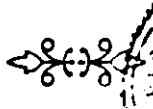


THE
INDIAN IN NATAL

BY

SIR SHAFAT AHMAD KHAN

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR INDIA
IN THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA



Published and distributed through the courtesy of

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Hon. Secretary:

Natal Indian Congress.



SIR SHAFAT AHMAD KHAN,

High Commissioner for India in the
Union of South Africa.

foreword



SO many pronouncements on the Indian question in this Country has been made in the past, that the average man has erroneously begun to think that he has understood the whole problem and can therefore declaim upon it at any given moment. But these utterances have so far been concentrated on only one facet at a time of a very complex situation—how complex, only the earnest student of South African affairs is likely to appreciate.

It is therefore refreshing and stimulating to have to look at the whole canvas as Sir Shafa'at Ahmad Khan presented so admirably in his opening address to the Institute of Race Relations assembled in Conference recently at Pietermaritzburg. No one aspect of the question, as the distinguished speaker pointed out, will admit of a real solution, unless one views the whole picture which has been so strangely coloured by the peculiar—almost unique—attitudes of mind of the European people of this country. The picture he has painted is brilliant in conception, and extremely comprehensive.

Sir Shafa'at in his address has challenged the intellect of South Africa to find a solution of the so-called Indian problem. His new angle of approach is also a challenge to the European people of this land for the application of its highest ideals and its high statesmanship to the handling of the destiny of a quarter million people.

I am highly privileged to commend the following pages to every honest student of human affairs and to all people of goodwill as a valuable contribution, to the study of what, in this country of grace, has become a "thorny problem" tending to create bitterness and strained feelings between Indians and Europeans.

Here we have a clear cut challenge to civilisation based on the precepts of A Man Of Galilee. There can be but answer to that challenge. Is South Africa ready to make it?

A. I. KAJEE.

28 Ryde Avenue,
Durban.
28th August, 1943.

ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY
SIR SHAFAT AHMAD KHAN,
AT THE
Opening of the Natal Regional Conference
Convened by
THE SOUTH AFRICAN
INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS
HELD AT
Pietermaritzburg, July 31st., 1943.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply grateful to the Institute of Race Relations for the honour they have conferred upon me by asking me to address this distinguished gathering.

The Institute started its work amidst numerous difficulties and carried on its noble work in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. I feel justified in saying that the initial difficulties which are inseparable for the formulation of a new policy have been overcome, and this body is now established on very solid foundations. The ideas and ideals of the Institute form the great achievement of this honoured body, and it has thereby united men of all races and creeds in economic and social investigations, evoking sympathy and stimulating antagonisms upon questions which are vital to the future of Africa. This was necessary for the evolution of the modern ideas of progress, at a time when we were but dimly conscious of our spiritual heritage, our feeling of intellectual unity and our habit of pouring converging contributions from different channels into the stock of experience. The Institute, too, could not pass into a new phase without checks and hindrances, but its members have applied the whole of their intelligence to the one aim of giving a certain definite form to the problems of the Union, based upon sympathy and justice to all races.

The Institute has become the symbol of aspirations of millions in this land and it has upheld this position because of the selfless devotion and missionary spirit of its leaders. The work of the leaders is appreciated by numerous sections of all races, creeds and colours who have followed its activities with the deepest interest, and accorded to it their enthusiastic support. I believe I am voicing the sentiments of every one present here when I place on record our deep sense of grief on the sad demise of Professor Hoernle. I saw him only a few days before I left Johannesburg, at the end of last month, and he was, as usual, in a cheerful mood. He had just seen his doctor, who had warned him against the risk he was running and he assured me, a fortnight ago, in a letter, that he was taking precautions, and trying to follow the severe regimen prescribed for him by his medical adviser. I am afraid, it was too late, and he died a martyr to duty. Professor Hoernle's loss is irreparable. The Indian Community has lost in him a constant friend and a selfless champion of its rights, and the Institute has lost one of its leading figures, who brought to its councils ripe experience, wide culture, genuine sympathy, and an energy which seemed limitless. He has nobly performed his mission by sowing the seeds of sympathy and racial harmony broadcast, and sacrificing his life for the cause. Our heart goes out at this hour of trial to his widow, whose beneficent work for the Indian Community is no less distinguished than that of her husband. I hope and believe that she will continue her philanthropic work and maintain the fine tradition which their joint labour built up after nearly twenty-five years of devoted work.

It may legitimately be asked by a foreigner who comes to these shores whether South Africa has developed certain definite principles of social growth and mental development through the various organs with which it is endowed at present. Is there a certain norm to which her parliament, her civic bodies, and associations for culture conform? Quickened to livelier consciousness by contact with diversity of races and colours, a stranger within the gates is sometimes tempted to put the question whether there is any unifying principle which supplies the cohesion which is denied to this country by circumstances into which it is necessary for me to enter. The deepest interest in the growth of the Union, the warmest recognition of its services to Africa as a whole, are compatible with the just conviction that there is an absence of organic

