

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIAN DIASPORA TO SOUTH AFRICA

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Key Concepts: African National Council, Afrikaners, Labourers,
South African Hindu Mahasabha, Whites

South Africa, officially the Republic of South Africa, is a country located at the southern tip of Africa. It is divided into nine provinces and has 2,798 kms. of coastline to the north side the neighbouring countries of Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe to the east are Mozambique and Swaziland while Lesotho is an enclave surrounded by South African territory. South Africa is the 25th largest country in the world by area and the 24th most populous country with over 51 million people (Waldmeir 1997).

South Africa is a multi-ethnic nation and has diverse cultures and languages. Eleven official languages are recognized in the constitution. Two of these languages are of European origin English and Afrikaans, a language which originated mainly from Dutch that is spoken by the majority of white and Coloured South Africans. Though English is commonly used in public and commercial life, it is only the fifth most-spoken home language. All ethnic and language groups have political representation in the country's constitutional democracy comprising a parliamentary republic unlike most parliamentary republics, the positions of head of state and head of government are merged in a parliament-dependent President. About 80% of the South African population is of black African ancestry, divided among a variety of ethnic groups speaking different Bantu languages, nine of which have official status. South Africa also contains the largest communities of European, Asian, and racially mixed ancestry in Africa. South Africa is ranked as an upper-middle income economy by the World Bank. It has the largest economy in Africa, and the 28th-largest in the world. By purchasing power parity, South Africa has the 5th highest per capita income in Africa. It is considered a newly industrialised country. However, about a quarter of the population is unemployed and lives on less than US \$1.25 a day.

South Africa contains some of the oldest archaeological and human fossil sites in the world. Extensive fossil remains have been recovered from a series of caves in Gauteng Province. The area is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been termed the Cradle of Humankind. The sites include Sterkfontein, which is one of the richest hominine fossil sites in the world. Other sites include *Swartkrans*, *Gondolin Cave* *Kromdraai*, *Coopers Cave* and Malapa. These sites suggest that various hominid species existed in South Africa from about three million years ago.

Colonization:

In 1652 A.D, a century and a half after the discovery of the Cape Sea Route, Jan van Riebeeck established a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope, at what would become Cape Town, on behalf of the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch transported slaves from

Indonesia, Madagascar, and India as labour for the colonists in Cape Town (Sawant 1994). As they expanded east, the Dutch settlers met the southwesterly migrating Xhosa people in the region of the Fish River. A series of wars, called the Cape Frontier Wars, were fought over conflicting land and livestock interests.

Great Britain took over the Cape of Good Hope area in 1795 A.D, to prevent it from falling under control of the French First Republic, which had invaded the Dutch Republic. Given its standing interests in Australia and India, Great Britain wanted to use Cape Town as an interim port for its merchants' long voyages. The British returned Cape Town to the Dutch Batavian Republic in 1803 A.D, the Dutch East India Company having effectively gone bankrupt by 1795 A.D.

The British finally annexed the Cape Colony in 1806 A.D and continued the frontier wars against the Xhosa; the British pushed the eastern frontier through a line of forts established along the Fish River. They consolidated the territory by encouraging British settlement. Due to pressure of abolitionist societies in Britain, the British parliament stopped its global slave trade with the passage of the Slave Trade Act 1807 A.D and then abolished slavery in all its colonies with the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 A.D.

In the first two decades of the 19th century, the Zulu people grew in power and expanded their territory under their leader, Shaka. Shaka's warfare led indirectly to the Mfecane (*crushing*) that devastated and depopulated the inland plateau in the early 1820s. An offshoot of the Zulu, the Matabele people created a larger empire that included large parts of the highveld under their king Mzilikazi.

During the 1830s, approximately 12,000 Boers (later known as Voortrekkers), departed from the Cape Colony, where they had been subjected to British control. They migrated to the future Natal, Orange Free State, and Transvaal regions. The Boers founded the Boer Republics: the South African Republic (now Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West provinces) and the Orange Free State (Free State).

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 A.D and gold in 1884 A.D in the interior started the Mineral Revolution and increased economic growth and immigration. This intensified the European-South African subjugation of the indigenous people. The struggle to control these important economic resources was a factor in relations between Europeans and the indigenous population and also between the Boers and the British.

In 1931 the union was effectively granted independence from the United Kingdom with the passage of the Statute of Westminster. In 1934, the South African Party and National Party merged to form the United Party, seeking reconciliation between Afrikaners and English-speaking "Whites". In 1939 the party split over the entry of the Union into World War II as an ally of the United Kingdom, a move which the National Party followers strongly opposed.

