Chapter 3
‘White Gold’ on a Rusty Spoon – Some Reflections on Indenture in South Africa

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Abstract
Colonialism with its capitalist agenda was extended to the better parts of Africa and other countries in the globe since the 15th century. It was a quest to expand the economic interest of the colonisers through brutal measures against the will of the colonised. Capital resources was extracted through slavery until its abolishment in 1833, which was later transformed into indenture, a form of arrangement that engaged capitalists and the indentured in a voluntary arrangement based on a contract of servitude for a defined period of time. South Africa is one such country that was colonised by the British empire where the system of indenture was implemented by hiring labour from India to work the sugar plantation of the then Natal Colony. For the first generation of indentured Indians this was an exacting experience, as life on these desolate estates were sub-human by nature, extracting every ounce of energy to feed the sugar mills with their labour. This chapter recollects the experience of the indentured in the different facets of life leaving behind a legacy that the present generation need to be proud of. Their genealogical roots were founded by hard work, determination, the will to succeed, which has won the current generation a place on the African soil. The chapter also highlights the contribution indentured Indians made to the multi-national sugar industry currently located in South Africa.

Keywords: Indenture, Colonialism, Apartheid, Plantations, Sugar, Labour

1 Introduction

The system of indentured labour in South Africa was one of the British colonialists' strategy to extract labour to serve the sugar cane industry, primarily on the coastal belt of KwaZulu-Natal. The system was designed as a contract between colonial whites and the indentured to serve their masters' capitalist needs. It was a weathered form of slavery based on a voluntary contractual labour relationship – a more civilised version of slavery, which was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833.The thriving sugar business demanded more labour to cultivate and, considering that the indigenous Black Africans chose not to participate in sugar cultivation, placed a premium demand for indentured labour in Natal. The first batch of labourers arrived in 1860 and hordes followed over a period of 51 years. Indentured Indians became the trail-blazers of the sugar industry, which in present times has transformed into a multi-billion-rand industry, ranking as one of the highest producers in the world. Dubbed 'White Gold', the enterprise was founded at the altar of family life, kinship ties, social networks, and relationships on the bare backs of the indentured forebears.

Recollecting the history of indentured Indians is characterized by one of sorrow and pain. Abuse, inhumanity and loss of dignity are some of the experiences that they had to endure in a quest for prosperity in a strange land with the bare minimum of resources. On the other hand, the history of indentured Indians elicits a sense of pride, courage and motivation to survive and prosper, which the current generation owe to the sacrifices made by their forbears. Many contributions made by the indentured Indians stand posterity since their arrival.

This chapter recollects the early experiences and efforts of indentured Indians to secure a space in this alien land, their socio-economic conditions, and the quest to maintain their sense of identity as a community. It provides a brief synopsis on key areas that affected their evolution as a community, given the inhumane treatment meted out by the British capitalists. Thereafter, a brief insight is provided on the multinational sugar industry in South Africa, which was founded on indentured labour.

2 Reflection on the Early Evolution of Indenture

The S.S. Truro was the first ship to sail to the shores of the Natal Colony on 6 November 1860, carrying with it 342 indentured Indians (Sulliman 1997:107). Over 51 years, 152 184 'human cargo' was shipped to the shores of Durban, comprising 62% males, 25% females and 13% children (India Ministry of

External Affairs 2000:76). The vast majority were Hindus, with 12% Muslims and about 2% Christians. The indentured catchment areas were the South of India, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. They comprised different castes and the languages spoken were Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Punjabi, and Gujarati. Given the diversity of languages spoken in the colony (including Tamil, Bhojpuri, Gujarati, Telugu, Urdu, Kokani, and Meman – a dialect of Sindhi), interaction was at a minimum (Mesthrie 1990). This diversity restricted social interaction amongst certain linguistic groups and at the same time excluded others from forming social networks and relationships. In the absence of social interactions, the indentured felt isolation in the vast fields of sugar cane with very little contact with their fellow indentured. Being in a strange land and stripped of social networks and religious and community support structures further exacerbated their social isolation (Khan 2012:136).

Their settlement patterns in KZN spread across the city, the colony and outside of it. Riverside, Cato Manor, Clairwood and Magazine Barracks were some of the settlement sites on the periphery of the city. On white-owned sugar estates located in Isipingo, Umzinto and Umkomaas were some of the settlement areas to the south of Durban. To the north of Durban, towns such as Verulam, Tongaat and Stanger were settlement areas (Maharaj 1994:3). These settlements were mostly on the coastal belt of Natal due to its fertile land for agricultural activity.

