Perceptions of and Responses to Transformation among people of Indian Origin in Post-Apartheid South Africa: 1994-1999

By

Anand Singh

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Dedicated to

All the ethnic minorities in the world, for peaceful co-existence and multi-culturalism,

and

to my mother, my wife Jayshree and children Janitra, Jivesh and Lasila.

ABSTRACT

The theme of this dissertation is reflected in its title and was written to capture this particular historical juncture in post-apartheid South Africa. It was inspired by a variety of factors, including the harsh historical experiences of the Indian population since their arrival as indentured labourers in 1860, the current reassertion of ethnic identities and widespread ethnically based conflicts throughout the world, and the minority rights campaign that is gaining momentum in Europe. The significance of the last point is that West European countries generally enjoy the status as trendsetters on social policy issues, and the rest of the developing world often tends to follow suit. In this respect, this dissertation attempts to illustrate how the views of the Indian minority on transformation, in between the 1994 and 1999 democratic general elections, have been influenced and shaped. Their experiences were important in ascertaining their perceptions and responses to transformation. Research was carried out in the Greater Durban Area across class boundaries, covering suburbs such as Reservoir Hills, Clare Estate, Asherville, Overport, Phoenix and Chatsworth. The outcome of this effort is contained in 229 pages consisting of ten chapters. It is viewed in the context of the circumstances that prevailed just before the county's first democratic general election of 27 April 1994, up to the period of the next general election of 2 June 1999. Of central concern here were the dynamics surrounding the inevitable transfer of power from the White minority to representatives of the Black majority, and how the smallest ethnic minority i.e. the people of Indian origin, were reacting to this process. Research was carried out on the issues about which respondents felt very strongly. These translated into chapters on the history of violence against Indians in South Africa, the widespread impoverishment that is overshadowed by the visibility of the Indian middle and upper classes, their perceptions of informal settlements, Indian priviledge versus African empowerment in the public transport sector in Durban, finding new schools, and emigration – viewed as a solution to some and a dream to others.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis is about people of Indian origin in post-apartheid South Africa. It focuses on issues of historical and contemporary interest, especially within the population in several of the city of Durban's predominantly Indian suburbs. The work should be viewed in the context of the particular historical circumstances that have prevailed since just before the country's first democratic general election on 27 April 1994, up to the period of the next general election of 2 June 1999. The social, political and economic factors that have dominated this period have been of immense interest both nationally and internationally. The intrigue surrounding the inevitable switching of power from more than three hundred years of White political and economic domination to African majority rule was what caught the attention of the entire world (Sparks 1994). A central concern here was the position of the minorities in this emerging transitional democracy. The world would not have been surprised if the country deteriorated into a state of civil war and if the most powerful of its minorities, the Whites, engaged in a protracted war to claim their own territory and self-rule. Indeed such attempts were made by right-wingers both among Whites and Zulus, but without much success. The periods of ethnic and racial tension were short lived and dissipated through careful maneuvering, especially through the leadership and charisma of Nelson Mandela. Both Afrikaners and Zulus considered themselves threatened minorities and articulated their fears in emotive rhetoric and acts of violence. Other minorities such as Indians and Coloureds reacted more passively to change. The options that were available to both these population groups restricted them to this type of reaction. Their minority statuses and marginal integration into the military structures forbade them from responding to transformation in the ways that Afrikaners and Zulus had done. A glimpse into how transformation has impacted on people of Indian origin is provided below. Five aspects will be covered in this introduction viz. justification for the study, contextualising class and ethnicity, the areas of fieldwork, methodology (literature survey and fieldwork) and a synopsis of what lies ahead.

The issues: Justification for the study

In the late 1960s the Economic Commission for Latin America, dominated by the underdevelopment/dependency school which was inspired by Andre Gunder Frank (1969), came to enjoy predominance in explaining the position of peripheral countries in the world political economy. This school emphasized the unequal relationship between the

industrialized west and the developing countries that were the chief supplier of minerals and raw materials. While their analysis was initially centred on economic explanations, they soon came to realise the character of their political leadership, the low levels of skills, and the class and ethnic composition of the Latin American populace. This often gave way not just in Latin America but in Africa as well to ethnic conflicts, despotic and corrupt leadership, and even lesser commitment from the ruling elite to steer countries away from such quagmires.

In addressing South Africa's imminent transition to democracy and focussing on policy perspectives for the future, Schlemmer (1991: 15) argued that politics in South Africa is often oversimplified and has weakened the capacity of South African social science to deal with the real complexities of change in the system. Often, the competition for political power is seen as a Black (African)-White divide that ignores the role and contribution of other minorities such as Indians in regional and national politics. Schlemmer added that the models for transition in Southern Africa are distinctly unappetising, especially when viewed against the background of the widespread problems in the region since independence. Post-independence leaders in Africa misled themselves into believing that they could administer their countries adequately without the assistance of their White adversaries. Half of White Rhodesians fled Zimbabwe which was starving of foreign capital, Lesotho was under prolonged military rule, Mozambique and Angola were implementing scientific social reeducation camps, and had crude East European equipment which could not be repaired. The consequences of all of these efforts were disastrous and had to be abandoned for lack of creative and responsible leadership. Other writers such as Good (1999) have supported this claim by illustrating how the rise of wealth and power within the cattle owning economy of Botswana has been accompanied by the creation of poverty and weakness. Olivier de Sardan (1999: 28) unhesitatingly placed the failures in Africa in the 'corruption complex', because as he puts it "Corruption (that is to say the 'corruption complex') has become, in almost all African countries, a common and routine element of the functioning of the administrative and para-administrative apparatus, from top to bottom." South Africa too is showing similar directions of elitism, decline in state capacity, embezzlement and predominance (as Good refers to the African leadership), is swiftly turning democracy into mere electoralism. Human, financial, organisational, and material resources have been dissipated on a very large scale. After the 1994 election, "the government, in the assessment of the Minister of Public Service and Administration, decided 'unscientifically' on a target of cutting 300 000 civil service jobs in three years, and wasted R1000 million on

programmes which robbed the bureaucracy of its best brains, but retained those, whom Zola Skweyiya said, 'you would like to have retrenched'" (Good 1997: 548). The failures in Africa prompted the late Mozambican President Samora Machel to say to President Robert Mugabe soon after he took over Zimbabwe: *"Keep your Whites."* (Richburg 1997: 191).

South African politics is also undergoing radical re-engineering along ethnic and racial lines, not withstanding the problems of the past. This thesis, while not unaware of the external environment in which South Africa operates viz. the global economy, focuses on the internal dynamics of South Africa's democratic transition. In particular its focus is on race and ethnic relations with particular reference to the Indian minority. For more than four decades since 1948, legislation required citizens to determine their aspirations along ethnic and racial lines. The 1950 Population Registration Act which divided South Africa's population into four racial categories viz. White, Indian, Coloured and African, and which also identified Africans by ethnic group, provided the basis for differentiated access to economic and political opportunities. This gave rise to a significant degree of in-group solidarity within the racial and ethnic categories as each tried to either protect their privileges or oppose the constrictions that were imposed upon them. Out of this situation emerged cleavages that are bound to make the transformation process in post-Apartheid South Africa as sensitive to racial and ethnic issues as possible. This situation exists at a time when ethnic tensions in countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Yugoslavia, Chechnya and Dagestan, among others, have flared up in ways that have been extremely costly to human lives and socio-political stability. The end of the Cold War has ushered in an unbridled build-up of arms in many of the strife torn countries as well as new kinds of political demands that are rooted in ethnic mobilisation. Understanding Indians perceptions of and responses to transformation would require some attention on the politics of the rest of Africa as well as those of South Africa, since these factors are instrumental in determining the nature of such issues.

An interesting comment by a student was made one day on the politics in Africa. In March 1997 when I took an M.A. class in Social Policy that had mainly African students, a debate emerged around the topic of the role of the state and international aid in developing countries. This was the period during which Mobuto Sese-seko was facing firm opposition from the Laurent Kabila led forces in what was then Zaire - presently renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo. Most of the students were emphatically against the international "donor" agencies. Enthusiasm among them to bash the International Monetary

Fund and the World Bank for its role in Africa reached high and emotional levels, especially with reference to what little economic and political stability was achieved in Zaire. Their accounts of how Sese-seko was co-opted and neutralised by these institutions and their surrogate multi-national corporations, as they plundered the economic resources of the country, demonstrated a high level of political consciousness. They clearly wanted to see a South Africa free from the alliances with exploitative international agencies, trusting that the ANC led government was going to steer clear of them. But their enthusiasm was dampened and brought to an abrupt halt by an incisive response from a Nigerian student who retorted: *"Listen my South African brothers and sisters, the problem in Africa is not with the external powers. The problem here is that African leaders are weak and they have sold us out. Do you know if you have a referendum in Zaire to-day the people will ask for the French to return, and if you have a referendum in Nigeria today, they will ask for the British to return. That is because most of my country's oil revenue has been stolen by the Nigerian army generals who have put all the money in the Swiss banks - more than four hundred billion U.S. dollars! I am telling you, the Nigerian leaders have put my country five hundred years behind time....If you look at the problem facing your own country today, it is going the same way with corruption. You will learn very soon...."*