In 1948, the National Party was elected to power. It strengthened the racial segregation begun under Dutch and British colonial rule. The Nationalist Government classified all peoples into three races and developed rights and limitations for each. The white minority controlled the vastly larger black majority. The legally institutionalized segregation became known as *apartheid*.

While the White minority enjoyed the highest standard of living in all of Africa, comparable to First World Western nations, the Black majority remained disadvantaged by almost every standard, including income, education, housing, and life expectancy.

India worked consistently to put the issue of apartheid on the agenda of the UN, NAM and other multilateral organizations and for the imposition of comprehensive international sanctions against South Africa. The ANC maintained a representative office in New Delhi from the 1960s onwards. Following talks between the then South African Government and the ANC, India's relations with South Africa were restored after a gap of over four decades with the opening of a Cultural Centre in Johannesburg in May 1993. Formal diplomatic and consular relations with South Africa were restored in November 1993 during the visit to India of the then South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha. A Consulate General was thereafter established in Johannesburg. The Indian High Commission in Pretoria was opened in May 1994, followed by the opening of the Consulate General in Durban the same month. Since Parliament in South Africa meets in Cape Town, a permanent office of the High Commission was opened there in 1996, which has been re-designated as Consulate General of India with effect from January 2011. In addition to its High Commission in Delhi, South Africa has a Consulate General in Mumbai.

Indian South Africans

An early Indian to settle in South Africa was Kalaga Prabhu, a Goud Saraswat Brahmin merchant from Cochin. He was the foremost among the Konkani merchants in Cochin. As punishment for conspiring with the Mysorean king Hyder Ali to overthrow the king of Cochin, Kalaga Prabhu and his son Choda Prabhu were arrested by the Dutch and exiled with their families for life to the *Cape of Good Hope* in 1771 A.D.

The modern South African Indian community is largely descended from Indians who arrived in South Africa from 1860 A.D onwards. The first 342 of these came on board the *Truro* from Madras, followed by the *Belvedere* from Calcutta. They were transported as indentured labourers to work on the sugarcane plantations of Natal Colony, and, in total, approximately 150 000 Indians arrived as indentured labourers over a period of 5 decades, later also as indentured coal miners and railway construction workers. The indentured labourers tended to speak Tamil, Telugu and Hindi, and the majority were Hindu with Christians and Muslims among them. Indians were imported as it was found by colonial authorities that local black Africans were economically self-sufficient, and thus unwilling to subject themselves to employment by colonial farmers, while other colonial authorities believed that the hunting and warrior African culture of the time was incompatible with a sudden shift to employed labour. The Mercury newspaper favoured the importation of labour, although other Natal newspapers were against the idea (Dick 2013). In general, the importation of labour was not viewed as politically important by colonists when it was proposed, and the importation of Indian labour was driven by lobbying by a relatively small group of sugar planters, and the long-term consequences of Indian immigration were not taken into account. By 1904, Indians outnumbered whites in Natal. It should be noted that although 1860 A.D is dated as the beginning of Indian settlement in Natal, a farmer called ER Rathbone was the first to introduce Indian labour to the colony in 1849 A.D. The remaining Indian immigration was from *passenger Indians*, comprising traders, and others who migrated to South Africa shortly after the indentured labourers, paid for their own fares and travelled as British Subjects. These immigrant Indians who became traders were from varying religious backgrounds, some being Hindu and some being Muslims from Gujarat (including Memons and Surtis), later joined by

Kokanis, and Urdu speakers from Uttar Pradesh. These Muslims played an important part in the establishment of Islam in the areas where they settled. There was also a significant number of Gujarati Hindus in this group. Indian traders were sometimes referred to as "Arab traders" because of their dress, as large numbers of them were Muslim.

Indentured labourers on sugar plantations were frequently mistreated, and lived in unsanitary conditions. However, formerly indentured labourers quickly established themselves as an important general labour force in Natal particularly as industrial and railway workers, with others engaging in market gardening, growing most of the vegetables consumed by the white population. A large percentage of indentured labourers returned to India following the expiry of their terms, and some of those who returned alerted authorities in India to abuses taking place in Natal, which led to new safeguards being put in place before further recruiting of indentured labourers was allowed to take place.

Passenger Indians, who initially operated in Durban, expanded inland, to the South African Republic (Transvaal), establishing communities in settlements on the main road between Johannesburg and Durban. Natal's Indian traders rapidly displaced small white shop owners in trade with other Indians, and with black Africans, causing resentment among white businesses.