The physical living conditions were dehumanising, as they were accommodated in what came to be called the 'coolie' huts made out of stone, zinc, wattle or daub. This meant the cost of living space came at a premium. The homes were overcrowded, poorly ventilated, lacked sanitary amenities and were often exposed to adjacent polluted water streams. In urban centres, sub-quality houses were provided by the local and central government, whilst on the plantations by different sugar estates. These basic necessities were lacking, making the domestic environment not conducive to healthy living. These formal settlements came to be known as barracks, which was overcrowded, and lacked fresh air, as the houses were too small for the number of people that it accommodated (Meer 1980:9-10). Living in barracks hardly provided a conducive environment to raise a family.

The social and economic conditions of the indentured labourer were characterised by inhumane treatment. Exploited by long hours of work on daily food rations, poor sanitary and health conditions, absence of medical care facilities, lack of educational facilities, absence of family life and economic

opportunities, racial prejudice and physical abuse took its toll on the well-being of these so-called 'strange-looking people' from Asia in an alien land. Social and health-related problems in the form of suicide, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, mental illnesses, violence, infidelity, desertions, tuberculosis, diseases, infanticide, death related to burns were some of the many hardships encountered by the indentured (Meer 1980).

3 Family Structure

The institution of family is known to extend itself to a sense of community. Amongst the first generation of indentured Indians, the male-female ratio, which was 3:1, made settling into family life a challenge. For the colonialist, as long as the indentured remained unencumbered, it made them readily available to sell their labour at their masters' call and convenience (Khan 2013). The underrepresentation of females (Palmer 1957:28; Meer 1972:37; Chetty 1980:30) reduced the opportunity for many unencumbered indentured males from aspiring towards a family life. However, the male population decreased drastically when many returned to India post-indenture through the repatriation scheme (Padayachee 1999:199). It is estimated some 23% had returned to India by 1911 when this system of slavery was abolished (India Ministry of External Affairs 2000).

Although the repatriation scheme reduced the gap between males and females, there was still a paucity of eligible females to consummate marriage. This resulted in marriages taking place outside one's religious and ethnic groups. For instance, marriages registered in 1872, 12 years after the arrival of indentured Indians recorded the highest percentage of marriages between Muslims and Hindus. A total of 67% of marriages were recorded (Meer 1980) and the secondment to colonial farms showed scant respect for the heterogenous composition of the indentured, which in part may have been attributed to the prevalence of high levels of interfaith marriages. Cross-religious marriages came with challenges of its own to preserve religious and cultural identity. Later, strong attempts were made to preserve religious and cultural identities, making marriages across religion and language lines almost taboo (Desai & Vahed 2007). Not only did Muslim marriages across religious lines attract opposition; inter-caste marriages were strongly discouraged in general (Khan & Singh 2015). Recognition of marriages, whether consummated in India or South Africa, was non-existent. Hence it was not uncommon for the formation of

short-term unions and separations in times of marital conflict. This was exacerbated when the Coolie agent assigned unencumbered indentured males and females as husband and wife who accepted this arrangement to overcome the fear of loneliness and emotional insecurity. Responsibility for children born out of this relationship was often difficult to uphold, due to the denial of paternity (Palmer 1957:28).

Those who completed their indenture, known as free Indians, settled into some form of family life. Given the choice between re-indenture, a free passage home to India, or freedom through a small plot of freehold land was part of the labour deal. Many settled for the last, although not in all cases the promise of land ownership was honoured (Burrows 1952:2-3). Some were forced to use their savings to purchase land from their former white masters, especially in the rural small towns, whilst others opted to continue living on white-owned farm estates in the service of their former masters, or on a lease basis. The prospect of land ownership, however, provided a new sense of hope, as they now had access to the means of production to eke out a living and establish a family home. It may be asserted that the ownership of land was a means of emancipation from the exploits of the colonialists and set the foundation for the emergence of family and community life. The growing economy of the city offered opportunities to indentured households through market gardening, fishing, hawking, and various crafts (Meer 1975:2).