In a sense, the student's statement enjoyed resonance with views that were generally associated with conservative thinking during apartheid, although he was certainly not influenced by it. His disappointment emerged out of his experiences in his own country, which had the misfortune of several *coup d'etats* in less than ten years. The political emancipation in most African countries after colonialism has been stifled by lack of vision, systematic plundering of state resources and mismanagement of the positive financial reserves and functional infrastructures that were left behind (Hyden 1983; Hill 1986; Good 1986; Carmen 1996). A classic case in point is provided in Hill's (1986) coverage of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party's attempt to acquire support in the 1950s by providing cocoa farmers with official grants for replanting of their cocoa farms after they were devastated by swollen shoot disease. There was no account of how these funds were actually used and no threat of farms being expropriated if the grants were not repaid through increased production, until years later when a commission of inquiry discovered that farmers were putting the money to other uses. A widespread practice was to devote the cash to building houses in Accra for letting, leading to a sharp reduction in cocoa production and consequently to a reduction in state revenue. Similarly, Good's (1986) investigation into the

massive annual losses of maize in Zambia in the 1980s, led him to discover a virtual absence of proper planning and massive pilfering of funds in almost every government Ministry. Every year there was insufficient fuel, no spare parts for transport vehicles, insufficient jute bags to store the maize, no grading of roads - making it difficult for trucks to collect the maize during the rainy season from farms away from the main road, among a range of other problems. In Zimbabwe as well the central province of Gokwe continue to suffer isolation from the rest of the country because of the lack of proper infrastructure that should allow for dual movements of supplies in and out of the region (Breslin 1994). While the farmers sell their produce to the neighbouring towns and cities there is no in-flow of goods to Gokwe that allows for ready access to basic goods and immediate needs. This has produced a desperate situation that has led people to eating dogs and adding grass to their maize meal in order to stretch its lasting capacity. Farmers have also been forced to sell their implements to buy food and pay for their children's education in order to break their reliance on agriculture. Such situations across Africa has led Hyden (1983: x), in his search for alternative forms of governance in the continent, to comment:

> **As most of Africa's new states are reaching the age of a human generation, very few can look back on a period of real progress... To many foreign businesses eager to find new markets and new wealth, Africa has become a pit that swallows their money with little or no return. This is a judgement that applies not only to 'socialist' or 'Marxist-Leninist' regimes but also to those characterised by a 'free' economy, for example Nigeria, Sudan and Zaire... In spite of receiving colossal amounts of aid, they argue, countries like Tanzania and Zambia show no progress; instead their economies show signs of moving backwards....**

Soon after the end of colonial rule Whites, who were the most privileged in the civil service and who were selectively trained to operate it, emigrated in droves to the industrialised countries. This migratory movement created a vacuum in administrative positions that made it difficult for the newly independent countries to effectively continue with the functioning of these institutions in sustainable ways. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa the state has all but lost its role as the instrument for development and political stability. In other countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia, the state has been instrumental in fostering political instability and the breakdown of civil society (Richburg 1998). This has given rise to ethnic conflicts of genocidal proportions in some countries, which in turn led to a virtual breakdown of the infrastructures in others. Interviewees for this project were aware of these situations and were generally critical of them. The expulsion of the Indians from Uganda in 1974, the restrictions imposed by the governments of Malawi and Tanzania on Indians to freely engage in commercial activities, and two

carefully orchestrated ethnic clashes in KwaZulu-Natal in 1949 and 1985 between Africans and Indians (see chapter 2), were often points of reference in discussions on African domination. More recently, President Robert Mugabe's threats to expropriate farmland owned by White farmers in Zimbabwe have added to this list of references in conversations on African politics.

These failures in the African countries had been put to significant use by the racist regimes in South Africa since 1948 – when mobilisation for decolonisation in Africa started increasing at a rapid pace. But the move towards the creation of nation-states in Africa has led to more problems than solutions (Davidson 1992; Bayart 1993). Davidson (p99-101) for instance has argued that nation-statism was only a form of escapism from colonial domination. In their attempts to transform colonial territories into national territories, Africans found their wealth of ethnic cultures distracting, hard to absorb and retrogressive – especially in its violent manifestations. By drawing attention to these situations, successive Apartheid regimes succeeded in persuading large segments of the Indian and Coloured populations, and to a smaller extent the African population, of the dangers of African majority rule. More than sixty per cent of the Indian voting population voted for the National Party in the 1994 general election while a bigger number among the Coloureds in the Western Cape did the same for the National Party, making them the regional government for the Western Cape.

It is against this background of perceptions of disorderliness in Africa that the topic has been conceptualised. Perceptions are important in formulating responses to change, especially in a situation where the political and economic conditions are volatile and prone to negative national and international reactions, as has been the case in South Africa since the mid 1980s.

The end of Apartheid, or the system of legislative discrimination, has brought the problems of restructuring and transformation in South Africa into sharp prominence. Drastic changes had to be effected to ensure that the newly elected government, dominated by the African National Congress (ANC), maintained its support base within the African population and within segments of the Coloured, Indian, and to a lesser extent White populations. The dissolution of the ten 'tribally' based homelands that had a semblance of self-governance imposed upon them during apartheid, as well as the range of prohibitive race based laws that applied to all of South Africa, had resulted in a unified state where race and ethnicity were

bound to be radically reviewed. After centuries of systematic exclusion of those who were not previously classified as "White", from the mainstreams of political and economic life, these arenas had suddenly witnessed an influx of Africans, Coloureds and Indians. The rights of these previously disenfranchised racial categories, particularly the African majority, have become the cornerstone of transformation policies, and have raised acute questions about how to deliver to what is widely seen as a differentiated motley of people spread across the length and breadth of South Africa. Although the tendency was to refer to all previously disenfranchised citizens as "Black", the situation is no longer considered with the same zeal. Indians in KwaZulu-Natal and Coloureds in the Western Cape are deemed to have enjoyed more privileges than Africans. This has created a schism in the rank and file of these population groups and has retained the notions of race, class and ethnicity with the same zeal that they had during Apartheid.

Contextualising class and ethnicity

Understanding the perceptions of and responses to transformation among people of Indian origin has to be examined in the context of the debates around race, class, ethnicity and civil society in South Africa. These aspects are unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future and will in all likelihood continue to determine the nature and pace of transformation. A sociologist *cum* cynic and critic of South Africa's transformation, Desai (1999: 81), commenting on the swift rise of the new African elite and the flight of capital to overseas stock exchanges, stated: "Those who are not part of the political class or who are not wealthy do not have the luxury of temporary sojourns in foreign lands. For the middle class who wish to test the waters overseas, the only option is to accumulate capital by selling up to finance their trip. The lower classes, of course, cannot even emigrate to the next province."

Pluralists have written critically on the nature of race and class relations in South Africa. A prolific writer from this tradition, van den Berghe (1969)argued that social classes in the Marxian sense of the relationships to the means of production exist by means of definition, as they must in any capitalist country, but they are not meaningful social realities. Clearly, pigmentation, rather than ownership of land or capital is the most significant criterion of status in South Africa. Wolpe (1988) challenged this position by arguing that van den Berghe makes class irrelevant and socio-economic differences are treated as the outcome of racial definitions. The relationships between social groups are viewed as a function of racial ideology, attitudes and prejudices. To Wolpe (1988), the net result of not accounting for

race prejudice in structural terms means that the bulk of the writing on race in South Africa, remains at a descriptive level only.

More recent analyses have gone beyond such limitations by examining the dynamics of power politics and the emergent political partnerships that are based more on the interests of capital rather than on race alone. Both issues however are inseparable from each other. To Glaser (1997: 23) there are several trends that are shaping relations between the (ANC-governed) state and 'black' civil society in the country. These trends emerge out of a commitment to reduce White political and economic hegemony and engage in the process of African empowerment. But they are also constrained by the interests of capital and the reality of an untrained African labour force and white-collar personnel which is presently incapable of assuming total responsibility of the country's administration. However, Glaser's reference to 'black' civil society is not an inclusive reference to all the previously disadvantaged groups, in that it is restricted to those in African townships only. To examine race and class in the context of White-African relations is to preclude the contributions and dynamics of other population groups such as Coloureds and Indians.

Macdonald's (1996) paper on power politics in South Africa amplifies the trends identified by Glaser in two ways. First, he sees the state being exposed to relentless pressure to adopt policies preferred by capital, which exerts a steady conservative influence on the ANC, and second he feels that the terms negotiated in the interim constitution specifically protect the integrity of established bureaucracies. These factors have a stifling effect on the ANC's welfare policies over the African working classes, forcing the party to reorient itself by shifting its political base from popular organisations to state bureaucracies. It is in this manoeuvre that the contradictions and preoccupation with race and ethnicity in post-Apartheid transformation is raised. Filatova's (1997) commentary on the ANC's discussion document on *Nation-Formation and Nation Building* is an apt illustration of how South Africa is being reracialised through pronounced efforts towards an Africanist state. She warns that another new development is that Africansim as a perception (not a distinct political movement or party) has gained momentum more than ever before both inside and outside the ranks of the ANC and its allies. Filatova (1997: 52) succinctly captures the current mood in the transformation process by stating: "The reassertion of African pride, the invention and the re-invention of black identity, styles and fashions, culture, even ideology (*ubuntu)* the discovery of 'Africaness', even if only in the form of renaming of places and personalities, the reinvention and revision of a black legacy in search of a new, a

particularly African way – all this is a natural reaction to the past." As one of the most stable and developed countries in the continent, South Africa is presently trying to position itself as a major role player and moral leader in Africa. "The first step to achieving this is 'Africanisation' of the image of the country in both cultural and ideological sense. The nervous reaction of the government to the signs of rejection by other African states of South Africa's leading role on the continent on the grounds that it is not African enough (Nigeria's challenge to Mandela being one such example) betrayed a lack of confidence of its own position in this matter" (Filatova 1997: 53). Therefore, in the context of re-engineering civil society in South Africa as well as the country's position on the African continent, the challenge lies with how the ANC can establish and sustain an acceptable level of racial and ethnic harmony. Despite the party's emphasis on non-racialism before the 1994 election, the vote was racially divided and it came out overwhelmingly 'African'. As a result of this political emotions and feelings of the 'non-African' minorities play a much smaller role in the ANC's political considerations now than they had before the 1994 election.