unity in a land on which nature has lavished some of her choicest gifts. Buchan, who came here as a member of Milner's Kindergarten, was fascinated by the South African landscape. In a moment of frankness, he declared its chief characteristic to be "its utter aloofness from human life. It seems not to take the impress of man. Its history is as transient as the cloud shadow. A hundred Johannesburgs would not change the character of South Africa". At the same time he admitted that he had received an experience here which he had not known since his childhood "moments, even hours of intense relaxation when one seemed to be a happy part of a friendly universe." There are, of course, numerous persons who, I confess, are birds of passage in this land, who neither understand the secret nor feel the need of learning its mysteries. I confess that after nearly two years of study of some of the problems of this beautiful land, I have not been able to form distinct ideas as to its pattern of life. We witness here the new birth of the European spirit, and South Africa has borrowed her light from Europe, as the moon shines with the rays reflected from the sun. The development of South Africa may, therefore, be regarded as the silver age of the old golden age of Europe. The European intellect in the Union, after a desperate struggle with nature and man, has now resumed its activity, is interrogating nature, taming her into subjection, and is therefore enjoying the pleasures of unimpeded energy. The ancient Greeks used to say that wood is everlasting, and therefore the images of the gods are made from it. In India, this tree is called the deodar-tree, the god tree. This tree of life, this god tree, has come to this land from Europe, and its foundation is Christianity. Just as the first Englishman who translated the Bible into the English language was Caedmon, so the first pioneers of South African culture came from the West. They stamped this country with their culture and religion, and South Africa has imbibed and assimilated both the religion and culture of the West. We may now venture to reply to the stranger who puts the inevitable question, what is the pattern of South Africa's life? Its pattern of life is European, and the spiritual vigour is derived from the common fount of Christianity. These are the two sustaining pillars of South Africa's culture which lie deep in her history, and are the centre of her national vitality in modern times.

Christian principles moulded the life and thought of South

Africa for ages, and I am convinced that they will do so in future. It is not necessary for a person to be a Christian so that he may practice Christian virtues. There are millions of Hindus and Muslims all over the world who are practising Christian virtues without being Christian. It is true, however, that among the dominant races of South Africa, the Christian religion has always been interwoven with its public affairs and vital institutions. The influence of the Christian religion and the Christian ideal of life upon politics has been profound. Many of the politicians of the Union who command a large following in the Union are inspired by a deep religious feeling, and the personal interrelation of politics and religion is probably more significant in the Union than in Western Europe. It is true, of course, that there are small groups or sections in which ideas are abundant and serious convictions on religion are rare. These are, however, exceptions, and we are justified in saying that the South African way of life is the type of life which took root in Europe during the age of the Christian faith. Now the characteristic expression of that faith is democracy, though it may be that it is of comparatively recent origin. It is, however, perfectly correct to assert that in modern times democracy is the form which it has assumed for several generations.

It was Christianity which taught the eternal significance of every human soul and stressed the sanctity of human personality. The Rule of Law which is the greatest contribution of the English intellect to the modern age is expressed in the Christian tradition of freedom. In fact many of the virtues which have been incorporated into the substance of the life and thought of every one in South Africa, whether he is a Muslim, Hindu or Jew, are Christian in origin though they have their prototypes in other religions as well, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. It will, however, be true to say that in South Africa thousands of Muslims who have grown up were nourished on the Christian tradition, which was, and is, their spiritual legacy and constitutes their spiritual capital. The doctrine of human equality is claimed by the Master of Balliol, Mr. A. D. Lindsay, as exclusively Christian, though other religions had emphasised certain important elements of political equality. Mr. Lindsay, declares that the "doctrine of human equality has, of course, been affirmed and acted upon by men who have repudiated the religion which gave it birth and, indeed, all

religions. The belief can survive, for a time at least, what produced it. But it is a religious faith and nothing but faith will sustain it." The political structure of South Africa is Christian, as its Culture, and its Christian conception of life will enable this country to earn its survival if the basic virtues, which are common to Christian no less than to other religions, such as Hinduism and Islam, strike roots deep and wide in the political and social life of South Africa. A creed is worthless unless it is practised by its votaries, and life is action and not meditation. Our aim ought to be unity of spirit, and not merely of letter or form. The last thing to perish in a nation is its faith, and in the Christian church there exists a hierarchy of able and god-fearing men, who by the sanctity of their lives, the gravity of their doctrines, their ministrations to the sick, by the relief of the poor, and maintenance of schools and hospitals, have kept alive in the ruling races of South Africa the ideal of a creed pure and undefiled before God. Many practise Christian virtues at present who had ceased to attach importance to formularies distinctive of a particular creed. The Indians who came over later on also practised them, as they had been preached for hundreds of years in their own land by Hinduism and Islam. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Indians in the Union found no difficulty in assimilating the moral teachings of Christ, and imbibing the Christian ideal which has been supreme in this land since its foundation as a State. Their religions had preached these basic virtues for hundreds of years before they arrived to Natal. It is no exaggeration to say that the fibres of the Church in the Union were intertwined with the very heartstrings of the ruling races in South Africa, and Indians became the inheritors of this spiritual tradition.

I have mentioned above that there are two sustaining pillars of South Africa, (1) Christianity, (2) European culture. I will now deal with the latter. I cannot deal here with various aspects of European civilisation, such as intellectual, artistic, and mechanical advances of Europe, as this will take me too far afield, so I must confine myself to the social culture of the European peoples as expressed in their standards of living in Europe and the U.S.A. As is known to every one who has travelled in different parts of the world, the greatest contribution of Europe to humanity is the resurrection of the human body, in modern time, and the freedom of man from concentration upon the other

world. This present life is not necessarily a preparation for the next, and it must be made useful to the community. The cloistral solitude of Simeon Stylites and Trappist monks, and of anchorites and ascetics, is no longer regarded as the only path to salvation. The application of intelligence, of science and machinery, to diet, hygiene, sanitation, to food and clothing, housing and disease, have led to the resurrection of the human body, and the raising of standards of living throughout the world. The East is also profoundly affected by this doctrine, and the liberation of reason from superstition, so that we may develop the resources of the country, and through the energies emancipated by our struggle with nature, we may be able to afford equal sustenance to all the people of the land. This has been applied all over Europe, the U.S.A., and is now applied to Russia and Asia. Western standards of living have happily been adopted in many parts of the world, and the best organised attempt has been made in the United States of America and Russia. South Africa, too, has not lagged behind and it is the glory and pride of this country that the standards of living of Europeans have not deteriorated. Public opinion on the subject is unanimous on this vital issue, and it is now recognised that we need social security for all, so that the common man may lead a happy and contented life in this world. All these principles are taken for granted, and the movement for social security has gained momentum all over the world. This means, of course, an enormous improvement in the present-day standards so that the common man may be able to contribute to the building of a new society by participating in its social and economic uplift.