The family structure was characterized by an extended unit related by descent with a patriarchal head, which Kuper (1956:16) refers to as the *Kutum*. The *Kutum* comprised a patriarchal head with his wife and children, but also his unmarried brothers and sisters and his married brothers' wife and children. Included in this family unit were parents. With access to natural capital through land acquisition and social capital derived through the *Kutum*, it provided the necessary socio-economic resources necessary for the establishment of family life, participation in the colonial economy and building a sense of community. This co-residence contributed to family and social cohesion. The household defined the social and economic responsibilities of its members. Resources were pooled in a common family budget, which allowed families to overcome their financial woes. Within a short period of time, the indentured reproduced themselves. To illustrate: in 1921, there were 141 649 Indians in the colony, compared to 136 838 Whites (Extracted from Burrows 1952). This increase in the population size presented a threat to the colonialists, as they feared that the Indian would undermine their socio-political and economic hegemony in the

colony through reproducing themselves rapidly.

The oppression meted out to the indentured made them succumb to the exploits of the colonialist. The hardship meted out on the plantations made them politically docile. Challenging issues on their well-being risked brutal reactions and sanctions. The arrival of Gandhi in 1893 provided a breath of political fresh air to champion the socio-political and economic well-being of Indians in general.

4 Religious Life

Post-indenture, much effort was made to construct family and community life. Religious associational life began to take form through the establishment of places of worship and vernacular schools. This was contrary to the proselytization taking place by Christian missionaries who believed that the indentured were 'heathens' (Desai & Vahed 2007:228). By and large, indentured Indians resisted attempts by Christian missionaries to 'save' them from moral degeneration by preserving their faith. This entailed making great sacrifices to create conditions for the advancement of their perceived 'heathenism' (Gopal, Khan & Singh 2014:32).

The Festival of Chariots, Kavady and Diwali celebrations amongst the different groupings of the Hindu faith may be considered by far the most important form of religious expression in the absence of organised forms of religion in these early years of indenture. However, within a short space of time the indentured established places of worship. The Shree Emperumal Temple (1875), Shri Vaithianatha Easvarar Alayam (1883), Shree Gopal Hindu Temple (1893), Durban Hindu Temple (1898) and many more stand posterity on early attempts to promote cultural, social and religious associational life[1] (SAHMS Centenary Supplement 2012:4). With the mushrooming of temples, religious diversity was streamlined through a national synod to promote unity and religious cohesiveness through the formation of the Hindu Maha Sabha in 1912.

The indentured Muslims followed suit, with their Hindu counterparts by observing the Islamic New Year (Muharrum) as a form of expressing their

[1] The first temple to be built was in 1869 made of wood and iron in Rossburgh. South African History Online. (https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/indian-community)

faith. They carried pagodas through the streets of towns and cities, followed by elaborate celebrations. Such an occasion was joined by their Hindu counterparts, which became an expression of a sense of community and belonging (Vahed 2002:3). Hadrath Badsha Peer, who arrived amongst the first batch of indentured, is revered for his spiritual guidance[2]. In 1895, Hadrat Soofie Saheb, another spiritual luminary, built 11 mosques, vernacular schools, cemeteries and orphanages amongst the indentured Muslims. The Riverside Soofie Mosque and Mausoleum is now a provincial heritage site. The tombs of both spiritual personalities in Durban continue to be frequented by some sections of the Hindu faith during times of calamity, distress and personal misfortune, due to a belief in their mystic attributes (Khan 2013:151). The establishment of the Grey Street Mosque in 1881, although built by traders, was frequented by many indentured Muslims who settled and traded in the city. It is observed that religious norms and values were defended by indentured Muslims through confrontation with their colonial master. Objections to working in a piggery, shaving of beards, celebration of religious festivals, avoidance of non-halal foods, maintaining personal hygiene, and the preference of women to adorn the purdah are some of the Islamic etiquettes and norms which this group won over from their colonial masters to ensure their social reproduction and cohesion (Khan 2014:88).

5 Socio-Economic Conditions Post-Indenture

Post-indenture there was drift to the periphery of towns and cities in search of better economic opportunities. Some indentured made great strides in the economy. Between 1885–1872, the indentured set up 68 stores in the city of Durban (Meer 1980:315). Migrants to the city settled in peripheral areas such as Riverside, Bluff, Cato Manor, Magazine Barracks and Clairwood where they assimilated through social networks and contacts. Many settled in small towns in the colony. The lack of adequate housing, infrastructure, lack of skills for

[2] His official name was Sheik Allie Vulle Ahmed, who came to be known as Hadrat Badsha Pir (King of the Guides), due to a belief that he possessed mystical powers and his stature in providing spiritual support to the first generation of Muslims in the country. He is known to have originated from Chittoor, Madras and is highly revered by indentured Muslims in the country and a mausoleum stands perpetuity in his honour in the City of Durban.

formal employment were sources of poverty and social disorganisation pervading the community. Settling down to family life led to a natural population increase and resulted in a larger household to support financially.