These developments must also be viewed against two issues viz. increasing ethnic differentiation and the rising ethnic tensions in the 1990s throughout the world, where the result has been large-scale acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing. In countries such as Rwanda, Nigeria, and Yugoslavia the high levels of ethnocentrism has translated into the most violent forms of ethnic warfare that was widely expected to occur in South Africa after the demise of White rule. In such multi-cultural societies majority segments of the populations have used the democratic processes to dominate in political and economic spheres. There has been a strong tendency to consolidate the state by appealing to the nationalism of the majority people (Miall 1994). As a result of this, ethnic minorities in different countries in several parts of the world have experienced varying forms of isolation, intimidation and violence against them. Referring to the Minority Rights Group, Miall (1990: xiv) presents their definition of an ethnic minority as: "...a group which is numerically inferior to the rest of the population in a society, which is politically non-dominant and which is being reproduced as an ethnic category." For a minority to exist, there has to be a majority and vice-versa. During the apartheid era in South Africa, race and ethnicity were fundamental in determining political, economic and social boundaries, enforced through legislation. In post-apartheid South Africa these boundaries are supposed to dissipate through a non-racial ideology. A fundamental question – for which there is no simple explanation - is: "Can the boundaries created by race and class during apartheid be transcended to bring about a new and more patriotic South African identity?"

This question must be examined against the experiences of other such groups in multi-cultural societies in other parts of the world. The violent experiences of ethnic minorities have often militantly raised the issues of rights and obligations of minorities. The rights of minorities to receive equal treatment, practice their religion and normative customs, and to speak, learn and teach their languages have become prerequisites for their full participation in the political and economic life of the state. Their obligations and patriotism to the state are determined by the measures in which these requirements are met. Failure of the state to meet them either in part or adequately can result, as experience has demonstrated, in violent action for secession or independence. The salience of the minority problem throughout the world has produced a transnational regime for minority rights (Miall 1994: 3). But it is still relatively weak and centred mainly around the concerns of minorities in Europe. It offers protection under international law and international conventions such as the European Convention on Political Rights, and requires subscription to the political commitments that have been determined by member states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). However weak such a forum might be, it is a start. Its existence is indicative of the requirements of states throughout the world to seriously consider the needs of its minorities in order to ensure that they carry out their obligations with the enthusiasm that is required of loyal citizens.

In South Africa, people of Indian origin have especially one thing in common i.e. their ancestral geographical roots in India. Otherwise there is a diversity of groups among them who differ from one another through language, religion, regional roots, economic status, eating habits and taboos, personal preferences, and above all, class differences. Ginwala (1974) points out that until the end of indenture, divisions among Indians along lines of language, culture, religion and juridical status, coincided with economic divisions. The indentured Indians were largely Tamil-Telegu, South Indian Hindus, while the unencumbered immigrants who followed them were mainly Gujerati Muslims from Western India. Although the Indians were responding to restrictions formulated in racial terms, Ginwala found that they did not respond as an ethnic unit. The particular interests of different sections determined their political participation. This view was supported by Vahed (1995) who acknowledged that Indians formed their own social and economic pyramid. He argued that merchants had a choice to identify with the White bourgeosie or disregard their conveniences in favour of identification with the wider struggle for political emancipation. The Indian middle class only had the privileges of protected employment,

but like their counterparts in the working class, they were equally constrained and precluded from being absorbed into the wider society.

Such diversity among Indians in South Africa diminishes any notion that assumes homogeneity within this commonly referred group. Despite these wide-ranging differences among the various segments, there is still the tendency to refer to people of Indian origin as "Indians" in various contexts and discourses. In this sense, the simplistic and uncritical definition of ethnicity that is provided by Eriksen (1993: 6) is useful. The term ethnicity refers to relationships between groups whose members within each group consider themselves to be distinctive, and these groups may be ranked hierarchically within a society. However, the problem with this definition is that it imputes a notion of homogeneity in social and economic status of very large segments in a country's population. It does not focus on social stratification within ethnic categories and precludes understanding of how economic status and linkages could cut across social boundaries that produce situational conditions that may for instance, temporarily ignore ethnic distinctions. In this context, the concept is useful to Indians as an ethnic category only in so far as it refers to people of a common geographical origin, and not for any other descriptive purpose. For this reason the economic segments that exist within the Indian population also require a class analysis of historical and contemporary experiences, revolving around perceptions of and responses to the transformation. This is based on the assumption that people from different socio-economic backgrounds are likely to perceive transformation and respond to it in terms of their levels of education, awareness and political consciousness, personal experiences and resources at their disposal. Restriction to any particular economic segment of the Indian population would have produced a limited perspective of how Indians are responding to the radical political changes since April 1994. While there might be perceptions that transcend class boundaries among Indians, the responses can only be determined by their skills and resource bases.

The interviewees for this study had earning capacities and material conditions that were evidently different and it was assumed that their responses would vary accordingly. People of different class backgrounds have achieved varying levels of education, which in turn determines their levels of consciousness and responses to the political and economic conditions in the country. For instance, there have been regular media reports of people wanting to emigrate to the industrialised countries, with lawyers and other recruiting agents advertising extensively to exploit this market. The countries that are being extensively

advertised are England, United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But South Africa's depreciating currency has made emigration difficult for people who have the will but not the resources. Emigration is only one of the factors that has become a major phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa. Other phenomena that have acquired serious attention include

- unbridled proliferation of squatters in urban areas
- violent crime
- widespread allegations of official embezzlement of state funds
- lack of vision by the state to produce effective policies in key areas such as health, education, and law and order.

Race has been an important factor in linking especially the latter issues to specific classified groups. During apartheid, it was Whites who were held responsible, and since April 1994 the association has been with Africans. It would be naïve to deny that squatters and violent crime are not especially associated with Africans in South Africa, although every other population category has its share of the same. There is almost a tacit acknowledgement of these perceptions in the media and with different racial and ethnic groups, especially when the virtually hopeless conditions in other parts of Africa are compared with what is occurring in post-apartheid South Africa. It is against this background that the perceptions of and responses to transformation among people of Indian origin were approached.

The Areas of Fieldwork

Research was carried out in several suburbs in the Greater Durban Region that extends to Stanger on the north coast and to Umzinto on the south coast. The core areas of research were Phoenix, Reservoir Hills, Clare Estate, Overport, Asherville, Verulam and Tongaat. Other areas where research was done on a smaller scale were Umkoomaas, Umzinto and Stanger. These were 'marginal' farming areas which were followed up through networking with interviewees from the core areas of research. The suburbs were deliberately chosen because they constituted a mixture of people from working/underclass, middle class and upper class backgrounds. Phoenix is the area with mainly working class/under class people who rented in council housing, while the other areas had mainly middle class civil servants, self-employed professionals and a sprinkling of big farmers and industrialists who lived in a variety of self-owned houses. In several of the suburbs working class people who rented in houses were also interviewed.

All of the areas were classified during the apartheid era as Indian Group Areas under the

Group Areas Act of 1950. They were therefore still predominantly occupied by people of Indian origin. Purchase and sale of property in these areas were previously restricted to this particular classified group. But since the repeal of the Influx Control Laws that used to forbid Africans from becoming permanent citizens in South Africa's metropolitan areas, the demographics in these suburbs have changed drastically. The rapid migration of Africans from the rural areas and violence ridden urban townships have led to an influx of people into the urban areas, where they started building squatter camps. This gave rise to significant changes to the dynamics of the quiet and relatively 'undisturbed' suburban lifestyle of the Indian population. It is the changes in these suburbs that have made them attractive for the topic at hand. Their significance lies in examining the impact of these and the broader political changes that are perceived to be taking place after years of legally imposed racial boundaries and insulated lifestyle that was effected through the 1950 Group Areas Act.

Methodology: Literature Survey and Fieldwork

Literature Survey

The search for an appropriate area of study on people of Indian origin and relevant literature for a Ph.D. began in 1989. Inexperience, a lack of direction through unavailability of qualified supervisors, and the intimidating thought of such a task, initially led to only sporadic research that was not followed through over a sufficiently long period to warrant the write up of a doctoral dissertation. Domestic and departmental responsibilities and unavoidable involvement (in a very small way) in the protracted struggle for political change in South Africa, particularly in my university, added to the constraints of engaging in sustained research.

The first attempt at understanding Indians in South Africa began with an exercise to understand the dynamics of poverty in the Indian township of Phoenix. This was followed by an historical literature survey and analysis of two violent clashes between the regionally dominant African population viz. the Zulus and Indians in 1949 and 1985 respectively (see chapter two). The literature on these two episodes provided a glimpse into information that raised more questions than provided solutions for my initial efforts on understanding the nature of the clashes between the two groups. It brought into focus a complex range of issues that required more than a cursory examination of the ethnic tensions between two of the major ethnic groups in KwaZulu-Natal. Among these issues were the history of colonialism and Indian indentured labour, the dynamics of Indo-European relations, the

dynamics of caste and class among Indians, their participation in politics at regional and national levels, their responses to change in the face of the collapse of Apartheid, and the future of civil society in post-Apartheid South Africa.