I have dealt with these two points on South Africa's national life. Let me now point out the manner in which they affect the Indian problem in Natal. It is well known that the original settlers who came over here from India were recruited mainly from the labouring classes and most of them were illiterate and came from very humble surroundings. They worked exceedingly hard on the sugar plantations, and the primitive conditions under which they lived would have permanently impaired their health, but for the mild climate of Natal. (I should like to place on record my appreciation of the excellent work which you, Professor Burrows, and your devoted

band of research scholars have done for the Indian community by conducting objective investigations into the activities of the Indian community in Natal in a scientific spirit. I should like to mention particularly a pamphlet entitled "Indian Life and Labour in Natal" which has been prepared under the auspices of this Institute under your supervision. It is a mine of information for every student of the Indian problem, and is written in an objective spirit. I hope that similar inquiries into the housing and education of the Indian community will be conducted by you and your able band of researchers).

The early immigrants lived in primitive conditions, but it is clear from the evidence which we possess that conscious efforts have been made in the past to improve their standard of living, and provide for them all the amenities of a decent home, with good surroundings and good wages. I cannot give the details of Indian housing in Durban and elsewhere as the subject is highly controversial, but it will be agreed by all that there has been considerable improvement in the condition of Indian workers.

I am not, however, concerned here so much with the conditions in which the Indian community lives at present as with the aims which we have to keep constantly in view. Now, throughout their eighty-three years of residence in this land, the aim has consistently been to raise their standard and ultimately to bring them up to the level of the Europeans. We know, of course, as practical men, that equality of standards with the European is still far off, but it ought to be our endeavour to attain it in the fulness of time. To put it in other words, it has been the constant aim of the Government of India and the Union Government to suggest social and economic measures for the Indian community so that it may not lag behind any other section of the people. I may be permitted to quote the relevant portion of the Cape Town Agreement of 1927: "The Union Government firmly believe in and adhere to the principle that it is the duty of every civilised government to devise ways and means and to take all possible steps for the uplifting of every section of their permanent population to the full extent of their capacity and opportunity, and accept the view that in the provision of educational and other facilities the considerable number of Indians who will remain part

of the permanent population should not be allowed to lag behind any other section of the people." That the object of the Agreement was to maintain western standards of life will be clear from the joint statement of the Union Government and Government of India. Paragraphs (1) and (2) stated: "Both Governments reaffirm the right of the Union of South Africa to use all just and legitimate means for the maintenance of western standards of life; (2) The Union Government recognises that Indians domiciled in the Union who are prepared to conform to western standards of life should be enabled to do so."

The policy embodied in the provision of the Cape Town Agreement mentioned by me has been consistently followed by both the Governments since 1927 and there has been no deviation from it on any occasion. This was reiterated by General Smuts in his speech on the Pegging Bill this year. He declared that it was the policy of the Government to carry into effect the Cape Town Agreement, and the Government of India have consistently aimed at it. The Indian Community has responded to the appeal made to it, and nobody can deny that it has made substantial progress in this respect. I have toured through most parts of Natal and many parts of the Transvaal, and I was agreeably surprised to find that Indian young men are conforming to western standards in ever increasing numbers. They have a desire to improve their social condition, to have good houses, to spend more on food and clothing, and to keep up a high standard of living. One sees it often in Durban and other places. Again, it is natural that Indians should prefer to live with men of their own colour and race, and we have, as a result, more or less well-defined Indian areas throughout Natal. This is specially the case in large towns. "These have not developed," to quote the pamphlet on Indian life and Labour in Natal, "as planned islands of segregation, but have grown naturally from the concentration of industrial employment or of agricultural and market gardening possibilities, or because the area was not favoured by Europeans, on account, perhaps, of topography or climate."

This is the natural line of advance for the Indian Community in future, as it has been in the past. It is better, I submit, to arrange this delicate matter in consultation with the Indian Com-

munity by persuasion. If this is done, I have no doubt that the good sense and sound common sense of leaders of both the important elements of the Natal population will result in a compromise that will be satisfactory to both the parties. If, on the other hand, an attempt is made to bring about segregation, it is bound to intensify racial feeling, and create bitterness and misunderstanding. The Indian Community in India and in the Union is, and has been, strongly opposed to segregation and the views of my Government have already been published. The Government of India are, and have been, a party to a series of agreements with the Union Government which are binding upon the Union Government, and the Government of India by virtue of these agreements cannot divest themselves of their obligations to the Indian Community. It is obvious that the Indian Community cannot lower its standard of living, nor can it go back upon the progress it has made in this as well as in other spheres in the last thirty years. It follows that proposals for Indian villages, Indian towns, Indian settlements and Indian town councils with Indian mayors, etc., are inconsistent with the basic laws of progress, with the Cape Town Agreement, and with the policy which both the Union Government and the Government of India have advocated for a number of years.

