

The South African Story of People of Indian Origin

- By *Ishwar Ramlutchman Mabheka Zulu*

The Indian South African community has always been renowned for its determination to ensure education of its children as a priority, even in the face of adversity. From the earliest indentured labourers contributing from their meagre earnings to build schools, clinics, and even contributed towards the freedom of South Africa. This has remained a steadfast principle that has brought about the literacy level in the community.

The year 2019 marked 25 years of democracy in South Africa and after two decades of peaceful transition from a horrific apartheid state to a democracy where all our rights and freedoms are guaranteed in the Constitution and the goodwill and love of the African people whom we share work spaces, neighborhoods and public places. Durban is the home of more than 1.2 million Indian citizens and hundreds more of Indian nationals. Durban has been the home under the African sun of our Indian community since 16 November 1860.



On 16th November 1860, 159 years ago, the *SS Truro* landed in the Bay of Durban and more than 300 men, women and children stepped onto African soil to forever make this their home, some thousands and thousands of miles away from Mother India. During this historic Convention in Trinidad and Tobago, I take this opportunity of saluting the 1860 indentured Indians and the descendants of the pioneering people who made possible for all of us, Hindus, Muslims and Christians, to enjoy a good and people life in the heart of the African east-coast seaboard.

The poignant history of the 1860 Indian indentured labourers who worked collectively and under trying human conditions to survive every hour and every day, turning the lush green sugar cane fields into the gold of sterling and pounds for the colonial sugar farming barons is well documented.

This year marks 108 years since the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa. The peace apostle spent 21 years in Phoenix next to John Dube's neighborhood where both these great leaders plotted and planned the democracy that all of us enjoy today. KwaZulu-Natal, like the South African culture, is a mix of various cultures. Through social cohesion, unity in diversity will become the rainbow nation of South Africa.

This year also marks the 150th birthday of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and special homage and grateful recognition of Gandhi ji as the preeminent leader of Indian independence movement in British-ruled India through non-violence means. Gandhian non-violence teachings for peaceful protests to achieve freedom and social justice, Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence teachings have inspired many to protest in peaceful ways against oppression, colonial rule, subjugation and violent discrimination in many countries.

This year also marks the 100th birthday of Nelson Mandela who was a nonviolence anti-apartheid activist, politician and philanthropist who became South Africa's first black president from 1994 to 1999. Nelson Mandela achieved a smooth transition to majority rule in South Africa following the teachings of peace and reconciliation of Mahatma Gandhi. "The legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela is that they were exemplars of the fundamental belief that the drivers of conflict are all amenable to non-violent solutions. The achievements of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela demonstrate that the outcome of non-violent change, achieved through persuasion rather than coercion, are durable."

Together we can make the world a better place to live in. Peace across our land. Unity in Diversity must become our essence of Life.

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