The experiences of Indians during colonialism up to 1910, after the formation of the Union Government in 1910, during Apartheid since 1948, and up to 1961 when they were granted permanent citizenship for the first time, brought out the ethnically and racially divisive way in which South Africa was administered. Literature that covered these periods, produced mainly by historians, broadly covered a range of issues that highlighted the blatant racism that Indians had to face on a daily basis – *see chapters two and three* -(Sannyasi and Benarsidas 1931; Joshi 1942; Calpin 1949; Pachai 1979; Bhana and Brain 1990; *among a range of others*). The latter four references dealt extensively and intensively on legislation that was specifically designed to restrict Indians from free and equal participation in the country's economy. On the contrary, anthropological and sociological research paid little or no attention to the hardships that Indians had faced, or how the constrictive legislative devices manifested to constrain Indian advancement. While the sociologist Meer (1969) acknowledges these issues, she treated them in a dismissive manner, focussing more on the achievements of a small segment of Indians and generalising upon them rather than on the shoddy experiences of the majority. Anthropologists such as Kuper (1956; 1957; 1960) and Jithoo (1978; 1985), who have been the main contributors to ethnographic studies on Indians, produced descriptive functionalist accounts of Hindu social structures and Indian business families respectively. More critical insights into the nature and dynamics of people of Indian origin came from Ginwala (1974) and Vahed (1995) on issues of class consciousness and control, and the making of an Indian identity respectively. A related Masters dissertation by sociologist Maharaj (1995) on the social identities of Indians in a changing South Africa had some relevance as well. But her information was mainly statistical and highly generalised without proper reference to class or caste based responses to change and identity. Only one chapter out of seven dealt with empirical data that was limited to commentary on responses that were tabulated rather than analysed and interpreted.

Despite South Africa's comparatively favourable economic position with the rest of its African counterparts, it was the racism, poorly developed political structures, and mismanagement of the economy that eventually led to the demise of the Apartheid state. Political structures and economic opportunities were best developed for Whites and to a

lesser extent for the other population groups. Huntington (1968: 3), in describing the increasing gap between the rich and poorer nations, aptly pointed out that in the twentieth century, the principal locus of political underdevelopment, like economic underdevelopment, tends to be the modernising countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Apart from a few exceptions, the political evolution of these countries after the Second World War was characterised by increasing ethnic and class conflict, recurring rioting and mob violence, frequent military *coups d' etat,* the dominance of unstable personalistic leaders who often pursued disastrous economic and social policies, widespread and blatant corruption among cabinet ministers and civil servants, and declining standards of bureaucratic efficiency and performance. Ironically, press reports and other areas of the media abound with such information on the performance of the ANC, since its inception as the government. The Heath Commission, especially appointed to expose rogue elements in the civil service, has revealed massive corruption in almost every ministry, regionally and nationally. By July 1999 the auditor-general's report the recoveries, savings and prevention of loss by the Commission to be R1.38 billion (rands). This included the prevention of a loss of property worth R385-million (rands), where state assets had not been transferred but were in the process of being embezzled or lost due to maladministration (*Daily News* 22 July 1999). The South African Television (SATV) network's *am2day* (6 October 1999) reported that the Commission had an astronomical figure of 220 000 cases on their list. South Africa's battle against inefficiency and embezzlement of state funds has been compounded by the lack of ingredients that has put other Indo-Pacific Rim countries ahead of it in productive capacity for the new millennium. Sitas (1998: 38) and Macdonald (1996: 223) argue in slightly different ways about the negative impact of the country's scarcity of capital, its reliance on the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and the absence of a flexible and committed labour force to enhance capacity. These factors inhibit the redistributive commitments of the ANC, enhances the role of business and maintains much of the state organisation that was built up by the National Party during Apartheid. The impact of this has been an almost dubious retreat from the populist policies of the ANC and a new alliance with capital, which prompted Nelson Mandela to declare that "the ANC is in office, not in power" (Cape Times, 16 February 1995). The route towards acquiring power would be, as Filatova's (1997) paper implies, through Africanisation of state apparatuses and African domination in the centres of production and service delivery.

Fieldwork

An undisturbed effort in fieldwork began in 1995 with a departmental project on squat... that afforded me the opportunity to investigate Indian residents responses to this phenomenon in the midst of their suburbs (see chapter 6). Thereafter an opportunity for more research was presented in 1997 when the Centre for Science Development encouraged application for funding which required academics to build research capacity among disadvantaged students, particularly those of African background. One of the topics was on ethnic identity and social transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. This provided an ideal opportunity to use African post-graduate students to test two kinds of responses. The first was to test whether African students would have problems in interviewing Indians, while the second was to analyse responses from Indians on issues that were pertinent to the breakdown of apartheid and the voting in, for the first time in the country's history, of an African dominated government. Two Honours students, both Africans, were initially selected for this research capacity building exercise. One did thirty interviewees with business people in the Point area of Durban's Central business district, while the second student did thirty interviews with residents in Phoenix. The students, a male and female, were generally well received by their interviewees and they found the experience, which was their first, rewarding. Thirty more interviews were done by three Indian students, as part of the research capacity building exercise in Sea Cow Lake, Newlands and Isipingo. A comparison in the experience between the Indian and African students showed no difference in receptivity by the interviewees. A letter of introduction from me helped in acquiring for them, in most instances, a sympathetic reception from most people who were approached. For the African students, racial intolerance was surprisingly not encountered at all. This was important learning exercise for both the students and I in several ways, as outlined below.

Apart from the ninety interviews that were done by the students, an additional one hundred and sixty five were carried out by myself. The interviewing took place in varying contexts, such as in individual and group interviews, structured and semi-structured interviews. This was often facilitated by regular periods of participant observation in various settings such as informal and formal social gatherings such as prayer rituals, weddings, funerals, public meetings, parties and sports fields, where large numbers of people were present. Each situation that was targeted for research required the adoption of criteria that was determined by the nature of the day's events and the kind of people who were present. In most instances, careful and calculated approaches to individuals and groups of individuals

produced the information that was appropriate for the day. It also led to effective networking and following up on leads for future interviews. There is much to recommend in such an approach when examined against the words of Burgess (1984: 5)

> **The field researcher is a methodological pragmatist...The researcher is, therefore, engaged in a variety of tasks. A central feature of this work involves monitoring the research process and the research design. For the design will be continually modified and developed by the researcher throughout the project. Alongside observational work, formal and informal interviews may be conducted and life histories and personal documents may be collected.**

In most personal and group interviews the life histories of individuals were central to ascertaining how their experiences determined their perceptions of and responses to transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. Participant observation, follow-up interviews and either deliberately or unintentionally meeting interviewees more than once, helped in establishing consistencies and inconsistencies in people's perceptions and responses to changes in the country. The participant observation approach was made possible in most cases through casual integration into the formal and informal gatherings and participating, in Blumer's (1966) words, in the position of an actor. Such an approach is qualitatively different from the objective approach in which the researcher stands as an outsider who assesses what he/she observes in terms of his/her understanding of events in a detached manner. For Blumer the most effective way to understand how 'actors' perceive situations is to become an actor on equal terms (see Burgess 1984: 4). Such an approach, however, is convenient for people who approach their research as 'insiders', in the sense that they belong to the same ethnic or interest group. Integration and acceptance into target groups is made easier through familiarity, identity and in a sense, undeclared solidarity. This enables researchers to become privy to the most intimate thoughts and discussions on ethnicity, change and how people embrace or reject it. Very often, even when researchers enter into situations that are not intended as ethnographic exercises, they have the advantage to complimenting their data in the most unexpected ways and times. Such instances provide the 'insider' researcher with information that is unlikely to be gathered by those who approach their research as 'objective outsiders'. This is especially the case when people engage in discussion on issues that are sensitive, and ethnically and racially loaded. Outsiders, especially if they belong to different ethnic or racial groups, are unlikely to become privy to uninhibited discussions with individuals who have a common social background. It is common human tendency for people to speak guardedly when they suspect that someone from outside their group is unlikely to take too kindly to their views and attitudes. This happens especially if that person/s either belongs to the opposition group

under discussion or if what is spoken is likely to be challenged. Keesing (1981: 490) is therefore correct in stating that

> "...there is some power in an insider's view as well: institutions can be brought to bear, and native actors can often see the oversimplifications and distortions of anthropology fieldwork – the costs of an 'outsider view' – are becoming painfully clear as students in formerly colonial areas learn what anthropologists have written about their people."

It is for this reason that conversational analysis became an important mechanism for eliciting information in the research process. It helped to make sense of the discourses in formal and informal gatherings, the perceptions that were ascertained through speech from them, the responses in areas such as security measures that were outwardly visible and that recurred, and the interaction among those who were observed and/or interviewed. Conversational analysis is significant in understanding the nature of social structure in real life (Allen and Guy 1978: 34). It is important in understanding how and where people place themselves in the social taxonomy of the multicultural nation-state in which they are a part. Verbal discourses and social interaction provide ample information on how people's aspirations are conditioned and dictated by existing economic and political realities. Inevitably, this determines the nature and extent of their discourses and their levels of social interaction. Among South Africa's racial and ethnic categories, the insulation that was imposed upon designated populations during apartheid created mind sets that brought about social boundaries which along constricted people to think along myopic lines. These factors present an important challenge for investigation in post-apartheid South Africa, so that we may ascertain their continuity or dissolution. This is why the perceptions of and responses to transformation among people of Indian origin in post-apartheid South Africa is important - in the context of the mosaic of other cultures and ethnic categories that exist in the country.