The only solution of the Indian problem lies in the assimilation of the Indian to western standards of life, and western thought. On the one hand, the Indian demands freedom from segregation and colour bar, so that he may have equal opportunity with the other element of the population, and, on the other hand, he wishes for the restoration of the municipal franchise which was taken away from him in 1924 and the parliamentary franchise of which he was deprived in 1896. The only possible line of advance for him is franchise for the parliament and the municipalities and representation of the Indian Community in the Town Councils of Natal and in the municipalities of the Transvaal, where there is a large Indian population, besides representation in Parliament. The world is changing with extraordinary momentum, and the pattern of the New Order is already taking specific shape. Humanity has risen so far to every clear call of duty, and ancient prejudices, cemented by a thousand subtle ties, have been discarded. Soviet Russia has wholly changed the life

and thought of two hundred millions, in an enormous area of eight and a half million square miles within twenty years. India is once again entering a period of rapid industrial expansion with products which will better the standard of life of her millions, intensify her demand for freedom, and establish a firm economic basis for an India that can stand on her own legs. The Indian Community, too, has not lagged behind in Natal or the Transvaal. It is determined to advance along western lines and to adopt western ways of life and thought. While it has kept up the spiritual traditions of its race, it wishes to live in a European country in the European way. It wishes to march forward, and not to go backward. The policy it has pursued since the Cape Town Agreement, on the advice of the two Governments, has been extraordinarily successful, and it is keen on following it consistently. It has now built up a solid structure of leadership, and efficient organs to express its views and formulate its aspirations. The number of highly educated men and successful captains of industry among Indians is rapidly growing, and South African Indians are sending their boys and girls in ever increasing numbers to England, India, and to Universities in South Africa for advanced study. There will be no dearth of competent leadership in the Indian Community, and its numbers in professions, such as the legal and medical profession, have increased considerably. Yet these men, when they return to their homes, find it difficult to lead a free life, as there are many restrictions which prevent their mental growth and advancement in their professions.

Mr. Chairman, I hope I shall be pardoned if I refer to some of the problems which face the Indian Community. The Indian population in Natal is a youthful population, as, according to the census of 1936, forty-seven per cent. of the Indians in 1936 were under the age of fifteen years and only 13 per cent. were above forty-five years. On the other hand, the European population has only 27 per cent. of its numbers under 15 years of age, and 26 per cent. are over forty-five years. Again, the Indian birth-rate has shewn a consistent increase, and the figures are 37 per 1,000 birth-rate as against 20 per 1,000 of Europeans. In 1936 there were 183,661 Indians in Natal, and in four years, by 1940, the number had increased to 195,000. The Cape Town Agreement

of 1927 had provided for repatriation of South African Indians and about 17,000 Indians went back to their country. By 1932, however, it was clear that the possibilities of repatriation were exhausted, and though the Government of India did its best to implement its undertaking, the reluctance of Indians to return to India made it necessary to give up the scheme altogether. At the present time, more than 90 per cent. of Indians in Natal are born and bred in this country and regard South Africa as their motherland. They have a genuine devotion to this country, and I am convinced that they are as loyal to it as any other element of the South African population.

I have said above that the Indian population in the Union is a youthful population. The South African Indian looks forward and not backward, and is building up his career in this country with infinite patience and industry. Besides the increase in Indian population, there have been some other notable developments in its structure. For a number of years Indians were employed mainly on sugar plantations, market gardening and unskilled work in railway and coal mines. Recently, however, the Indian is leaning more and more towards semi-skilled work, and is flocking to the factories in towns. This is due partly to the fact that semi-skilled work offers him better opportunities for advancement, and he can use his intelligence, dexterity and patience to the fullest advantage. Besides, the Native has a stronger physique and can do unskilled work more successfully than the Indian.

I do not want to encumber this paper with statistics, but I may be pardoned if I illustrate the tendencies referred to above by quoting a few figures from the excellent pamphlet mentioned above. The proportion of Indians since 1909 who are over fifteen years of age and are engaged in agriculture has fallen from nearly 50 per cent. of the population of working age to only 18 per cent. On the sugar estates, there are only 7,500 Indians as against 40,000 Natives. Market gardening, too, is not so popular among Indians, and sons of many market gardeners have found employment in industrial concerns.

Indians played a very important part in the development of

railways in Natal. They also helped in railway development in Uganda and Kenya, and one still finds in Kenya numerous Indian station-masters and other subordinate employees in the railways. As railways developed, Indians found it impossible to compete with the Natives in heavy manual work. In 1910, about 6,000 Indians were employed on railways in Natal. Their number had been reduced in 1937 to 400.

In coal mines, too, the number of Indians has gone down. I found only a small proportion of Indians in the coal mines in Dundee last year, and their place has been taken by the Natives.

The most remarkable change has taken place in the manufacturing industry. The Indian has deserted agriculture, and sugar plantations, and has taken eagerly to industrial establishments. It is calculated that his employment in industrial concerns was doubled between 1915 and 1937. The pamphlet mentioned above declares that "this is a remarkable achievement in view of several obstacles to such progress." There are so many restrictions on his employment in such industries that his progress is surprising. As there is a colour bar in industry, he is excluded from the skilled trades, is prevented from undertaking European labour by fixed wage rates, and he does not possess the minimum educational qualifications which will enable him to become apprenticed to a trade. Indian young men also find serious difficulty in other spheres, and there were only 18 properly qualified indentured Indian workers under the Apprenticeship Act in 1942.

Commerce and Finance.