The South African Republic government first instituted discriminatory legislation against Indians in 1885 A.D, which led to protests from the British authorities, as the Indians were British subjects, and was used as one of the justifications for the Anglo-Boer War. Indians were prohibited by an 1891 A.D statute from living in the Orange Free State, then an independent Boer Republic, and this led to the almost total absence of Indians from the area, a situation that persisted into the apartheid era. Indians were banned from working in the mining industry, and areas were set aside for *coolie locations* in various towns in the Transvaal. Persons of colour could also not walk on sidewalks in the Transvaal.

Following the end of the second Anglo-Boer War, the new British government of the Transvaal Colony continued discriminatory practices against Indians. Passenger Indians who moved to the Cape Colony, although facing petty discrimination, were generally well treated, could own property, could vote, and could trade freely. The Muslim men in this group married Cape Malay women, and thus integrated into the existing community. Indians began facing repressive legislation in Natal as well. They were forced to carry passes in 1888 A.D.

In 1893A.D, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, arrived in South Africa to represent an Indian businessman in a legal dispute. Following his arrival in South Africa, Gandhi experienced racial discrimination, and, following the proposal of legislation to restrict Indian voting rights in Natal, he helped organise resistance, leading to the formation of the Natal Indian Congress. This organised resistance led to the unification of disparate groups of South African Indians for the first time. Although the bill was defeated, it was successfully reintroduced in 1896 A.D. Discriminated against by apartheid legislation, such as the Group Areas Act, applied in 1950, Indians were forcibly moved into Indian townships, and had their movements restricted. They were not allowed to reside in the Orange Free State Province, and needed special permission to enter that province. They were also, as a matter of state policy, given an inferior education compared to white South Africans. The Asiatic Land Tenure and the Indian Representative Act of 1946 were repealed.

In 1961, Indians were officially recognised as permanent part of the South African population, the Department of Indian Affairs was established, with a white minister in charge. In 1968, the South African Indian Council came into being, serving as a link between the government and the Indian people.

In 1968, the South African Indian Council (not to be confused with the anti-apartheid South African Indian Congress which had the same initials) was created by the government, and in 1974, the council was reconstituted to allow for 50% of its members to be elected by Indians. The Council did not enjoy much support, for example, in 1981, only 6% of eligible voters participated in elections for the council.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela joined the African National Congress in 1944 and was engaged in resistance against the ruling National Party's apartheid policies after 1948. He went on trial for treason in 1956-1961 and was acquitted in 1961 (Sparks 1995).

After the banning of the ANC in 1960, Nelson Mandela argued for the setting up of a military wing within the ANC. In June 1961, the ANC executive considered his proposal on the use of violent tactics and agreed that those members who wished to involve themselves in Mandela's campaign would not be stopped from doing so by the ANC. This led to the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Mandela was arrested in 1962 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment with hard labour. In 1963, when many fellow leaders of the ANC and the Umkhonto we Sizwe were arrested, Mandela was brought to stand trial with them for plotting to overthrow the government by violence. His statement from the dock received considerable international publicity. On June 12, 1964, eight of the accused, including Mandela, were sentenced to life imprisonment. From 1964 to 1982, he was incarcerated at Robben Island Prison, off Cape Town; thereafter, he was at Pollsmoor Prison, nearby on the mainland.

During his years in prison, Nelson Mandela's reputation grew steadily. He was widely accepted as the most significant black leader in South Africa and became a potent symbol of resistance as the anti-apartheid movement gathered strength. He consistently refused to compromise his political position to obtain his freedom.

Nelson Mandela was released on 11th February, 1990. After his release, he plunged himself wholeheartedly into his life's work, striving to attain the goals he and others had set out almost four decades earlier. In 1991 (Davenport 1998), at the first national conference of the ANC held inside South Africa after the organization had been banned in 1960, Mandela was elected President of the ANC while his lifelong friend and colleague, Oliver Tambo, became the organisation's National Chairperson. He was awarded the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize by the Indian government. Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding, by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations New Delhi.

India's links with the struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa date back to the period during which Mahatma Gandhi started his Satyagraha movement in South Africa over a

century ago. India was at the forefront of the international community in its support to the anti-apartheid movement; it was the first country to sever trade relations with the apartheid Government (in 1946) and subsequently imposed a complete diplomatic, commercial, cultural and sports — embargo on South Africa. India worked consistently to put the issue of apartheid on the agenda of the UN, NAM and other multilateral organizations and for the imposition of comprehensive international sanctions against South Africa.