A synopsis of what lies ahead

There are ten chapters after this introduction, including the conclusion. The purpose in chapter two is to briefly engage in a reconstruction of the history of ethnicity and violence by the state against Indians in South Africa. This sets the tone for the more contemporary aspects of the quality of life for a significant proportion of Indians in the country. Chapter three provides information on how the underclass among Indians in the Phoenix township is being reproduced through insight into the variation and fluidity of household composition. The aim is to challenge the widely held notion that Indians are generally of middle and upper class status, when in fact the majority of the almost one million Indians in South

Africa live in the townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix - where indigent conditions prevail on a very wide front. Despite these conditions, the population failed to produce a political leadership that was inclined to engage in a protracted war in the same manner as the African dominated liberation movements, against the apartheid regime. While many Indians joined these movements, the majority did not feel inclined to do the same. Instead their politics of protest were conditioned by their minority status and assumed a peculiar form. Chapter four attempts to reflect upon this political manifestation by cultural entrepreneurship and the culturalisation of politics have become the predominant form of political representation among Indians in South Africa during the April 1994 pre and post election periods. Chapters five to ten are analyses of how 255 Indian interviewees have perceived and responded to change between February 1997 and March 1999 in areas that are of topical discussion in the media, in social gatherings and a range of other forums. In chapter five an overview is provided on some observations and people and their areas, a profile of the interviewees and a broad analysis of their responses. The residents perceptions of squatter settlements in their areas, especially in Clare Estate, where one of the largest in Durban was situated, is covered in chapter six. Some of the responses that were more visible, such as in small business opportunities that were provided by the squatters, was intensively investigated and is presented in chapter seven. The more subtle and covert responses to transformation occurred in areas in which the history of Indian involvement contributed substantially to the development of the KwaZulu -Natal province viz. public transport and education. These responses are discussed in chapters eight and nine respectively. A feature that has become characteristic of Indians in other African countries after colonial rule was replaced by African majority rule, was mass emigration. This aspect was extensively followed through as a factor that appeared recurrently in interviews and is presented in chapter ten. An assessment of the factors that are covered in the ten chapters is presented as the conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

The history of ethnicity and violence against Indians in South Africa

Introduction

In South Africa, like the rest of Africa, race and ethnicity have often been deciding factors on the levels of participation in the national and economic life of the country, and of the benefits that each group may receive. Since the beginning of colonialism and the entrenchment of White hegemony, racial and ethnic clashes were an integral feature of the divide and rule policies. Van den Berghe's (1967) and Wolpe's (1970) analyses has drawn our attention to some of the theoretical issues that underpin class and race analysis in apartheid South Africa. While the former place race at the centre of his analysis the latter combines race and class to provide a more comprehensive perspective on inter-group relations in South Africa. Wolpe (1970: 162) has argued that by seeing race prejudice as the basis for differential incorporation of particular groups, "there is excluded from the analysis discrimination that is either economically motivated, or arises in or through the operation of the economic system, or that is a consequence of a particular distribution of power, or in any event, is not caused by race prejudice." This statement epitomizes the discussion below and provides a basis for understanding the nature of White hegemony and the history of antagonism between two disadvantaged groups (Indians and Africans) competing for scarce resources.

The ethnic violence against Indians in South Africa is by no means isolated and unique in the post-colonial countries. There is a history and pattern that is associated with this violence, especially in Africa. The Indian diaspora, spearheaded by the indentured Indian labour of the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was widely subjected to organized ethnic violence in most of the countries after their independence from the colonial powers. In the East African sub-continent, particularly in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, the people of Indian origin were violently attacked, abused and expelled en-masse, until their numbers and economic influence were swiftly eroded (Bhatia 1973; Nanjira 1976). In countries further away from the African continent like Fiji, Sri Lanka, Guyana, Trinidad and Surinam, the violence included a more covert form that precluded total participation in the economic and political processes of these countries (Klaas 1961; Cumpston 1969; Tinker 1976). Yet in first world countries such as the United States, where political institutions are well developed and economic prosperity is entrenched, the visibility

of Indians is hardly a factor in the broader scheme of things. The Indian experience in the United States has been the challenge of integrating into the political economy and creating a sense of community against a generally extrovert and liberal population (Saran 1985). Their vulnerability in Africa and outside the continent was evidently correlated with their visibility. In some cases it arose from preponderance of their numbers associated with their political aspirations as in Fiji, Sri Lanka and Guyana. But in other cases the decline of economic power of the Whites increased the visibility of Indian entrepreneurs, especially when their numbers were proportionately smaller as in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

The case of Indian settlers in South Africa has a different slant to it and must be understood against the wider political realities. Politically, Whites have been a dominating force for much longer than was expected after most African countries acquired their independence - their political demise occurring only after the first democratic general election in April 1994. But economically, they still maintain a hegemonic position, despite the process to increase African participation in economic empowerment. It is only here that institutionalised discrimination was practiced for over a century in some form or the other, affecting Coloureds and Indians on a wide scale as well. However, the vulnerability of the people of Indian origin to various kinds of violence - state, ethnic and structural - has not drawn the attention of social scientists in general and of Indians analysts in particular. Probably the status of a pariah state deservedly bestowed by the international community on South Africa since 1961 precluded it. But it is quite understandable that the sufferings of the majority of disenfranchised people during apartheid, i.e. the Africans, overshadowed the ordeals of the people of Indian origin who are a minority - approximately 2% of the total population according to 1997 population census.

In this context it is helpful to focus attention on the vulnerability of the people of Indian origin to ethnic violence, especially with this being a period when the White colonists shifted their policies from willful attraction of Indian indentured labourers to accelerated efforts to repatriate them from about 1893. The year 1993 was extremely significant for South Africa. It was the centenary year of the first visit of Mahatma Gandhi to South Africa, whose presence was also meant to defend the right of Indians to remain in the colony of Natal as subjects of the British Empire. Throughout his stay of 21 years (1893-1914) in South Africa he struggled for racial equality and justice for Africans and Indians. Gandhi's efforts have to a large measure been instrumental in securing a permanent place for Indians

in South Africa and for taking a position against the discrimination they suffered, especially from Whites.

The information below attempts to cover the issues of ethnic violence against Indians and is divided into four parts. The first part briefly portrays a profile of society, polity and economy of South Africa. The second part traces the history and nature of Indian migration. The third part highlights the nature of political violence in the country in general and analyses the cases of organized violence against Indians. Finally, it argues that within the structural conditions of South Africa the vulnerability of the people of Indian origin to violence is inescapable.

Polity, economy and society

Until the peaceful transition to democratic governance after the April 1994 general election, South Africa had drawn the attention of the international community because of its ideology of apartheid. Apartheid, the system of institutionalised discrimination, was introduced by the Afrikaner (mainly of Dutch origin) dominated Nationalist party government in 1948. It sought to apply the fundamental wishes of most Whites on the question of South Africa's racial future. The two dominant White groups viz. Afrikaners and the English, had at times disagreed over the implementation of various aspects of the apartheid programme, but their common agenda was to ensure White rule. The policy of apartheid had become synonymous with legalized and institutionalized discrimination. It contradicted a strong international movement since World War II towards racial equality (Johnson 1973:1). For this it earned the frequent condemnation of the United Nations and Common Wealth of Nations, from which it was forced to withdraw in 1961.

Apartheid legislation after 1948 merely gave legal sanction to social customs existing since the 1700s (Johnson 1973:2). The dominant Whites had never encouraged social integration, upward economic-mobility, equal educational opportunities and free political participation of those who were not descendants of Europeans. Since the introduction of the Population Registration Act in 1950, South Africa's population was divided into four broad racial groups categorized as "Whites" (people of European descent), "Coloureds" (people of mixed descent), "Asians" (mainly of Indian origin) and "Africans". In an illuminating account of poverty in South Africa, Ramphal (1989) has designated these divisions as colour or racial castes, which they see as arbitrary, unscientific, oversimplified and essentially

political. The condemnation was so serious that it brought Phillip Tobias, the South African Anatomist-cum-Physical Anthropologist, to make a public comment about race in the country as a "national neurosis of the obsessional variety".

The four racial groups were deemed by the state to be reinforced by language and customs, although it only recognized two official languages i.e. Afrikaans (of Dutch origin) and English. In an account of "ethnic group" and "nation" in South Africa, Sharp pointed out that "the Apartheid vision involved a particular interpretation of the terms "ethnic group" and "nation". It held that ethnic groups differed from each other by virtue of objective cultural differences. The member of an ethnic group spoke one language, held to a distinctive set of practices and showed a common system of beliefs. Because of these objective characteristics, it was argued, the members of the group showed common interests, and would naturally unite in order to propagate and defend their interests (Sharp 1988:79). Sharp's article aimed to show how the changing terminology from "race" up to the 1940's to "ethnicity" in the 1950's, and to "Third World-First World" of late made no substantive difference to South Africa's structural arrangements. The change in terminology remained rhetorical, as its main aim was to keep pace with changing usage of racial and ethnic concepts internationally. The 1997 census of the population sizes by racial category in South Africa was given as approximately 38.5 million, of which 29 062 500 were Africans, 992 600 Asians, 3 299 400 Coloured, and 5 090 900 Whites.

Between 1960 and 1980 the average income distribution figures revealed that Whites enjoyed 69.6% as 15% of the population, Indians 2.4% as 2.5% of the population, Coloureds 6.5% as 9% of the population, Africans 21.5% as 73% of the population (Ramphal 1989:20). Until 1974/75 Whites were granted up to 70% of the total expenditure on education, while for the same period Africans were granted 15%, Coloureds 10%, and Indians 5%. However, in 1991/92 the situation had showed a position that was radically different from the 1974/75 period. The state was trying to offset the imbalances in education since 1976, after African school children in Soweto, Gauteng Province (previously Transvaal), revolted against their forced teaching in Afrikaans and unequal education. The 1991 figures on state expenditure on education revealed that Whites received only 33% of the budget, Africans 48%, Coloured 13%, and Indians 5% (Race Relations Survey 1991:193).

Accessibility to employment too was racially biased. The occupational mobility on non-Whites was frustrated through constrictive labour legislation such as the Mines and Works Act (1911), which was periodically amended to ensure their exclusion from skilled, managerial and better paid employment (Yudelman 1977; Toli 1991; Race Relations Survey 1991). In the 1970's and 1980's labour discrimination continued along racial lines through the Industrial Reconciliation Act and the Labour Relations Act (1956). These laws excluded large sections of the African labour force from organized union activity and paid no attention to their basic wages, unemployment insurance, medical aid and other fringe benefits. The Congress of South African Trade Unions accused the government of perpetuating laws that were anti-union, which were designed to keep Africans, Coloured and Indians at a subservient level in the economy. The school of Business Management of the University of South Africa (UNISA) revealed in 1990, that only 2.2% of managers and less than 1% of senior management in South Africa's top 100 companies were Africans. Coloureds and Indians comprised 2.6% and 3.3% of management respectively (Race Relations Survey 1991).