The industrial revolution of the 19th century led to the establishment of the Natal railway in 1860 to support the emerging capitalist enterprise of the colony. Large numbers of indentured Indians were employed. In 1872, 63 were employed, whereas in 1886 it increased to 814 (Meer 1980:498). Although sugar cultivation remained the major employer of indentured labour, demands by tea and coffee estates, domestic servants, the Durban Corporation, shipping agencies, coal mines and Railways became increasingly significant (Rajaval 1994:42-43). The demand for indentured labour to oil the emerging Natal economy can be seen in the coal mining sector, through which the railway network was serviced. In 1897, 342 were employed in the coal mines, which number increased to 3 200 by 1909 (Rajaval 1994:46). The colonialist's socio-economic advancement became dependent on indentured labour.

Poverty and social problems in the urban centres required a concerted welfare response from the community. Many individuals and families were in distress characterised by overcrowded housing conditions, poverty and low subsistence levels, high infant and maternal mortality rates, high birth rates and large family size, high incidence of disease, and widespread illiteracy. In the city of Durban, a social-welfare response was made by the Indian Women's Association in 1913, inspired by Mohandas Gandhi, which led to the formation of the Durban Indian Child Welfare Society[3], which offered various forms of social welfare service (Khan 2016:144).

Market gardening was an important economic activity amongst the indentured, who sold their produce in the urban centres and the city. Many were

[3] The Durban Indian Child Welfare inspired and provided support for the establishment of the Pietermaritzburg Indian Child Welfare Society on the West of the province in 1932, followed by the Verulam, Tongaat and Stanger and District Indian Child Welfare Society in 1939 in the north of Durban. Inland, the Dundee and Dannhauser Indian Child Welfare Society was formed in 1939, followed by the Newcastle and District Indian Child Welfare Society in 1944. To the south of the province, the Umzinto and District Indian Child Welfare Society was established in 1942, followed by the Port Shepstone Indian Child Welfare Society in 1945 (Natal Indian Council for Child Welfare, 1950).

engaged in hawking, going door to door in white settlements to sell their produce. Whites were infuriated by street cries and a constant knocking at their doors by the vendors. However, this was outweighed by the advantage of cheap produce that the Indian hawkers supplied to white households, restaurants and hotels (Adamson 1932:56). Others set up street stalls on premises such as the Grey Street Mosque. In the city of Durban, an open-air market known as the 'squatter market'[4] in Victoria Street became a hub of business activities. Some 2 000 indentured farmers in and around Durban sold their produce in this market, which later was formalized in 1910 and today is known as the Warwick Avenue Precinct (Vahed 1999).

The early economy of Durban was a site of competition and contestation from different interest groups. The Durban Town Council harassed the indentured with different pieces of legislation to regulate and derive revenue from trading practices. There were contestations between passenger Indian traders[5] and both Muslim indentured and Hindu traders for a space in the city's economy. The passenger Indians dominated the economy and placed the indentured on the periphery, resulting in their social condition deteriorating. Given the availability of capital and skills amongst traders, the indentured Indians were economically disadvantaged to pursue their economic wants (Khan 2013:151). However, a small section of the indentured community

[4] Non-farmers sold 'from a basket, or by placing goods in small lots upon a sack' while they squatted cross-legged on the street; hence the name 'Squatters Market' (Vahed 1999).