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Against the background of India's consistent support to the anti-apartheid struggle, there has been a steady consolidation of our close and friendly ties with South Africa, both bilaterally and through the trilateral IBSA Dialogue Forum. A number of bilateral agreements have been concluded between the two countries since the assumption of diplomatic relations in 1993 in diverse areas ranging from economic and commercial cooperation, defence, culture, health, human settlements, public administration, science and technology and education.

Through the years, the Indian community has made significant contributions to the cultural, social and political life of South Africa, adding a vibrant colour to the magnificent tapestry of people that populate the country. There are Indian South Africans in the country, notably the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Pravin Gordhan, the top One Day International (ODI) cricket batsman, Mr. Hashim Amla, who plays for the Proteas (South Africa's national cricket team).

The first Speaker of the first democratic House of Assembly (the lower House of Parliament) after the 1994 elections was an Indian South African, Dr Frene Ginwala. The first President of the Democratic South Africa, Nelson Mandela, appointed six Indian South Africans to his Cabinet, while many Indian South Africans were in the highest posts of the ANC (Ottaway 1993). Ms. Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of the Mahatma Gandhi and a Member of Parliament for the ruling African National Congress (ANC) summed up the cultural issue. Haroon Lorgat - Chief Executive of the International Cricket Council, Ebrahim Patel - South African former Minister of Economic Development, Fatima Meer - a South African writer, academic and screenwriter, known for her anti-apartheid activism, Ahmed Kathrada - Nelson Mandela's fellow inmate at Robben Island and close confidante. Kathrada was one of the Rivonia Trial defendants,

Navanethem Pillay – United Nation's former Human rights commissioner and Devaraj Ratan, a removed social worker and spiritual leader etc (Mandela 2000).

The 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indians in South Africa as permanent residences and, at last, citizens, has been celebrated both in India and in South Africa in 2010. Celebrations have been both at national and individual levels. In India the city of Chennai and the State of Tamil Nadu have held various official functions to mark the anniversary.

In South Africa one local family member organised a huge family reunion to celebrate the anniversary. Ms Mandy Moodley, managed to get 189 family members together for the reunion on 17th April, 2010 to celebrate function at the community centre in Chatsworth, Durban. She said on that occasion “We are proud Indians who were born and brought up in South Africa. We fly both the South African and Indian flags at our homes and we're proud to belong to two such wonderful countries.”

Cultural Contacts

Buddhism in South Africa: Buddhist traditions are represented in South Africa in many forms. Although the inherently introspective nature of Buddhism does not encourage census, adherents to these traditions are usually outspoken and supported by perhaps an even greater, though hidden number of sympathisers. Temples, centres and groups are common in the metropolitan areas and the country is thought to comprise the largest Buddhist community in Africa.

Apart from various Buddhist groups brought to the Cape Colony from Southeast Asia during the 1680s, and the many indentured labourers brought to Natal from India during the latter part of the 19th century (some of whom were Buddhist, and some of whom were Hindu who later converted to Buddhism once in South Africa), most Buddhists in South Africa are converts, and not Asian. Various Buddhist groups grew up in the major cities from the 1970s, and there has been a proliferation of distinct Buddhist traditions since the mid-1980s. These include Theravada, Zen, Nichiren and Tibetan schools. The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order has erected Nan Hua Temple, the largest Buddhist temple and monastery in Africa, in the town of Bronkhorstspuit near Pretoria.

Another notable Buddhist centre in the country is the Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal. The Nichiren Buddhist lay group Soka Gakkai International has a community centre in Parkwood, Johannesburg. Derivatives of Korean Zen have been established in the Western Cape. The Vipassana Association of South Africa founded by S.N. Goenka has been holding meditation retreats in the Western Cape. More recent additions to the collection of schools include Shambala originally conceived by Chögyam Trungpa, Diamond Way Buddhism, a multicultural Lay Buddhist tradition under the guidance of H.H. 17th Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje and the New Kadampa tradition founded by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso.

A 2003 study estimated that in the late 1990s there were a total of 6,000 Buddhists in South Africa (3,000 of whom had Asian ancestry) out of a total population of 42 million (or 0.01% of the total population). Buddhist leaders often visit the country in order to bestow

teachings and blessings. His Holiness the Dalai Lama attended the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1999, but was denied a visa when he was asked to attend an international peace conference in March 2009.