Widespread agitation against such imbalances gave rise to a serious rethinking by the state on the future of apartheid. The unbanning in February 1990 of its major opponents such as the African National Congress (ANC), Pan-African Congress (PAC), and South African Communist Party (SACP) and the release of political prisoners was an indication of this serious rethinking. But the process of reintegrating the unbanned political movements and individuals into mainstream political life in South Africa was accompanied by widespread political violence. All of the unbanned organizations accused the state of complicity in the violence by creating a covert "third force" to violently divide African dominated movements. Hindson *et al* (1994) contended that the spate of violence in African townships[1] in South Africa was the result of the state's fostering of class divisions within the Black population. In attempting to illustrate the state's double agenda, they argued that while the state sought to publicly negotiate a democratic future they covertly intervened in a way consistent with their repressive past to maintain White hegemony. Similarly Charney discussed vigilantism in South Africa as one aspect of the broader spectrum of violence in South Africa. To Charney, vigilante violence in South Africa was a form of counter-revolution that was initiated by the state against the extra-parliamentary movements. He

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[1] Huge housing complexes built by the state for the Coloured, Indian and African working classes. ·

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saw counter-revolutionary vigilantism as the unlicensed use of private violence to defend an oligarchic state under popular challenge (Charney 1991:1).

Throughout South Africa it was and still is the African masses of the lower income sectors in the townships who had fallen victim to vigilante initiated violence. Between 1985 and 1990 the cumulative death toll through vigilante violence was estimated to be between 3500 and 5500 people (Charney 1991). In the province of Natal, which accommodates the largest sector of South Africa's Indian population, it was estimated that between 2000 and 4000 African people were killed by Inkatha supporters, who are of Zulu origin and backed by the state until December 1990, as a Zulu cultural organization[2].

Both Hindson's *et al* (1994) and Charney's (1991) articles indicate that the then apartheid-state could only hold onto power through malicious means rather than through popular support. While most of the media and the state in South Africa continued to view this as Black on Black violence, its opponents disagreed with this version as oversimplistic. The President of the ANC, Nelson Mandela, in an address to a crowd of Indians at a Diwali celebration in October 1991 accused the state of fostering this violence with the intention of casting African political organizations in a negative way, while it made itself look like the custodian of peace and democracy. In the same talk Mandela warned Indians of the Whites repressive actions against them and cautioned them of possible manipulation to gain their votes in a future election (*The Leader,* October 30-November 2 1991).

There is a history to Mandela's mention of violence against Indians in South Africa, which needs to be understood if the subsequent violence against them is to be appropriately contextualised. It actually began soon after the initial batch of indentured labourers had completed their three-year contracts since 1860 with the colonists in Natal. In view of their swift rise in entrepreneurial activities soon after Indians were given land in lieu of their fares back to India, Whites began feeling increasingly threatened. From this period racist agitation against Indians began on an ad-hoc basis both formally and informally. It gradually developed into racially based legislation, which intermittently manifested itself into more violent forms.

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[2] At a special conference in December 1990, Inkatha, a Zulu cultural organisation, was transformed into a fully-fledged political party. Calling itself the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), they adopted a new constitution and opened their membership to all South African citizens.

Indian immigration

The hiring of India's citizens as indentured labourers in the British colonies in the nineteenth century had taken various forms. The process was selective and the inducement to immigrate was usually in the promise of future rewards. Many had agreed to venture into these unknown lands to escape the harshness of their impoverishment in India, whereas others were virtually abducted to work.

Indian immigration to South Africa had also followed a similar pattern. The necessity to attract indentured labourers to work here was born not out of a shortage of labour but of the unwillingness of the indigenous Zulu (predominantly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal) to be drawn into foreign economic practices. The Zulu had found their comfort in the social formation that was of their own making. Their participation in a monetary economy would not have been consistent, up to the end of the nineteenth century, with their own economic values and socio-political norms. On the contrary, White settlers were too priviledged to engage in manual forms of agricultural labour. Their non-involvement was aptly stated in the following words:

> **"In Natal, Whites considered it below their dignity to do manual work. Consequently the White Natalian did not expect to do farm work himself but to make a living and sometimes a fortune by employing other people to do the hard manual work under his direction"** (Palmer, quoted in Bugwandeen 1989:3).

It was upon this parochial perception of the role of Indians as labourers that initial Whites attitudes were predicated. Though not intended, it had sown the seeds for a more complex set of relationships that unfolded as former indentured labourers began to make their mark in the colony's economy, which persisted patrimonially into the twentieth century.

The first batch of indentured labourers arrived in South Africa on 16 November 1860. They had embarked on the shores of the east coast port of Durban, which was soon to become the major export centre for the lucrative sugar plantations developing around it. Indentured labourers were later joined by traders, mainly from the state of Gujerat, who paid their own way from India to Durban and became known as "passenger Indians". The employment of Indian indentured labour in Natal sugarcane fields since 1860 had yielded unexpected successes in harvests within a record-breaking period. In just one year their labour led to an

increase in the export of sugar cane from 26 000 pounds in 1863 to 100 000 pounds in 1864 (Meer 1969:24).

Natal's moderate climate and burgeoning economy also created attractive circumstances for many who came to the region to want to remain. The economic opportunities and the relative successes that were made by both indentured labourers and passenger Indians thereafter had encouraged many to take advantage over the colonists need for the Indian input in the development of the region. However, many ex-indentured Indians who had entered into businesses of their own posed severe threats to White enterprises. Two extracts from magisterial reports illustrate this point:

> "A few more Indian stores have been opened in the town of Verulam during the year, and two European stores have been closed for want of support, the Indians having entirely absorbed the petty trade with Indians and Natives".

and

> "Complaints continue to be made of the increasing number of Indians traders and Hawkers... These people render it impossible for small European store-keepers to make a living" (Pahad 1972:16).

Herein constituted the first signs of visibility of Indian fortitude and entrepreneurship and White agitation against them. Their successes were such that in 1901 the Protector of Indian Immigrants wrote that the employers realized the indispensability of Indian labour and pointed out that if Indian labour were withdrawn "The country would at once be simply paralyzed." In 1903 Sir Leigh Hullett further confirmed this contention when he stated that Durban was absolutely built by the Indian people (Pahad 1972:13). By 1910 there were a total of 149 791 people of Indian descent in South Africa. By this time many had dispersed out to the three other provinces in the country. In the Cape there were 6606, the Transvaal 10 148, the Orange Free State 106, and in Natal 133 031. Despite being coerced by repatriation policies and living under constant threat of these measures, Indians persevered until permanent citizenship was granted to them in 1961, although they remained disenfranchised. The most recent census figure of 1997 placed the Indian population figure to be under one million.

The population figure of 1910 was as much as the majority of Whites were prepared to accept of the Indian presence in the country. Agitation against the further import of indentured labour from India had brought about an abrupt halt to Indian immigration in

1914. However much White settlers in South Africa wanted to repatriate Indians back to India, they were constrained by virtue of them being subjects of the British Empire. The competition between Whites and Indians is rooted in the initial attitude of the colonists towards the Indians when they first arrived in Natal. After completing their three year contracts, which later increased to five years due to the value of their labour, indentured labourers were given the option to return to India on a free ticket or accept a piece of crown land in lieu of their fare. This inducement gave rise to a situation that inevitably challenged the monopoly in trade by White entrepreneurs in Natal, which brought out their fears, anxieties and insecurities in relation to the nascent Indian entrepreneurship. It is against this background that Whites had to carve out a coercive political situation that constrained open competition between themselves and Indians.

Structural violence

The enactment of constrictive legislative devices, described here as structural violence, were central to the attempts by White colonists to curb the rate of success amongst ex-indentured Indian labourers. The 1913 Immigration Regulation Act, especially designed to stop further Indian immigration into South Africa, was the result of the increasing anti-Indian sentiment by Whites. Their attitudes had shown that Indians in South Africa were acceptable only to the extent that they remained as labourers. Whites became fearful that ex-indentured labourers and passenger Indians were threatening their monopoly in trade. As their opposition against Indians gained momentum, it led to the appointment of a special commission of inquiry viz., the Wragg Commission, by the Natal Government in 1885 to enquire into White complaints. In a climate of intense racial prejudice, it was surprising that the Commission had found White fears against Indians to be unjustified, and had acknowledged the existence of the anti-Indian sentiment. But it recommended the restriction of free trading for Indians in the then Transvaal province, resulting in their severe restrictions on trade, residence and ownership of property. Following the traders was a small number of ex-indentured Indians who worked as waiters, domestic servants, and fruit and vegetable vendors in Transvaal.

To give legal sanction to White demands, the Asiatic Law Amendment Act, Act 2 of 1907, had called for the Registration of all Asiatics in the province of Transvaal. They were required to obtain new residence permits to replace those issued by the former Transvaal government. The Asiatic Land followed this and Trading Amendment Act, which

prohibited individuals of Indian and Chinese origin from acquiring new trading, licences. This law also made it difficult enough to allow them to circumvent the law and occupy premises through a White nominee by forming a company or buying fixed property (Bugwandeen 1989:6).