[5] The arrival of Muslim passenger Indians in the 1870s from areas in India such as Surat, Kholwad, Rander, Kathor, Baroda, Bardoli and Navsari, added a new sociological dimension for those of the South Indian diaspora. The new arrivals were largely business entrepreneurs and were regarded as Arabs by the colonial masters by virtue of their distinct dress. They enjoyed enormous trading opportunities, privilege of movement in the city and to remote towns in the colony and Transvaal, where many of them set up trading posts. In 1885, the number of retail shops owned by this community in the city of Durban increased by 60 per cent, compared to those of South Indian extraction. They traded with the indigenous Africans, indentured Indians and whites to a certain degree. Indentured Indians had access to food and other items from their homeland in Indian and met their dietary needs beyond the food rations provided by the colonialists (Khan 2009:88-89).

engaged in capital-intensive agricultural activities[6]. This competition and contestation to share in the city's economy created a wedge on religious, ethnic and class lines, which led to them organising themselves through formal structures to preserve their financial interest. The Indian Farmers Association (IFA) and later the Indian Market Stallholders' Association (IMSA), Indian Agricultural Union, the Natal Indian Farmers Association (NIFA), Indian Market Stallholders' Association (IMSA), amongst a few, were formed to mobilise and give voice to the economic interest of the indentured (Vahed 1999).

6 Education

Very little attention was devoted to the educational needs of children born of the indentured lineage. Early initiatives were made by Christian missionaries comprising Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (Kumar 2016) to provide education. The missionaries were the first to establish schools for Indians. The first school was built by the Roman Catholic Church in 1867, which housed 30 pupils. By 1883, 21 mission schools were established in different parts of the colony for primary-level education. These schools were open to both indentured and African children. Efforts were also made by parents to teach their mother tongue (South African History Online, 2022), as there was much anxiety about the proselytising propaganda of missionary teachers. The indentured resolved not to send their children to schools established under the control of missionaries and made a conscientious attempt to pursue the educational needs of their children.

In as far as literacy was concerned, many had no formal education but managed to sustain strong memories of their customs, traditions and rituals which they preserved diligently (Khan 2015:231). The responsibility for the education of children of indenture was devolved to the owners of estates. Education of children from indenture was made compulsory for the owner of the estate where at least 20 children between the ages of 5 and 12 could be provided with elementary education at their cost. Only a few estates extended this generosity. The education system focused primarily from a utilitarian point

[6] M.L. Sultan is known to be one of the wealthiest farmers who bequeathed his financial resources to the M.L. Sultan Technikon and other educational institutions (Vahed 1999).

of view in preparation for particular occupations in life. The colonialists, however, felt that even primary education would cause the children of ex-indentured to forsake the arduous life of their fathers for more congenial occupations that were preserved for whites. Hence investment on education was considered a waste of money (Adamson 1932:64). Notwithstanding this attitude, various attempts were made by the indentured to set up schools on crowded premises and converted buildings. These schools were private initiatives by the community, which depended on school fees, use of mission and other premises on rent or rent-free and partial subsidy derived from the colonial government[7].

Given the shortage of schools, an attempt was made to set up evening schools in areas such as Umgeni, Tongaat, Verulam, Isipingo, Clare Estate, Umzinto and Pietermaritzburg. Due to the travelling distance to these schools from remote estates, the curfew implemented on the movement of the indentured until 9.00 pm and the tiring day on the estates, attendance at these schools dropped and later abandoned. Notably, the first government English-medium Indian school was opened in 1896. The community's contribution to the educational needs can be noted for the period 1910–1928, when £50 000,00 was invested in education, compared to the £22 843,00 spent by the colonial government (South African History Online, 2022).

The education of female children was hardly a priority for the colonialists. Between 1888–1899, two schools were built in Durban and Pietermaritzburg (South African History Online, 2022). Indentured women were seen as a liability, as the estates wanted only strong, healthy men who could toil the fields. In time, the value of women in the agricultural economy was noted and a gendered division of labour was introduced on the plantations. Field tasks such as hoeing, weeding, multi-cropping between fields, cutting plant cane and sowing them in furrows in the blazing sun was a back-breaking and extremely tedious task. Given the fact that the planting and harvesting seasons overlap as new fields are rotated annually, this economic activity was undertaken regularly. This division of labour was subjected to control measures and wage deductions for underperformance due to illnesses. Women pushed themselves to work, whether sick, pregnant, or even in labour. When unproductive, they were subjected to food rations (Beal n/d).

[7] By 1885, the total amount in grants given to Indian education was £626.5s.0d, compared to £68 paid out in 1874.

7 Indenture and the Political Economy

The economic worth of the indentured was only valued as far as capital was extracted through labour. The physical, psychological and social wellbeing of the indentured was of secondary importance to the capitalists as long as it brought monetary gains from this global white gold economy. In keeping with colonialist capitalistic interests, the desire to subvert the ban on slavery found voluntary indenture as an ingenious way of extracting labour through legal means underwritten by a contract. It was based on a principle of willing buyer and seller of labour defined by specific arrangements, which made this form of labour morally acceptable. Despite these contractual arrangements, the working and living conditions were in sub-human environments.