South Africa Hindu Maha Sabha

The origin of Hinduism in South Africa can be traced back to the agricultural labour requirements of colonial Natal in the mid-nineteenth century. The Indians came as isolated individuals not in family units, and the ratio between men and women was three to one. The labourers were housed in shacks and huts, with no privacy. There was no documentary proof of 'legal' marriages. The extraordinary accomplishment of the indentured Indian was that under such circumstances they were able to develop united families and impose deep moral values on coming generations. Individuals managed to survive the economic and political onslaught primarily because of their rich cultural and religious heritage, and community survival strategies. They maintained and adhered to their simple religious and traditional practices, customs, beliefs and ceremonies. "Their religious activities mainly centred around the household."

Many of the pioneers were illiterate and did not have a clear understanding of their own culture and faith. Missionaries of other faiths found in them fertile soil for evangelistic work. Indians born here became imitators of the culture and civilisation of the west. A few Hindu leaders were perturbed at this state of affairs. Mr. M.C.Varman, a Punjabi, and a man of great religious zeal, prevailed upon Professor Bhai Paramanand to visit in 1905 South Africa to preach the lofty teachings of Hindu religion and culture, inspiring lectures on Hinduism, something new in the lives of Hindus in this country, fired the imagination and aroused the enthusiasm of Hindus everywhere. It brought not only fresh hope to the existing Sabhas plodding to uphold the torch of Hinduism but moved dormant groups to establish new Sabhas, some of which have become leading institutions of our day.

The South African Hindu Maha Sabha was founded in 1912 to create unity among all Hindus in South Africa and promote *Hindu Dharma* through observing the best principles of the Hindu religion, philosophy, ethics, values and culture according to the highest tenets of Hindu teachings. It is the mission of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha to work towards the advancement of all members of the Hindu faith among all Hindu linguistic groups in a spirit of respect, unity and brotherhood.

The South African Hindu Maha Sabha will promote Hindu Dharma through observing the best principles of Hindu religion, philosophy, ethics, values & culture according to the highest tenets of Hindu teachings. It is the mission of the SA Hindu Maha Sabha to work towards the advancement of all members of the Hindu faith among all Hindu linguistic groups in a spirit of respect, unity and brotherhood. The Maha Sabha will, in all its undertakings, consistently safeguard the image and dignity of the Organization and that of all its Constituents through the development of knowledge of the Dharma, and through effective policies, procedures and roles. An underlying mission of the Maha Sabha is to contribute to good relations between Hindus and all other communities or sectors on local, national and international levels towards sound nation building, based on the fundamental principle of *Vasudhaika Kutumbakam*.

The values on which the Maha Sabha bases its activities are selfless service, accountability, respect, fairness, continuous improvement and unity. To encourage the study of vernacular languages; to promote and encourage efforts made by Hindu bodies to establish facilities of an educational nature for the advancement of the Hindu Dharma in South Africa; to organize conventions, lectures, workshops, seminars, symposia and conferences to further the objects of the Maha Sabha; to attend to all such matters as may be necessary or expedient to further the interests of the Maha Sabha.

Haven ceremony held on the 31st May 2011 at the premises of the Maha Sabha to commemorate 99 years of existence of the Maha Sabha. Fund raising drive. SEVA Service to man is Service to God and refusal to receive remuneration for ones sacred service is called SEVA. In this time of global warming and natural disasters, unemployment and poverty, one must also remember that we are social beings and some thought and deed must benefit our fellow humans in need .10 wheelchairs donated to 5 needy organisations.

Shuddha Certification and The Shuddha Logo

The one you can trust, Promoting a pure and peaceful lifestyle, free from animal products or by-products for the benefit of the Earth and all that inhabit it. Over the years the SA Hindu Maha Sabha has received complaints about supposed vegetarian products containing animal ingredients or contaminants. Hindus make up the majority of vegetarians in South Africa and every Hindu is required to abstain from all animal products during fasting. Further, with the considerable growth in vegetarianism in recent years among Hindus and Others, the need for a trusted independent certification Authority was growing.

The South African Hindu Maha Sabha, as the Parent Body representing all Hindus in South Africa has taken on this responsibility. The Shuddha Logo is the official registered trademark of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha (SAHMS). Food manufacturing companies are also beginning to realise the potential of using the logo on their range of products. Many manufacturers market their products as vegetarian. Closer investigation often reveals that such products contain animal fats or additives of animal origin.