In other provinces too pressure from White citizens on their governments to restrict Indian economic and social mobility continued to bear upon this vulnerable sector of the country's population. In the Cape Colony only children born of Indian parents before 1913 were allowed to enter. But the stringent regulations attached to this privilege had forbidden many from emigrating to the Cape. When the province of Natal was allowed a degree of autonomy in 1893 by the British authorities it introduced an annual three pounds tax on all Indians who completed their periods of indentured labour. By 1913 when the Immigration Bill was introduced with regard to Indian indentured labourers, the issue of this tax was still not resolved.

This period had coincided with the civil disobedience campaigns organised by Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi in South Africa. Gandhi had made innumerable attempts to resist these laws through organising boycotts such as the *Dandi March* (a walk of hundreds of kilometers between Natal and the Transvaal), and by getting media coverage. Gandhi's already widely documented resistance against these constrictive legislative devices had eventually led to a repeal of them, although they did not transform the attitude of the majority of the Whites towards their Indian counterparts. This was evident in the ongoing attempts to frustrate Indians. The recommendations of the Lange Commission in 1925, that Indians live segregated lives were not promulgated because of the fall of the Smuts Government. However, the replacement of this government by the Hertzhog Government reinforced the Lange Commission's recommendations. In an ensuing parliamentary debate about voluntary segregation and voluntary repatriation, D.F. Malan declared in an assumptive fashion that was so characteristic in the discourse of colonial politics at that time:

> **"The bill frankly starts from the general supposition that the Indian, as a race in this country, is an alien element in the population, and that no solution of this question will be acceptable to the country unless it results in a very considerable reduction of the Indian in this country"** (Bugwandeen 1989: 7).

It was clear from this statement that their White political masters could not guarantee Indians in South Africa any degree of fairness in their treatment. The dire need to attract indentured labourers in the 1860's from India was radically transformed to a desperate need to expel them. As Calpin put it:

> **"The problem had passed in sixty years from how to attract Indians to Natal to the dilemma of how to get rid of them"**. (Bugwandeen 1989: 8).

A plea was made to the Union Government of South Africa by the Indian Government for a Round Table Conference. However, the former had initially agreed to accommodate a delegation from India, led by a G.F. Paddison, whose visit had eventually led to a Round Table Conference in which apparent agreements were reached. But the final analysis on either side showed distinctly different interpretations of their agreements. Hence there was no consensus on how to deal with the issue. A second Round Table Conference had to be called and took place on 12 January 1932. By the end of this session the quest for the repatriation of Indians had proved a dismal failure.

The entire decade of the 1930's had witnessed a number of commissions and select committees to investigate White grievances against Indian entrepreneurs. Much attention was given to the acquisition of properties in White areas (Greyling 1979: 303). It became apparent after the release of the Indian Penetration Commission Report in 1941, that Indians were acquiring properties in the areas designated for White occupation at an accelerated rate. To curb this growing "infiltration" the South African government had introduced the Trading and Occupation of Land Restriction Bill (Transvaal and Natal). This Bill had served as a compromise to the compulsory segregation, in both rural and urban areas, which demanded in the early 1940's. It had merely "Pegged"the position as it stood in March 1943, and hence became known as the "Pegging Act" (Greyling 1979).

Over time the institutionalized form of discrimination was intensified with even greater severity. The hegemony that Whites had acquired over the Indian, Coloured (people of mixed descent) and African masses had instilled in them a level of confidence that had eroded any foresight to predict the challenges likely to arise against their rule. Their policies lacked the sensitivity that was necessary to treat people from different ethnic and linguistic groups on equal terms. Hence the enactments that were accepted in Parliament continued to claw at the relative comfort that Indians had carved out for themselves in South Africa. The

1946 Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill enforced the demarcation of residential and commercial properties on racial lines. This prohibited the people from either staying or trading from their properties, thereby severely limiting Indians in commercial activities. However, this Act did not go so far as to deny Indians the right to own fixed property. The harsher measures introduced through the Group Areas Act of 1950 had systematically and ruthlessly removed Indians, as well as Coloureds and Africans, from areas they had established and in which they had developed a sense of belonging.

Often, the justification to forcibly remove people from their areas was couched in rhetoric that can be likened to a double-edged sword. In one way state officials were saying to entire communities who were being uprooted that their removals were for their long term interest, considering the near slum conditions in which they were living. It is the patronizing way in which Whites made decisions for Indians that makes these uprootings an issue. In another way, the state was making its supreme authority known to the disenfranchised Indians. Impoverished slum conditions had been a feature of areas occupied by Indians. Indeed, the Durban City Council had allowed the situation to fester, and they had used this as a justification to uproot their victims. In 1932 the Old Borough of Durban had trebled its size by extending its boundaries. Its population increased from 126 000 to approximately 220 000, of whom 50 000 of the newcomers were Indians. This effectively increased the number of Indians in Durban, thereby impacting upon the political economy of the city. Although Indians were an economically and socially diverse sector of Durban's population, ethnic or class diversity were never issues to be mobilised upon. A tacit understanding prevailed on the fact that their choices were limited and that coexistence was an imposition. Despite this, their taxable contributions to the city's coffers were based on standard rates of all its citizens. But the services they received through roads, electricity, water, sanitary facilities and transport in Indian's areas was conspicuously inferior to White areas. The lack of sporting and social facilities together with other legally enforced prohibitions that minimized contact with other classified groups had insulated Indians against free non-racial socialisation. As a result many successful entrepreneurs had turned their attention to business, acquiring more properties wherever possible and massively investing in their homes.

Indeed, Indians saw themselves as a permanent part of the South African population, to which the state had to contend. Until 1961 matters pertaining to those of Indian origin were

administered through a subdivision of the Department of the Interior, under the Directorate of Asiatic Affairs. Its function was to oversee the application of legislation pertaining to registration, control over inter-provincial movement and the application of the repatriation scheme to the minority who opted for it.

In 1962 suburbs that were inhabited by Indians only in terms of the Group Areas Act (1950), were permitted to establish local authorities led by Indians - but whom the Senate nominated. In 1964 the National Indian Council was formed by the state after rigorous selection of individuals mainly from the business class. In 1965 the National Indian Council had its name changed to the South African Indian Council. But only in 1985 were Indians represented in Parliament through a tri-cameral system for Whites, Coloureds and Indians. Africans were excluded from this structure. The affairs of each designated group were administered separately in the House of Delegates for Indians, House of Representatives for Coloureds, and House of Assembly for Whites. It was against this background that a social hierarchy was created in South Africa, which gave Indians a marginal advantage over Africans. By its creation the tri-cameral parliamentary system made Indians *per se* visible as collaborators within an oppressive system run by Whites. However, the House of Delegates did not enjoy popular support from the Indian Community - having acquired less than twelve percent of the Indian voting population's endorsement. It is nevertheless expected that Africans should feel a sense of relative deprivation when they compare themselves with Indians.

The tri-cameral system was about the last measure that was sought by Whites to control and cajole Indians into submission. By this time the political turmoil, which unfolded through the ANC's campaign to make the state ungovernable, made Africans the bigger threat than Indians did to White hegemony.

Physical violence

Apart from the policies of structural violence that were pursued by the majority of Whites, there is convincing evidence that they also either tacitly endorsed or actively encouraged physical violence against Indians. At least two major clashes between Africans and Indians stand out in the history of ethnic violence in South Africa. The incidents that took place in January 1949 and August 1985 unfolded in numerous ways, feeding into the different perceptions to which people subscribed. To the uninformed Africans and Indians neither

ethnic group was considered worthy of any trust, hence the schism between them. To the racist White policy-makers and subscribers, the doctrine of separate existences became justifiable in view of African-Indian hostility. Separate existence, they argued, was the most effective way to avoid ethnic conflict. But to the critics of South Africa's practice of race based society, there were definite historical explanations for the outbursts of ethnic violence.

Writers who are familiar with South African history and critical of the country's racial policies have provided explanations for the Indian-African conflicts that go beyond the simplistic typologies of those who favoured separate existences. The works by Nuttal (1989), Meer (1985), Hughes (1987) and Byerly (1989), amongst others, have summarized the events of 1949 and 1985 as manifestations of conflictual relations that are symptomatic of the politics of divide and rule. They illustrate how the state, run by the dominant White ethnic group of Afrikaners, secured its position by playing the subject ethnic groups against one another through a system of differentiated access to power, economic opportunities and basic resources.

A brief descriptive account of the 1949 and 1985 clashes between Indians and Africans will help in understanding the nature of the differentiated positions of the country's racial segments. However, only the ensuing analysis will help to contextualise these incidents and place them in proper analytical perspective.

From Thursday, 13 January 1949, Durban experienced a weekend of public violence, in which 1 087 were injured and 142 died. Official figures stated that 87 Africans, 50 Indians, 1 White and 4 unidentified people were killed. At least 1 factory, 58 stores and 247 dwellings were damaged (Nuttal 1989:1). The event that led to this pandemonium was the apparent assault of an African boy, George Madondo, by an Indian shopkeeper.

As news of this spread it became more distorted. The key culprits in this violence were possibly the domestic African workers (*Amalaita*), who formed gangs and ruled Durban's streets and parks at night. They were well known for their stick fights and assaults on unsuspecting victims (Nuttal 1989). It was believed that through their coerciveness and ability to aggressively persuade, members of the Amalaita encouraged African beerhall drinkers and homeward bound African workers to join in their fracas. Indian individuals and their properties were their targets.

The violence continued into the next day when at about 4:00pm a crowd of about 1 000 African hostel dwellers from Somtseu Road (Central Durban) headed for the Indian trading areas. Police had responded by firing warning shots, which went unheeded. They then shot into the crowd, killing at least 4 people, and sent the others scattering in all directions. No attempts were made to challenge the police. But the violence gradually spread to the residential areas in Durban as the rumours were increasingly inflamed. The most affected areas were Cato Manor and Clairwood, home and trading areas to mainly people of Indian descent. The violence lasted up to Sunday 16 January 1949.