The sweat, pain and misery of the indentured have contributed to building a sugar empire by the white sugar barons in the colony. In 1852, Edmund Morewood started the first commercial sugar cane enterprise (Sokhela 1999:6). Over time, white-owned sugar estates began to emerge rapidly as its monetary value was increasingly recognized. With industrialisation, the mode of production was refined through technology, global and regional trade networks, which made the Natal Colony the preserve of white capitalists, in collaboration with multinational investors in the sugar enterprise. Sugar Estates engaged in monopoly capital to form giant sugar holdings such as the Hullets of Hullet, Marshall Campbell of Illovo, Reynolds brothers Umzinto and Crookes brothers in KwaZulu-Natal are some of the largest sugar magnates in the country (Koen 2015). Tongaat Hullett, for instance, has since indenture continued cane growing, sugar milling and refining throughout the Southern African region. Home-grown sugar barons have also extended themselves to neighbouring Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Swaziland, Malawi, to mention but a few. South African sugar producers has ranked consistently in the top 15 out of approximately 120 sugar-producing countries worldwide (South African Sugar Association n.d.).

Amongst the indentured, Babu Bodasing was the first to set up a plantation in 1866 (Fiat Lux 1966:10). It was not until World War I in 1915 that interest in cane growing began to be of economic interest amongst Indians. By 1930, there were about 500 farmers engaged in commercial cane cultivation. This presented a competition with white farmers and calls were made for the regulation of the sugar-producing industry. The government implemented a quota system, which regulated the amount of cane produced. Additionally, the

industry was beginning to feel the pressure of emerging Indian and African entrepreneurs. The Indian response was the formation of The Natal Indian Cane Growers Association, took up issues of interest on behalf of Indian cane growers, whilst the Africans were represented by the Natal and Zululand Black Cane Growers Associations (Sokhela 1999:9). The Natal Indian Cane Growers Association provided agricultural support to small-scale Indian farmers. However, post-democracy, these fragmented, race-based agents in the sugar industry had to undergo major reforms and welcome a newly shaped corporate style industry, including all the producers, irrespective of race. In memory of the contribution made by Indians in the sugar industry. The Cane Growers' auditorium was built by the association on the M.L. Sultan Campus of the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in 1959. Today these two associations are integrated into the corporate world of sugar production under one umbrella body.

South Africa's leading destinations for sugar are Malta, Angola, Namibia, Botswana and Swaziland. More recent trends in sugar exports shows a phenomenal growth. In 2019, South Africa shipped sugar worth 492,42m USD, an increment of 29,38% from 2018's total African sugar export of 380,588m USD. The annual change in value of South Africa sugar between 2017 to 2018 was 38,469 pc (South African Sugar Market Insights n.d.).

The table below provides a snapshot of regional performances in sugar production in KwaZulu-Natal. A total of 14 mills crushed 19 million tons of sugar in the 2019 season, compared to approximately 17 million tons in 2011. For the seasons 2011/2012 to 2018/2019, the standard of production was constant. Some of the best-performing markets in 2019 for South African sugar per kg were from exports to Portugal, Zambia, Lebanon, Turkey and the Netherlands.

The industry itself is worth R18bn, with 20 711 small-scale growers and 1 126 large-scale growers. It provides 85 000 jobs, 350 000 indirect jobs and livelihood to some one million people in the rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal. The coordination of the industry is undertaken by the South African Sugar Association established in 1927. The role of the Association is to support the industry with various forms of skills, cane testing service, industry affairs, internal support, manage the SA Sugarcane Research Institute, sugar cultivation training and arranging finance. Additionally, it engages with regional and international stakeholders on sugar cultivation.