The rich Muslim and Hindu merchants of Gujrat wield considerable influence in commercial undertakings. There are besides, descendants of Indian indentured labourers who have started many commercial undertakings. Their number is estimated at 2,000. The number of commercial establishments owned and managed by Indians in Natal is about 2,500 and there are almost the same number of Indian employees in these concerns. There are a large number of rural areas and small towns where Indian traders carry on their activities. The Indian has also distinguished himself in personal services. They are to be found as domestic servants in large numbers all over Natal, and there are about

a thousand women domestic servants. They also occupy an important position in the Natal liquor and catering trade. The Indian waiter is now well known all over the Union, and is found in all the important hotels of South Africa. His pay and other earnings are fairly good, and he sometimes earns as much as £12 to £13 a month. The minimum wages for a waiter in most of the hotels seems to vary between £9 10s. to £10 a month, but this is supplemented by tips and gratuities in large hotels. In the Durban season his gratuities are considerable.

One of the most remarkable features of the present-day is the growth of the Trade Union movement among Indian workers. They started with humble beginnings, and have been built up patiently by a group of earnest young men who work in them as organisers and are in constant touch with the rank and file. I have followed the progress of the movement with the keenest interest, and I feel that if this movement is wisely guided and carefully supervised, it will be instrumental in improving the economic level of the Indian workman. The leadership of these bodies is in the hands of young men who are imbued with Communist principles. As the workers have not yet been able to supply a competent leader, the movement is, therefore, led by outsiders. There have, unfortunately, been cases in which strikes were declared precipitately and workers and their families suffered in consequence. The best solution of the racial problems in the Trade Union movement will be mixed unions, which admit Indians and Europeans to membership. Separate Trade Unions are likely to deepen the racial cleavage. Unfortunately, the peculiar conditions of Natal offer little hope for the extension of mixed unions, though some of them have functioned with great success in the past.

Indian Education.

I cannot deal fully with the growth of Indian education at this meeting, as it will take up too much time, and must confine myself to the recital of some facts which may give us an idea of the progress made by the Indian community in different grades of education. It was calculated by Mr. Kichlu, an officer of the Government of India who enquired into Indian education in Natal and the Transvaal in 1928, that the Indian community

had donated substantial amounts for primary education. He put the figure at £50,000. Another estimate places the total amount donated by the Indian Community at £100,000. The latter figure includes donations for secondary schools. Primary education among Indians has expanded considerably. Between 1927 and 1936, there was unprecedented expansion in the primary stage and the number of aided schools increased from 53 to 102, the number of pupils from 9,761 to 22,475, and the annual expenditure on Indian education from £35,982 to £86,962. At the present time only about fifty per cent. of Indians attend primary schools, and the Indian Community has a great leeway to make. The Indian parent is keen on giving his sons and daughters a better start in life than he himself had, and I have no doubt that this keenness among Indians of all classes will bear fruit. Unfortunately, Indian girls have lagged far behind the boys, and only 5,762 girls out of the estimated population of 19,000 girls between the ages of 6 and 14 attended schools. If the recommendations of the Education Commission of 1937, which was presided over by Mr. Justice Broome, are carried out, Indian education will, I feel convinced, expand considerably and the Indian Community will align itself with other elements of the population in a common endeavour to liquidate illiteracy. I should like to express my appreciation of the recent move by the Provincial Administration to accelerate free primary education among Indians by the introduction of eight year programmes. This is a wise move, and it is appreciated by my Government. Another move in the same direction is improvement in the salary scales of primary school teachers. This will stabilise the position of teachers in Indian schools, and they will now throw themselves wholeheartedly into their work. The Indian Community has only one secondary school, the Sastri College. The College has done excellent work for the Community, and it will, I have no doubt, play a big part in the mental growth and intellectual advancement of Indians in Natal. The Indian Community needs, however, a secondary school in northern Natal, and another secondary institution in Durban. I am glad to hear that arrangements are now on foot for the establishment of a residential secondary school in the near future.

The need for a Technical College for Indians has long been

felt, and an Indian gentleman, Mr. Muhammad Sultan, offered £17,000 for the purpose. The Community is grateful to the Hon. Mr. Hofmeyr, Minister of Education, who appointed a Committee last year to enquire into the scheme. The Committee approved of the scheme for a Technical College and it is hoped that, after the settlement of the vexed question of a site for the College, the College will be started without delay. A Technical College is essential for the industrial training of Indian youth, and it will, I am convinced, be a most important element in the economic uplift of the Indian Community. The Community is becoming machine-minded and is leaving the countryside and joining the factories. It has a great reservoir of intelligence, dexterity, patience and industry, and if these qualities are applied to industrial enterprises, the growth of the Community is assured.

I have not dealt so far with University education. Here, too, the Community has made substantial progress. The number of Indian students in the Witwatersrand and Cape Town Universities has increased, and there are about 200 Indians receiving University education in Universities and University Colleges of South Africa. I think there are sixty South African students in Indian Universities. English Universities, too, have several South African Indian students. The Hugo Committee appointed to enquire into facilities for higher education of Indians in Natal considered the question of a University College for Indians in Durban and came to the conclusion that the proposal for a University College for Indians is not feasible for the present. I agree with this recommendation, as I feel that the number of Indian students who will join it will be too small to justify the expenditure incurred on its maintenance. I hope and believe that a University College for Indians will be established in Durban in due course, when the Natal University College is raised to the status of a University of Natal. The University College for Indians will then become a constituent College of the new University, and will play its part in the intellectual life of this province.

This is not the place for an elaborate discussion of the problems of Indian education, but I may be pardoned if I refer to one or two basic issues which face the Indian Community. In the sphere of primary education, it has considerable leeway to

make up. It is my hope and belief that within the next ten years the entire Indian Community will be literate and illiteracy will be liquidated. For this purpose, organised propaganda among members of the Indian Community is essential, and this is not really so difficult, as Indians all over Natal have become conscious of the imperative need for education for their children. The education of Indian girls, too, has to be expanded, and this I confess will be a more difficult task, as Indian parents have a rooted objection to sending girls above ten years of age to mixed schools. The only remedy I can suggest is the establishment of girls' schools, and the training of girl school teachers in large numbers, so that girls' schools may be staffed by competent women teachers. Another problem is that of technical education for Indians to which I have referred.