Hindvani

Hindvani means “Voice of Hindi” and the first broadcast in October 1998 coincided with the Sangh’s 50th Anniversary, currently broadcasting on 91.5FM in Durban and surrounding areas and on 102.3FM in Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas. Hindvani is run by a band of loyal volunteers who are dedicated to promoting the Hindi language and serving the community.

Hindi Shiksha Sangh

An NGO is both relevant and significant with regard to Community Engagement – with no remuneration. The HSS is a community organization that promotes the Hindi Language and culture in South Africa through its affiliates and Hindvani, its radio station. which include teaching the Hindi Language and Literature from the basic level to a Metric equivalent, followed by a 2 year teacher training certificate course. The first World Hindi Conference Jointly organised by the Indian Government, the Hindi Shiksha Sangh of South Africa (HSS) and the Indian Cultural Centre Johannesburg was held 22- 24th September,2012.

Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa

The Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa is a Religio-humanitarian institution established to promote Vedanta as exemplified by the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna's message of practical spirituality and Swami Vivekananda's humanistic ideas provide the impetus for the Centre's work in South Africa. The spiritual progress of the individual and thereby the community at large forms the central thrust of the activities of the Centre. The Centre is also involved in numerous humanitarian and social upliftment programmes amongst the disadvantaged people in South Africa. The centre was founded in 1942 and was made a branch of Ramakrishna Mission in March 2007.

Activities of the Mission centre : Providing specialist medical and surgical services to poor patients by giving consultancy services in 3 state hospitals, 2 private hospitals and 40 medical clinics / camps, conducting general surgery, hip-replacement surgery, cataract operation camps, counselling, health awareness programmes, care-giver training, etc. in 2012, 7210 patients were treated, including 255 who underwent surgeries. The centre has a 35-bed home at KwaMashu (Ramakrishna Ethembeni Home) and another 45-bed home at Inanda (Ramakrishna Abalindi Home), both for terminally ill patients. It also runs quarterly veterinary clinics in informal settlements. Publication of an English quarterly *Jyoti* and some booklets in local languages like, Zulu and Afrikaans. Three one-year certificate courses on *Hindu Studies*, *Bhagavad Gita Studies* and *Religious Educare*, 140 students appeared for the examination. Maintaining a research library and a bookshop.

Divine Life Society

The Headquarters of Divine Life Society of South Africa is located on a 2.5 hectare site at Reservoir Hills, Durban. Ashrams have also been established at Chatsworth (Durban), Northdale (Pietermaritzburg), Stanger, Richards Bay and Zakariyya Park in Gauteng. The Society has no other registered branches but there are several prayer groups all over the country.

Divine Life Society of South Africa has been dedicated to the moral, educational and spiritual upliftment of communities in South Africa throughout its history of six decades in this country. The Society began its African Education Projects in 1974. Thirty five years later, after ensuring community participation in each one of the projects, it has completed the building of over 350 education, health and other projects. Their education projects include the establishment of 374 classrooms, libraries, offices and staffrooms in various parts of KwaZulu-Natal. community originated and developed all these years.

Besides the building of schools, Divine Life Society has also been involved in numerous other social service activities over the years. Pujya Swami Shivanandha ji engaged in any type of project that would help alleviate the plight of the poor. Many of these projects are undertaken in partnership with Municipalities or Government Departments. The concept of the *Peace & Skills Training Centres* began as a poverty alleviation project in 2006. Basic skills like sewing, computing and bead-making are being taught at these centres. The first Peace & Skills Training Centre was built at Gamalakhe, near Port Shepstone early in 2006. To date, 35 Peace & Skills Training Centres in various parts of KwaZulu-Natal have been completed.

The Centers are playing a vital role in serving the needs of the communities in which they are built. Each centre comprises a large hall designed to accommodate 40 sewing machines, a

computer room and a peace centre. The Society's policy is to install sewing machines and computers at all the centers.

The Society offers to provide free accommodation and training to two prospective trainers from each centre in sewing skills. The computer centre will provide the youth and others with training in operating computers. Thirdly, the Peace Centre with its most beautiful colourful pictures of exotic birds, flowers, animals, scenic wonders, etc., with inspiring sayings in Zulu and English from the writings of Master Shivanandhaji, will educate and uplift the people

In 2006, Pujya Swami Sahajananda initiated the *Sivananda Sunlit Path* Programme to assist youth to cope with social evils such as drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, etc. and those suffering with depression and contemplating suicide. Numerous programmes have been conducted throughout the province, and over 1700 children have signed a pledge to stay away from the above-mentioned social evils. They have now become members of the prestigious Sunlit Club, and receive a free supply of a quarterly magazine, *Sunlit Path*, which contains helpful articles written by Sri Swami Sivananda to help them in their daily lives. Daily prayer and turning to God for help are the main themes of the programme.