Table 1: Sugarcane crushed by mills (tons)

SUGARCANE CRUSHED: 2011/2012 TO 2018/2019*								
REGION	**2011/12**	**2012/13**	**2013/14**	**2014/15**	**2015/16**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**	**2018/19***
NORTHERN IRRIGATED								
Malelane	1 658 943	1 556 390	1 685 846	1 655 413	1 718 777	1 327 829	1 312 874	1 597 041
Komati	2 358 719	2 075 805	2 360 039	2 330 859	2 183 539	1 713 307	1 896 859	2 362 678
Pongola	1 176 158	1 189 869	1 320 453	1 185 297	1 250 826	907 586	1 159 182	1 257 740
Total Northern Irrigated	5 193 820	4 822 064	5 366 338	5 171 569	5 153 142	3 948 722	4 368 915	5 217 459
ZULULAND								
Umfolozi	1 130 078	1 029 298	1 121 817	1 105 047	1 076 588	772 047	1 030 416	1 234 114
Felixton	1 705 537	1 464 812	2 088 930	1 877 159	1 571 884	1 556 670	1 670 459	1 793 981
Amatikulu	1 142 650	1 164 581	1 268 101	1 003 230	650 603	377 301	1 138 088	1 256 000
Total Zululand	3 978 265	3 658 691	4 478 848	3 985 436	3 299 070	2 706 018	3 838 963	4 284 095
NORTH COAST								
Darnall	876 867	915 110	1 064 473	860 544	0	834 418	866 923	1 037 171
Gledhow (KwaDukuza)	1 078 925	1 109 374	1 507 969	1 257 948	938 523	1 227 606	1 238 956	1 310 350
Maidstone	808 565	906 131	1 059 728	849 936	869 646	950 180	975 136	1 152 095
Total North Coast	2 764 357	2 930 615	3 632 170	2 968 428	1 808 169	3 012 204	3 081 015	3 499 616
MIDLANDS								
Eston	1 141 932	1 252 853	1 359 680	1 124 488	875 337	1 085 777	1 247 157	1 229 689
Noodsberg	1 088 697	1 425 584	1 467 088	1 326 214	1 083 751	1 356 427	1 375 221	1 485 659
UCL Company	643 533	746 706	696 049	712 257	587 168	721 550	800 773	811 667
Total Midlands	2 874 162	3 425 143	3 522 817	3 162 959	2 546 256	3 163 754	3 423 151	3 527 015
SOUTH COAST								
Sezela	1 989 673	1 668 931	2 062 966	1 755 129	2 054 759	2 069 201	2 091 272	1 909 484
Umzimkulu	0	772 576	969 830	711 983	0	174 711	584 861	594 019
Total South Coast	1 989 673	2 441 507	3 032 796	2 467 112	2 054 759	2 243 912	2 676 133	2 503 503
TOTAL	**16 800 277**	**17 278 020**	**20 032 969**	**17 755 504**	**14 861 401**	**15 074 610**	**17 388 177**	**19 031 688**

(Source: South African Sugar Association – 2022)

Historically, the Board of the South African Sugar Association was predominantly dominated by whites. In the new political dispensation, the board comprises 57% blacks and 43% whites in compliance with the countries equity policy. The Association provides support to 21 000 small-scale black growers. Currently it is diversifying the industry by exploring the production of ethanol, plastics, aviation fuel and various other products (South African Cane Growers 2019–2020).

8 Conclusion

The history of the multinational sugar enterprise today is indebted to the founda-

tions left behind by the indentured Indian for it to be a global actor in the sweet-bitter business of white monopoly capital. White capital was extracted from the pain and suffering of unsuspecting workers who sought to venture into an alien country with nothing but clothes on their backs to toil the blazing fields in order to eke out a living. Although they endured enormous hardships, the indentured was not distracted from the spirit of hope and the desire to succeed. The chapter outlines the evolution of the early indentured Indians and challenges that they had to surmount despite the adversarial conditions on the sugar plantations. They made attempts to preserve family life, sustain their religious and cultural identity, invest in the education of their children and become resilient to the exploits of the white capitalists. Post indenture they had to fend for themselves, taking up opportunities in the wage economy. Participation in the wage economy provided them with an opportunity to sell their labour, to the extent that they could derive value for money. Being dependent on wage labour provided stability in the household income, which allowed them to sustain themselves according to their needs. For many of the descendants from the indentured Indian lineage, there is a need to pride themselves on the contribution that their forbears have made to secure their current lifestyle and advancement in contributing to a multi-billion-rand sugar economy. Many from the indentured lineage are now in their 4th and 5th generation, who have a vague notion of the sacrifices that their forbears made. It is works like this that documents the life and times of indentured Indians as reminder that sugar production, dubbed 'white gold', was served on a rusty spoon in their early evolution, whilst the world savoured this with silver and golden spoons, unbeknown to them that this gold was produced in the context of slavery.

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