Unemployment.

Unemployment among Indians is not a serious problem at present, as out of 60,000 Indians who are employed in various trades the average number of days lost equalled 13.3 per worker, during the year ending April 30, 1936, and the unemployment rate was 3.6 per cent. as against the European rate of 3.1 per cent. and the Coloured rate of 3.8 per cent. The number of unemployed Indians in 1936 was 2,456, and this figure compares favourably with the employment figures for other racial groups. The real serious handicap of the Indian is not unemployment, but the existence of the colour bar in industry. Nearly 17,000 Indians are members of recognised trade unions, and young Indians have shown a remarkable capacity for organisation, and have established powerful trade unions, which have already begun to play their part in the national life of the Indian Community. On the other hand, certain trade unions definitely exclude Indians from membership. This is particularly the case with the building industry. The qualifications for membership are fairly high and no Indian has, so far, been able to comply with these stringent conditions. There are no Indian members in the Amalgamated Engineering Union or Commercial Distributive Workers' Union. On the other hand, they have to meet the serious competition of Natives in the grades of unskilled workers and lower grades of labourers, while in semi-skilled occupations their opportunities for reaching higher ranks are limited.

Poor Relief for Indians.

There is no statutory relief for Indians, and it must be admitted that Indians have not yet established charitable and benevolent societies for the relief of indigent Indians in sufficient numbers. The joint family system does provide some sort of insurance scheme, and the serious burden of unemployment in 1932 was borne mainly by the Indian family system. Modern young men are, however, asserting their independence, and the family system is disintegrating, the bonds of family have undoubtedly loosened, and the Indian youth is now anxious to set up his own home after marriage.

Post-War Re-adjustment.

The Indian Community is likely to pass through a delicate period of readjustment, immediately after the war, and the problem of unemployment may become acute, as some Indians who are now employed in semi-skilled and skilled work may be displaced by demobilised soldiers. The transition period should, in my humble opinion, be handled with tact, as displacement of Indian labour in certain industries may create racial friction and misunderstanding. I hope, however, the good sense of all the elements of this province will evolve some happy compromise which will enable both the returned soldier and the Indian employee to have stable employment.

Housing of Indians.

This is a vast subject, and I do not wish to deal with it here. It is, moreover, highly controversial, and I cannot, for obvious reasons, enter into controversy. I will content myself with pointing out certain factors which are entirely ignored in the discussion of this problem. In the first place, the Indian Community is a youthful community, and it will grow in numbers. In the second place, during the fourteen years ending 1940 the number of Indians in municipal areas has increased from 20,000 to 80,000. In the third place, as pointed out above, the joint family system is breaking up, and young people insist on having homes of their own. In 1936, 47 per cent. of Indians were under the age of fifteen. It is calculated that, with the rise in their social standards, infant mortality among Indians will diminish,

and it is estimated that by 1960 there are likely to be 263,000 Indians. In the fourth place, during the last seventeen years from 1921 to 1938, the Indian urban population has nearly trebled, while their population in rural areas has been reduced by half. In the fifth place, the problem of Indian housing in Durban has not yet been systematically studied on a scientific basis, and the question is unfortunately mixed up with the question of segregation and Indian villages, Indian town councils, etc. In the sixth place, everyone knows that Indians naturally prefer to live with their kith and kin, whose standard of life and ways of thought are similar, and all over Natal one finds this feeling expressed in Indian areas where they have formed themselves into groups based on common associations. I believe the same tendency is manifested in New York and other American cities, where the problems of a multi-racial community have been satisfactorily solved. In New York, various groups have occupied different areas, not because of any law passed by the American Congress, but because of the natural tendency of man to gravitate towards persons of the same culture and common associations. Hence, there are in New York a large number of Jews, Italians, Coloureds and others living happily together without compulsion, by deliberate choice. The racial configuration of Natal shows the same tendency. If, on the other hand, segregation is enforced, and separate village settlements or zones are established in or outside Durban, it will be a recurring cause of friction, misunderstanding and ill-feeling between the two races. The only remedy for such a state of affairs is adequate sub-economic and economic housing schemes for the Indian Community in Durban and other places where the problem has become acute. For post-war policy, I feel that an Indian should be co-opted on the Post-War Reconstruction Committee. Had there been some representatives of the Indian Community on the Town Councils of Natal, the housing and other problems which have reached an acute stage in some municipalities would never have reached serious proportions. The housing problem cannot be solved by applying compulsion under the existing law. Nor can it be solved by the establishment of separate Indian villages, separate town councils, etc., as the growth of the Community must be on the same lines as the European Community, and this must be done by mutual consultation, sympathy, justice and reasonableness on both sides. I am glad to find

that the Durban Corporation has decided to start a survey of Durban housing and I have no doubt that under your supervision and guidance, Professor Burrows, the survey of Durban will be conducted on scientific lines. I am inclined to agree with Mr. Mitchell, M.P.C., who declared at a recent Durban Rotary meeting that the question of expropriation of land for the purpose of housing should be entrusted to a separate body, which will deal with these issues in a judicial spirit. Under the existing system there is always the possibility of this question being mixed with purely political issues.

Social Service.

