

LMM/002/0001/15

12/11/60

NATAL INDIAN CENTENARY
COMMITTEE

phone 61996.
23366.

25, Baker Street
DURBAN.

12th. November, 1960.

TO THE PRINCIPALS
OF ALL SCHOOLS IN
NATAL.

Dear Sir,

re : Indian Centenary 16th. November, 1960.

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that the Indian people will be observing the Centenary of their arrival to Natal on November 16, 1960, exactly a hundred years after the arrival in Durban Harbour of the steamship Truro with the first batch of just over 300 Indian men, women and children.

On November 16, 1960 at 10 a.m. all Natal Indian children will be having at central venues an observance ceremony at which prayers will be offered, an address on the significance of the Centenary will be given and the children will recitate a dedication, a copy of which is enclosed herewith for your information.

Would you be kind enough on this day to draw the attention of your children to this significant and historic event by reading the enclosed message from the Indian people and their children to your children, if possible at 10 a.m. on Wednesday November 16, at which time the Centenary Ceremonies will take place simultaneously at all centres where our children gather.

Yours sincerely,

J. N. SINGH
CHAIRMAN.

D E D I C A T I O N

Five scores years ago our forbears came to South Africa. Like most of our fathers and mothers we were born in this sunny land of promise and great beauty.

I am being educated in the schools of Natal for the realisation of Truth and Goodness, for Knowledge and Citizenship, and for the awareness that the South African way of life is my heritage. I know no loyalty to any other homeland. I am a South African like all the young people of this country of every race and colour. This is my country too, my native land.

Today, on this 16th. day of November, 1960, in the presence of this great gathering I resolve with all my heart to devote all my talents and all my strength for the good of this land of my birth and to help build in it a great and united nation living in peace and friendship with its neighbours.

This is my humble dedication to my country. I make this vow, that come what may, together with all the people of South Africa of every colour and creed, I will ever be faithful to the solemn pledge that I am making on this Centenary Anniversary.

GOD BLESS OUR COUNTRY.

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MESSAGE FROM THE INDIAN PEOPLE
OF NATAL ON THE OCCASSION OF THE
COMMEMORATION OF THEIR ARRIVAL
IN THIS COUNTRY 100 YEARS AGO.

It is 100 years since the first Indians arrived at Durban, and today we Indian people of Durban and Natal are commemorating this Centenary in various ways, by holding special dedication services for young and older people, by lectures, by the erection of a visual monument as well as in establishing a Trust fund for bursaries.

At a time like this when we have so much to remember, we do not forget members of other races who make up this lovely country of South Africa, and especially the children of other races. We send a special message of greetings and good wishes, especially from all our Indian children at schools; greetings of friendship and kindness, and good wishes for your happiness, well-being and success in the future.

The Indians who first came to Natal did so to work on the land in sugar fields, and since then by much hard work and perseverance they have made good progress. In doing so they have come to know members of other races by living among them peaceably and have come to learn a great deal from their neighbours so that today we Indians look upon other peoples, who live in South Africa, as friends and fellow South Africans. Especially do we think of the boys and girls attending schools as Indian boys and girls attend their schools, learning the same things, growing up to appreciate the same virtues of kindness and courtesy.

Whilst we are commemorating this 100th Anniversary of the arrival of our forebearers in this country we pray that Almighty God will shower his blessings upon you and upon us, that all of us will continue to live in brotherhood together, as good neighbours, and that we can grow up together to serve and help each other and prove ourselves worthy of our country.

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ADDRESS BY CHAIRMAN AT INDIAN
CENTENARY OBSERVANCE ON
NOVEMBER 16, 1960.

Today we observe and commemorate the centenary of the arrival of the first Indian settlers to the shores of South Africa. It was on the 16th. November, 1860, exactly one hundred years ago that the steamship Truro berthed outside the Durban Harbour with the first batch of men, women and children from the sub-continent of India.

They arrived to work in a strange land among strange people. They found here already settled people who had come some two hundred years earlier from the continent of Europe and the British Isles. They also found here the indigenous and friendly African people, who in common with them were employed in the sugar farms and mills of Natal, in the coal mines and on the railways, working side by side for their European employers.

Several tributes have been paid to the vital contribution made by the early Indian settlers in the building of the Colony of Natal. From the date of their arrival began the material prosperity of Natal stated Sir Liege Huelett in the Natal Parliament before Union. They have played a great part in establishing the sugar industry and had proved to be a body of consistent industrious workers, who were the mainstay of the early industrial and agricultural development of Natal.

