



THE "TRURO" WHICH BROUGHT
THE FIRST INDIAN IMMIGRANTS
TO NATAL
on FRIDAY, 16th NOVEMBER, 1860

1860 1960

INDIAN CENTENARY COMMEMORATION BROCHURE

ISSUED BY :

Indian Centenary Committee, Pietermaritzburg & Environs



MESSAGE
FROM
CHIEF

ALBERT J. LUTHULI

The Indian community in the Union is observing the centenary of the arrival into this land of their forebears. This is a deserving and fitting honour and tribute to these sturdy immigrants from India. In the annals of our country they deserve an official place of honour such as is accorded various white settler groups that came into our country, notably the 1652 Dutch Settlers, the 1820 British Settlers and other Immigrant groups whose unstinted labours and devotion helped to develop South Africa.

The memory of this event brings to mind with deep abhorrence the excesses of imperial and colonial rule, which brought to South Africa under the most oppressive and humiliating conditions these indentured Indians. Their descendants, as other non-whites, continued to be exploited by the minority white rule in control of our common land. This should make the present victims of this unmitigated oppression to vow in earnest never to relax their freedom struggle efforts until they are free. This centenary anniversary will have failed in one important aspect if it does not help to promote and prompt this determination.

The programme of activities planned for this historic occasion will remind us of the salient points of the life of these immigrants and their descendants up to our day. The Indians have made a distinctive and lasting contribution to the life and progress of a land they have a right now to claim as their fatherland. They have made for themselves an uneraseable niche in the annals of the land. But white rule has not adequately and fairly rewarded them. As with other non-whites, African and Coloured people, what benefits have come to them have not come as a result of a direct and deliberate objective and effort of this minority white rule. They have come mainly through the self help efforts of Indians themselves assisted by the helping hand of a few friendly and sympathetic whites.

Life for Indians in South Africa, as it has been for other non-whites, especially among peasants and other working-class peoples, has been extremely harsh and unbearable as a result of the minority rule of white only. The story of the grim struggle for existence of the Indians in South Africa, in the face of the most impoverishing conditions, will be told best by the victims of the oppression themselves. But this very grimness, this ugliness of the oppression will help throw into sharp relief the greatness of their achievements under extremely cruel odds. It should provoke praise and admiration for the Indian among all people of goodwill, black and white, everywhere. It will reveal that the Indian is possessed of many qualities that are a hallmark of progressive human groups anywhere in the world; qualities such as virility, adaptability, resourcefulness, industriousness, thriftiness and foresightedness. It is these qualities that have made the Indian in many ways to be a worthy object lesson for other groups in South Africa. Given unfettered opportunities his talents and efforts would rebound richly to the greater benefit of the country than now; for non-white talent, ability, value and interests are sacrificed for white supremacy on the pretext that non-whites are a threat to white security. Non-whites are no danger to white security but are avowed enemies of white supremacy.

The Indian Community, under wise and progressive leadership, is to be complimented for having made creditable strides in shedding itself of aloofness from and hesitancy to make common cause with other non-whites, in particular the Africans in their common struggle for freedom in South Africa. The same could be said for the other racial groups towards the Indian and this is being achieved in the face of terrific propaganda to the contrary.

We hopefully look forward to the not distant future when racial prejudice will be a thing of the past. The observance of this Indian Centenary in South Africa should help to create among all sections of our multi-racial society a greater understanding of, and sympathy for, the Indian, and likewise towards other racial groups. It is only the outflow of such a spirit among people of goodwill—black and white—that will give birth to a non-racial, democratic South Africa where all its people shall brothers be.

It is the ardent hope of many that such a happy South Africa will have come to being before long.

In the meantime I align myself with all people of goodwill in South Africa and abroad in sincerely wishing the Indian community of South Africa all success in the observance of their 1960 Centenary Anniversary. I counsel them to look forward to a bright future. We should never be made despondent by harsh apartheid laws.

Do not be discouraged by legislation such as: Group Areas, Job Reservation, the threat to education and other similar measures. Oppression is not eternal. It is really a test of our manhood, sincerity of purpose and perseverance. It cannot last for ever. It is against the order of creation. Man was created free. "Might is right", is jungle morality and those who live by it are still at a brutal stage. The eternal progress is from brute to man. Dictators and dictatorships are a passing phase. Peace and friendship, fairness and justice are lasting foundations of society. We should dedicate ourselves to the realisation of these values in our country and in the world.

ALBERT J. LUTHULI