Social welfare work among Indians has been organised by a number of voluntary workers, Indian and European, who have been carrying on this work under great difficulty. The Indian in Natal is not eligible for old-age and invalidity pensions which are available to Europeans and Coloureds. About 4,000 poor, aged or blind Indians are paid grants up to ten shillings a month each by the Department of the Interior at an annual cost of £24,000. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive scheme of unemployment insurance for workers of any colour and no general unemployment relief is available for Indian workmen. The number of voluntary organisations in the Union of South Africa which are doing social welfare work among Indians is limited; in 1938, it was found that 75 per cent. of about 400 voluntary organisations in South Africa were confined to Europeans, and only 8 per cent. looked after the non-Europeans, besides 17 per cent. which did social welfare work for both sections. The Indian Community needs an Indian hospital in Durban and I intend making an appeal for a well-equipped hospital for Indians in the near future. I am confident that the response to it will be satisfactory, as the community has been anxious to have further facilities for hospital treatment.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I apologise for the extended treatment which I have given to some of the problems which face the Indian community. My chief reason for it is this. The Indian problem in Natal is not confined to the question of housing. It is a much more complex problem than that. It is really the problem of a youthful community, which is being

rapidly transformed into an urban community and is leaving the countryside in ever increasing numbers for the factory and the workshop. The result is that within about fourteen years it has quadrupled its numbers in the municipalities of Natal. Its mainstay in the past was agriculture and the sugar plantation, besides heavy manual work in the coal mines and railways. At present it is engaged in semi-skilled work in large numbers and has built up a solid basis of trade union membership. Adjustment in rapidly growing urban areas is always a difficult process, and the difficulty is not lessened by the fact that no serious attempt has been made for the last twenty years to tackle the housing problem of the Community. There is, moreover, the assimilation of the Indian to western standards, and the gradual disintegration of the family system. Indian young men want to live in their own homes and maintain a higher standard than that to which their fathers were accustomed. Moreover, Indians in Durban have a solid base of middle class leadership. In 1936, there were some 850 professional men, of whom about 70 per cent. were teachers, 12 per cent. were in the police, and 12 per cent. priests. This does not include a large number of rich merchants of Durban, who have been generous donors for hospitals, colleges and orphanages, besides a number of doctors, attorneys and others. Since 1936, the number of professional men in the Indian Community has increased considerably. All of them are naturally anxious to improve their standard of living and move into better houses and select localities. The housing problem is the resultant of these factors. It cannot be solved by compulsory segregation, zoning or separate village settlements. It can only be solved by providing the Indian poor and the middle class Indian with suitable localities in Durban and elsewhere. The drift towards the towns cannot be checked, and the only solution for it is a policy that is based on sympathy, trust, justice, and, above all, mutual consultation on each other's needs. The time has come when Indians should be in the Town Councils of Natal, and they should have representatives in committees of enquiry into housing and post-war reconstruction, which deeply affect their life in the province. At the present time, there is no regular channel for the expression of Indian views, and the only method so far selected is that of deputation by Indian organisations before different bodies and authorities in Natal.

This does not give any opportunity for constant and continuous exchange of views, from day to day, on many issues on which the future of the Indian Community depends. I have come to know all the Indian leaders in the Union for nearly two years. I can say that there are some among them who would be an ornament to any institution in the Union, and I am confident that if their advice is sought on many of the problems with which Natal is faced now and will be in future, it will prove most useful to all elements of the population. The tendency of the Indian to join the factories and take up semi-skilled work has increased considerably, of late, and he is naturally anxious that avenues should be provided for him for advancement to the higher rungs of the economic ladder. Relaxation of the colour bar in industry, I am convinced, is inevitable, if the Union is to take her place among industrial countries of the world, and industrialisation of the country is impossible without modification of the colour bar in industry. The Community will, I have no doubt, make rapid progress in skilled trade, if adequate facilities are provided for apprenticeship, and "mixed" trade unions, consisting of Indian and European employees, are formed. This seems to me the only sound line of advance for the future.

The Indian problem in Natal must be studied as a whole, and an attempt should be made to solve it in a Christian spirit. We cannot isolate one factor from numerous other factors which must be taken into account. In fact, the constituent elements of the problem interpenetrate one another, and one cannot solve, for instance, the housing problem without dealing with the question of primary education, hospitalisation, industrial training, and social work among members of the Indian Community. The progress of the Indian Community since the arrival of Indian immigrants in Natal in 1860 has been continuous. It has freed itself from the shackles of prejudice and old customs which it brought here. In education, industry and trade, political work and social welfare it has gone forward. Most of the Indians are still living in abject poverty and need adequate hospital facilities, decent housing and nutritious diet. Indian leaders are doing all they can, and the Government of India have not spared help or advice. The Community has depended so far upon its inherent strength, and is determined to remain an integral part of the civic life of