Housing projects, the Society undertook two large housing projects. In the late 1990's, 181 low cost homes were built for displaced Indians and Africans at Waterloo near Verulam.

In 2006, the Society embarked on a major housing project at Parkgate, also near Verulam. Phase 1 & 2 of this project saw 346 homes built and allocated to displaced Indians and Africans for occupation. Phase 3 of the Project, consisting of an additional 39 houses, has now begun. In total, 385 low cost houses will be built at Parkgate. In keeping with the teachings of the Master, the Society interacts with and assists all religious groups. When an appeal was made for providing accommodation for the aged at the Christian Care Centre in KwaMashu, the Society erected a large complex consisting of 36 rooms.

The Abalindi Welfare Society takes care of the aged in the rural area of Inanda. It is led by Rev. Arthur Sibisi. Divine Life Society adopted Abalindi Welfare Society for about 10 years from 1979, building a spacious dining hall, kitchen, pantry and two dormitories. The blocks for these new buildings were made by the members of the Abalindi Welfare Society in their yard. A feeding programme was also commenced to cater for the needs of nearly 500 people. The Indian stall-holders of the Durban Municipal Market generously provided the vegetables free of charge for nearly three years. Surplus cement blocks were sold to Divine Life Society for its school building projects. In 1986 another four dormitories were constructed, and the kitchen was equipped with modern cooking facilities, providing succour for the disabled and aged people of Inanda. The Abalindi Welfare Society is now on its own feet, a well-organized relief unit, self-sufficient in operation, in the midst of a poor rural African community. The Centre has trained devotees to counsel children on how to keep away from drugs, alcohol, gambling, sex, etc. Instructors will also help youth and Spiritual Darlings deal with depression and suicidal tendencies which are very serious problems in areas such as Chatsworth. They will receive extremely valuable literature written by Sri Swami Sivananda and Sri Swami Sahajananda that will guide them and teach them coping skills. The literature has universal appeal, and the teachings can be followed by adults and Spiritual Darlings of other faiths also, like Islam and Christianity.

ISKCON South Africa

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada sent two young devotees to South Africa to set up the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). It was decided that Rasi Kumar Swami and Ksudhi Das Brahmachari would be the first ISKCON devotees to travel to South Africa and establish Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's movement. He was invited by the ISKCON Vaishnava Research Forum to address an audience on the early history and development of ISKCON in South Africa at the Forum Lecture programme on Wednesday 11th January, 2012. Shyamlal Das as well as Bob Narandas and Champak Lal Soni, all pioneers of the movement during its fledgling years in South Africa were also invited. The Hare Krishna temple, known as the Sri Sri Radhanath Temple of understanding, is found in the largely Indian area of Chatsworth roughly 20 kilometres south of the city of Durban. It is one of the major tourist attractions when in Durban and for a couple of very obvious reasons. One is the incredible architecture of the temple. It is also part of the non-profit Hare Krishna organisation, so the meals are inexpensive but sumptuous.

ISKCON Pretoria has developed innovative programs which are proving to be very successful. The program started in Hammanskraal and has been extended to Tembisa projects. Hammanskraal is having Sunday namahatta programs – the program starts with kirtans, followed by a class on the Bhagavad-Gita, as it is, followed by ecstatic Kirtan and then Prasadam. Tembisa is a new project and is still in its infancy. Kirtan is held in the park and is then followed by a discourse from Bhagavad-Gita. Many people not only Indians other South Africans also come to participate in these programs.

ISKCON Madrand, organizing Food For Life Our vision is “*DECLARING MIDRAND A HUNGER FREE ZONE*”. Our mission to feed pure vegetarian meals is to show “That someone out there cares”. There is so much animosity, hatred, racialism and conflict amongst human beings. By distributing food we are sending a strong message to those who receive it that we care and love them. Our understand is that we are all children of the one Supreme Lord and we should live in harmony with each other. The founder of the Hare Krishna movement, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada said, “Imagine how hungry they are.... God is the Father wherever there is the Father, the children should not be hungry! No one within a ten mile radius of our centre should go hungry”

The Benoni Tamil School

Benoni Tamil School Board in the hope of spreading its primary objectives: creating a healthy living environment for all communities and families utilising our culture and heritage as the median advocating good principles, morals and ethics to foster love, tolerance, understanding and compassion and to teach the age old tamil language, music and culture to our children in the hope that this beautiful heritage is sustained for eternity.