After ten years of work on the sugar plantations our people who had completed their indentures became free to work where they pleased. Many drifted to the towns as domestic servants, small traders or as market gardeners. Others continued to work on the farms and mills, the mines and railways. The Chief of mines in Natal reported in 1881 that no coal he had seen from Zululand or elsewhere was at all equal to the coal from Dundee and Newcastle where Indians were employed on the mines.

According to records in 1887 there were two schools under the care of Rev. Stott in Durban providing education for Indians in Natal - a day school with 31 scholars and an evening school with 20 scholars. In these schools the English and Indian languages were taught, also writing and arithmetic. Later the Natal Government Railways established a school near the Durban Railway Station with Mr. Joel Peter from Trichnapoly- India, in charge. He had already taught at the Indian Church Mission School under the control of Rev. Whittington.

The Depot Road Government Indian School today stands where began almost the first school run by the Administration in Natal. By 1884 the Natal Government had established three schools at Victoria Street, Umgeni and Tongaat apart from the Railway school. These then were the first educational institutions which served our people.

After a hundred years the greatest progress we have made is undeniably in the field of education, where our people have sacrificed and contributed more than any other community, towards the erection of buildings to house some 100,000 children.

We refer to this early phase of our history in order that we may pay a **lasting** tribute to those men and women, our forbears, whose early sacrifices, **toil**, determination and ambition made it possible for us to attain the standards that we have achieved in all branches of our life in this country, not the least being our educational advancement.

Early in our life, too, there appeared on the Natal scene from among our community a man whose name and fame have become world wide and whose teachings and endeavours brought freedom and independence to the land of our origin - India. He was Mahatma Gandhi, who for some twenty years before and after the turn of the century played a historic part in the cultural and political life of our people. He has left a heritage of sacrifice and struggle which even today inspires and guides us towards greater endeavours in upholding our dignity and making a fuller contribution towards justice and freedom in this land.

It is not possible in a brief moment to survey our progress and chronicle our handicaps and disabilities during the hundred years we have lived here. Suffice it to say that we have been undaunted by the trials and tribulations we have encountered and that wherever we look - the advances we have made are there for all to see.

As we step into the second century of our existence in South Africa, we find ourselves still far short of our aspirations, ideals and ambitions. We live in fear of being unsettled by such measures as the Group Areas Act and the imposition of a separate Indian University. We are **plagued** with the restriction of job reservation and its consequential unemployment. We have no say in the governing councils of the land. We have not yet achieved the desired standard of free and compulsory education nor are all our children at school. Many opportunities in acquiring skill, learning and training and participating in various professions and trade remain closed to us.

It is not surprising therefore that our Centenary Observance has not been characterised by unbounded joy and celebrations, but has taken the shape of a solemn commemoration at which we are dedicating ourselves to work harder, make greater endeavours, engender goodwill and tolerance and strive for a happier South Africa in which there will be lasting good relations among all sections of our people and in which race, colour, creed ~~of~~ language will be no barrier to human understanding and multi-racial harmony.

The main project we have embarked upon to observe our Centenary, is the creation of the Indian Centenary Scholarship Trust, with an initial target of £50,000, from whose income bursaries and scholarships will be granted to deserving and poor students from all sections of the South African population, African, Indian, Coloured and European. We acknowledge with thanks the grant of £10,000 made by the Durban City Council towards this trust and we are confident that all public bodies and individuals not limited to our own community, will rally to make this trust a truly monumental commemoration of our Centenary. The Natal Provincial Council is expected to support this project by making available a substantial grant for the creation of **Centenary** bursaries, annually to primary, secondary and teacher training students in the Province.

To our young people who are largely assembled here our message is that they should look forward to the future with hope, and determined to overcome every obstacle in their path and to consider no sacrifice too great to make real their objective of becoming true South Africans in this ~~their~~ land of birth. They are an integral though small part, being barely three per cent of the population of this country. However they should have no fears for the future if their conduct is upright and their respect for human dignity and equality is unshrouded by any racial or colour prejudice. They must always, as in the past, unhesitatingly offer their hand of friendship to all about them whether Balck or White. In turn we expect and appeal that their mutual respect and friendliness will not be found wanting from among our other longer settled inhabitants in this land.

Let us on this day, in observing our Centenary, dedicate ourselves to the creation of a lasting, peaceful and harmonious South Africa for all her children.

Let us pray that we be given strength, courage and determination as our forefathers had, to make our fullest contribution in every sphere of South African life so that we may be regarded not as Indians but as people who have earned and merit the full stature of South African citizenship.

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