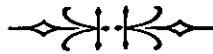
Natal. It wants equal opportunity for its race, and equality with the Europeans. It will not tolerate the status of an inferior community, as this is a stigma upon the Aryan race and culture, to which it belongs. Hence, it will oppose Indian villages, Indian townships, Indian mayors, etc., as this will be relegating a highly gifted race to the ghettos. Such reactionary proposals are not possible in 1943. To put its case, in one sentence, it wants abolition of colour bar in industry, education, public services, residence and trade, restoration of the municipal and parliamentary franchise, of which it was unjustly deprived, and representation by Indians on town councils and parliament. A comprehensive solution of the Indian problem in all its aspects is a vital necessity, and the time has arrived when it should be studied in a dispassionate manner. Segregation is not a remedy, as penetration is only a symptom of the disease. The remedy must be diagnosed by a competent body that will prescribe suitable medicine for a youthful community which is leaving the countryside for the factory, and is equipping itself for skilled and semi-skilled work. It is rapidly assimilating western standards of life, and is determined to maintain them so that the next generation may have a higher standard than the present. It has a basis of leadership among organisers of trade unions, rich merchants, professional men and social and political workers. It is keen on all grades of education—primary, secondary, technical and university education—and is prepared to sacrifice its comfort so that its children may have a better chance in the struggle for existence. It is kept in touch with the current of European thought, and cordially supports the sentiments to which Mr. Wendell Wilkie has given expression in his work, "One World." "Men and women all over the world are on the march, physically, intellectually and spiritually. After centuries of ignorance and dull compliance, hundreds of millions of people in Eastern Europe and Asia have opened the books. Old fears no longer frighten them. They are beginning to know that man's welfare throughout the world is interdependent. The big house on the hills surrounded by mud huts has lost its charm. Men and women in Russia and China and in the Middle East are conscious of their potential strength. They are coming to know that many of the decisions about the future of the world lie in their hands." Such changes are inevitable. In the words of Vice-President Wallace, of the United States of America, "this

war is a fight between a slave world and a free world, an epic milestone in the march towards an even fuller freedom than the most fortunate peoples of the earth have hitherto known. The peace must mean a better standard of living for the common man, not merely in the United States and England, but also in India, Russia, China, and Latin America—not merely in the United Nations, but also in Germany and Italy and Japan.”

Everything must depend upon the manner in which these changes are introduced. I contend that in the solution of this problem South Africa should apply the two basic principles which have been the sustaining pillars of her polity since its establishment in South Africa. In the first place, the basic Christian virtues which have inspired some of the noblest leaders of South Africa may be likened to the seed cast into the fertile soil of South Africa, which bore fruit a thousand-fold in its own kind of spiritual poetry. It supplied the spiritual oxygen to an organism which would otherwise have remained a wilderness. It is these virtues which made man the master of nature, and delivered him from the bondage of fear. The struggle of the Englishmen in Natal, as well as of the original Indian settlers in this land, was a campaign from which there was no release, a perpetual war of the soul against the flesh. It was a pilgrim's progress like Bunyan's, from the City of Destruction to the City of God. The only test of survival and success in this and for the two races is the application of the basic Christian virtues to the solution of the Indian problem. The spirit of Christianity should be transferred from the sphere of spiritual energy to the sphere of intellectual warfare against all rules which militate against the freedom of man. The other basic principle, which is simply an application of Christian virtues, is the maintenance of European standard of life and thought. This is not inconsistent with the maintenance of the spiritual foundations of Hinduism and Islam, and the followers of the two religions in Natal may combine, and have successfully combined, the European way of life and thought. These have produced a revolution in the economic structure of Europe and the United States of America; and the extension of European standards by the Soviet to her two hundred millions with an area of eight and a half million square miles, has wholly

changed the pattern of economic life in that enormous area. The Indian Community has deliberately adopted western standards of living, and is making a determined attempt to reach that standard. It should, in my opinion, be helped in every way to attain this goal. The Indian can only go forward, and will never go backward. I am confident that far sighted men in the Union have realised this truth, and are prepared to help the Community in this drive. They know that the present war has annihilated material distance, and has forged indissoluble links between South Africa and the rest of the world. This country can never lead its life in isolation, and has become an integral part of the new world order which is rising upon the ruins of the old. Mr. Wendell Wilkie has described how standards of living and modes of thought have undergone a profound change in China, Soviet Russia and the Middle East. The same process is in operation in India. It is a world phenomenon, and every country is going through a mental revolution at this juncture. Those who have a clear idea of South Africa's future, and its organic relation with India, have realised this, and have expressed with great clarity and lucidity the future relationship of India with Africa. The result is a new and radiant conception of humanity, and it is expressed in the creation of a common mental atmosphere, and the desire for a higher standard of living, in the diffusion of all that is contained for us in the basic Christian virtues and European culture. The new movement for higher standards of life has enabled its votaries—and they are to be found all over the world—to insist on a radical change in the structure of society, and the participation of the common man in the happiness and enjoyment of a comfortable life. The Indian people in the Union, conscious of an immense past and a persistent vitality, obliged to temporise and acquiesce in the existing rules and regulations, are taught to feel the existence of many distracting discords in what is still an incomplete phase of national existence. This is, however, a superficial view, as the two races in Natal are convinced of the absolute need for racial harmony and good relationship between the two elements of the population. I am a firm believer in this doctrine, as I am convinced that the future of this province depends mainly upon the feeling of trust, confidence and goodwill between the two races. It is my earnest hope that this ideal, which is an application of the Christian ideal, may soon be realised, and

and the two races may continue to work in harmony and peace for the good of this beautiful province. I am convinced that the richer veins of European culture and Christian virtues have not been worked out in the Union, and the tree of genius is ever green and vital in this land of promise. The early pioneers of this colony, having borne their flowers and fruits, have retired to rest. But the present generation and, I hope and believe, the next generation of Natal statesmen, will put forth lusty shoots and flourish, and will not allow the Indian Community in its midst to become backwaters, left behind by the subsidence of rivers in flood, and separated from the tidal stress of cosmic forces. I believe that it will extend the hand of friendship to a community which has been building up laboriously, cell by cell, its economic and social position. Being a firm believer in racial harmony and concord, I am convinced that the future of Natal depends on the co-operation of the two races in a Christian spirit for a noble purpose. If this is achieved—and I have no doubt of it—her future will be as brilliant as her past.



Printed by
PIONEER PRINTING WORKS,
180a, Grey Street,
Durban.

28/12-8/43