Sri Arthanareeshwarar Kovil Murthi: The Benoni Tamil School Board and the Sri Arthanareeshwarar Kovil hosted Sri Arthanareeshwarar's Bhramanda Vighraha Sthaapana Vaibavam Shiva Shakti Murthi Inaugural Ceremony on 9th March 2013. Twenty-meter tall statue used in making steel is 90 tons. Shiva statue in the shape of half and half her strength. Ten artists from India, after ten months of hard work have made the statue. Karthi Mutthusami, Benoni Tamil School Board's chairman, said “*At present, respect for women in South Africa has been*

declining”. Community as we honor the power to give a woman and being a mother. This will be the message of equality of gender in society.

Sri Raam Bhajana Mandiram

Established on 14th February 1999, Gauteng’s pioneering Raam Bhajan group the SRBM have grown from a small membership, into a dynamic team of spiritual aspirants. Our mission is to contribute & promote to the Hindu Culture. The SRBM’s mission is to improve the quality of life through spirituality and to inspire strong leadership through dedicated teamwork. On April 13th 2013, Hindus around South Africa are set to unite at the 3rd National Raam Bhajana Festival hosted by the Andhra Maha Sabha of South Africa (AMSSA). To be invited to participate at this event is the most prestigious honour and the Sri Raam Bhajana Mandiram (SRBM) has been asked to be one of the groups to represent Gauteng.

Durban

Eastern Rendezvous Programme which will be targeting the Indian Community. main objective of the programme is to provide a platform for the five linguistic groups which make up the Indian community to showcase their culture, language, cuisine and costume. It is a unique concept that is aspiring towards forging unity amongst the different linguistic groups of the Indian community. The programme brings together cadres of folk artists and cultural enthusiasts from the different linguistic groups to display their artistic ingenuity in a prestigious cultural space. The staging of this production aims to build a spirit of unity in diversity and catapults all the participants and administrators into euphoria of achievement, and a sense of accomplishment.

The cultural events hosted by the Indian community must be perceived as an outlet to permeate the ancient art forms that had originated in the land of their forefathers, which entered the shores of the Republic of South Africa, and gradually developed in the engine rooms of the community-based organisations, thus generating a vibrant segment of our culture. The Eastern Rendezvous is therefore a platform for the different linguistic groups to present their unique identities.

Conclusion

Indian South African is a term which refers to people from India living in South Africa. Most Indians in South Africa migrated from colonial India during late 19th century through early 20th century. Therefore, the term “Indian” is also used to refer to people who originally hailed from the countries of South Asia. At other times the aforementioned groups were subsumed in the broader geographical category “Asians”, when it included persons originating in present-day Iran (Parsis or Zoroastrians, other Muslims and the small Chinese community).

The distinctive languages, cuisines, arts, crafts, customs and traditions of the Indian Diaspora is an unending journey of discovery full of pleasant surprise in South Africa. South Africa’s Indian community serving continue to serve the Hindu community by constructing Hindu temples, maintaining Ashrams and schools, celebrating all Hindu festivals and fairs like Jaganath rathayatra, Independence day and Republic day enthusiastically with walks of African communities. Doing great charity work in terms of the noble objectives of the *The South African Hindu Maha Sabha*. Their challenge is to ensure that values such as integrity, morality, justice and righteousness, which are common to all faiths, permeates all facets of South African Society.

With the help of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), an intensive programme of cultural exchanges is organised throughout South Africa including scholarships for South African nationals. In addition to such cultural programming, a 'Shared Histories' Festival organized as a public-private partnership is also held, which held its fourth edition in 2010. The Fifth edition of the 'Shared Histories' Festival was held in September 2011. The SA Minister of Arts & Culture Mr. Pallo Jordan visited India in December 2007 during which he also inaugurated a major South African art exhibition. Mrs. Ambika Soni, Minister for Tourism and Culture visited South Africa in August 2008 and signed the Programme of Cooperation (POC) in Arts and Culture for 2008-2011. A Festival of India in South Africa was jointly organized by Department of Arts and Culture South Africa and High Commission in Pretoria from June-August 2011. India is a member of BRICS (Jose and Vitorino 2011), countries recently South Africa hosted the summit our Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh declared to work hard for world peace.

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