In August 1985, the assassination of Victoria Mxenge, a lawyer cum-activist in the African community led to extensive school boycotts in the African townships. Their initial attacks against quasi government targets such as schools, state administration buildings and vehicles had led to running battles with police and later with vigilante groups suspected to be members of Inkatha. This eventually gave rise to harassment of Indian shopkeepers and looting and destruction of their business, homes and clinics. Although most of the violence in the cluster of neighbouring Durban African townships subsided, it continued in Inanda[3] in a conspicuously ethnic way, with Indian owned businesses and homes being the targets.

At least 42 Indian-owned shops, as many houses and three surgeries operated by one Indian doctor were destroyed by arson. The last incident of violence, which is viewed as part of the Inanda upsurge, occurred on 13 August when the bodies of a young Indian boy, his father and his father's brother were found burnt in Inanda. This series of events led to 2000 Indians from Inanda fleeing for shelter to Phoenix, a neighbouring Indian working class township. Ironically, the Gandhi Settlement in the area was set alight by 300 Indian youths calling themselves "Phoenix Boys" (Hughes 1987: 351). However, stories about who really destroyed the historical site once used by Mahatma Gandhi remain inconsistent. Some maintained that it was marauding African mobs who were responsible while others felt it was youth from Phoenix who did not wish to leave a site of such sentimental value to be destroyed by Africans.

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[3] Until the time of the riots in Inanda, Africans and Indians peacefully coexisted. Inanda's historical importance lies in it being the first area in which Indian indentured labourers were settled after their contracts with the colonists expired.

A peculiar turn was taken in the policing of Inanda during this upheaval. On the night of the fourth day of the incident in Inanda, rioting Inkatha *impis* (Zulu warriors) were being dispersed in the area "to restore law and order". They were being projected by the White liberal media as "doing a fine job" (Meer 1985: 1). However, innumerable accounts had reached the public of Inkatha *impis* searching for looted goods, appropriating them to unknown destinations, and simultaneously ordering all able bodied African men to join them. Interestingly Meer's (1985) research revealed that her informants spoke of White policemen encouraging Africans to loot Indian homes but not to harm them physically. This situation became even more questionable when Inanda residents reported that White evaluators had surveyed Indian-owned properties to evaluate them just before the attacks against Indians. Indeed, this evidence resonates convincingly with Charney's (1991) account of counter revolutionary vigilantism.

On the Sunday after the first attacks on Indians simmered down, Inkatha held a "peace rally" near the Gandhi Settlement. The then Secretary General of Inkatha, Dr Oscar Dhlomo, stated:

> **"We have come here to reassure our Indian brothers and sisters of Inkatha's willingness to co-operate with them in all efforts that aimed at restoring peace, law and order in the area"** (Hughes 1987: 51).

However requests by the affected people to secure assurances that they will be protected by the Kwa-Zulu Government if they returned to Inanda did not materialize. Instead they were offered exceedingly low sums, significantly less than the market value, for their properties. Evidently the claim to restore peace, law and order was only meant for public consumption. Covertly, Indians were being coerced into giving up their properties in Inanda, without payment. Some were paid insignificant sums, and others simply lost everything without even recourse for compensation (see case studies in chapter three).

The violence in perspective

The analyses by Meer (1985), Nuttal (1989) Hughes (1987) and Sitas (1986) produced perspectives on the violence that differ significantly from official and media explanations. On the 1949 clashes between Africans and Indians the state appointed Commission of Inquiry concluded that they were race riots (Nuttal 1989). On the 1985 clashes none of the references mentioned above had referred to any commission of inquiry to investigate this spurt of incidents. The then state President, P.W. Botha, only publicly spoke two months

later in mid-October 1985, of 763 deaths of Africans on unrest in KwaZulu-Natal. He blamed them all on then banned African National Congress. He made no specific reference to the murder of the attorney Victoria Mxenge or of the displacement of Indians from Inanda.

To place these historical conflicts in perspectives it is important to examine some of the peculiar events that preceded each of them and the incidents which took place in the process.

The 1940s were witness to a number of attempts by African entrepreneurs to enter into the business of private passenger transport. In terms of the then existing segregation policies they were given preference to acquire licences for transport into their own areas only. This gave rise to African hopes to enter into some form of self-employed enterpreneurship. But it also led to a strong racial discourse whereby municipal and Indian bus owners blocked a number of African applicants from acquiring these during this period (Nuttal 1989:18).

Explaining this racial discourse, Webster (1978) pointed out the racial hierarchy in Durban with Whites at the top, Indians in the centre and Africans last. This set the basis for differential access into economic and political empowerment. The city was characterized by severe strains in inter-race relations, exploitation, oppression and discrimination. Quoting Rex, Nuttal pointed out that **"its society was shaped by stereo-typing and justification based on skin colour; its power relations were rooted in an unfree labour market enforced through state power"** (Nuttal 1989: 24). Thus 'race' was the central discourse of domination and exploitation in Durban, thereby creating a scenario that was bound to generate racial conflict.

This is why the awarding of transport licences for African townships to Indians was met with stone throwing, boycotts and violent incidents (Nuttal 1989). Over the broader economic framework, this was the attitude that characterized the consolidation of race and class interests. Evidently, it also effectively played the disenfranchised groups against each other. Indeed this had set the basis for a hardening of Indian-African relationships, which eventually gave rise to the January 1949 clashes. The assault of George Madondo was only a chance incident that served as a convenient pretext for the ensuing violent clash between Indians and Africans. The state used the incidents in this episode as one of its justifications for the introduction of the Population Registration Act (1950) - which introduced the four

racial categories of White, Coloured, Indian and Africans, and the Group Areas Act (1950) -
which created artificial shortages of land for those who were not classified White and which
restricted each category to its own areas.

The active role of the state in generating conditions for mutual hatred between Indians and
Africans can be further gauged by looking at a number of actions which preceded the 1949
riots. Cato Manor, a suburb situated on the outskirts of Central Durban, was occupied by
both Indians and Africans because it was a convenient residential area for both Africans and
Indians. Its attraction lay in its closeness to all urban amenities, including the central
business district, as well as its good soil and weather conditions. By declaring it an Indian
Group Area, the authorities had sown the seeds for racial friction between the two groups.
When the 1949 clashes occurred, the Cato Manor post office was also destroyed. Nuttal's
(1989:25) contention was that **"if there had been other state buildings in the district they
would probably have met the same fate"**. He added: **"It was the militant defiance of
the police orders rather than the attacks on Indian people and property which
prompted the police to embark on a shoot to kill policy"**.

The latter quotation is related to the threat of a strike by African workers in April 1949, in
which Indians were not involved. Zulu Phungula, a trade union activist was banished from
Durban in 1942, but was allowed to return in 1948. He gave a call for a general strike by
African workers in April 1949. Unwilling to accommodate his militancy, the state banned
him once again for 10 years, and crushed the possibility of a strike. In the second half of
1949 the Durban municipality had to grapple with increasing African militancy against it, as
well as with long term policy responses to the "riots". To Nuttal, the riots which began with
attacks on Indian commercial targets, escalated into a wider challenge against White
authority. Large numbers of Africans sensed a moment of opportunity to resist the state
with popular force, not directly but through communal assault on a vulnerable, racially
defined target (Nuttal 1989:34). Similarly, Kirk argued with reference to the 1949 clash,
that instead of attacking the ruling White class the aggression was deflected against an
exploitative minority (cited in Byerly 1989).

In the second episode of violence during August 1985 in Inanda, the event was ominously
preceded by a call in the then House of Delegates by Baldeo Dookie (nominated Minister of
Housing in the Indian House of Delegates) for Indians in Inanda to leave the area (Meer

1985). The call was interesting since Dookie did not have a mandate to represent Indians in Inanda or anywhere else; neither was he on record for trying to seek public opinion for this purpose. After the weekend of violence, Rajbansi (then chairman of the Minister's council in the House of Delegates) echoed the sentiments of Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi (President of Inkatha) characterizing the violence in Inanda as part of the onslaught orchestrated by the ANC to violently overthrow the state. Neither individual alluded to Dookie's speech in Parliament, nor to the assurance of protection that Indians were asking for if they returned to Inanda.

In the process of the clashes, the media and academics made innumerable reports of organized attacks by African mobs from outside Inanda. Reports of police and army complacency to save Indian property came from accounts given by African residents themselves, who had peacefully coexisted with Indians up to this point. In one account presented by Meer (1985), a White policeman allegedly encouraged Africans to loot Indian homes and shops, but not to harm them. Against the background of this information several fundamental questions were still left unanswered:

- Were Dookie and other state officials aware of the impending attack on Indians?
- If not, why was Inanda suddenly brought up in Parliament by Dookie?
- Why were the actions of the police and army not challenged by the House of Delegates and Inkatha officials?
- Why were Inkatha impis (warriors) given the task of restoring law and order in Inanda, when at this stage it was still under South African jurisdiction?
- Why did the House of Delegates not ensure that victims of the clashes were compensated adequately?
- Why did the HOD not opposed the incorporation of Inanda into KwaZulu?

Meer (1985) offered an explanation that appeared to tie up the eerie notion around the House of Delegate sell-out of Indians in Inanda. She argued that the state simply pleaded financial poverty as the main obstacle to buying off Indian property in Inanda. Its real intention was to transfer Indian owned land to the then KwaZulu Government as part of its separatist plan to increase the size of Bantustan[4] territories at no cost to itself. The "riots" served as an effective pretext to justify incorporation of Inanda into KwaZulu boundaries.

The violence in Inanda in August 1985 was not an isolated incident. Meer's (1985) view was that it must be seen as an extension of the violence that occurred in other townships at the same time. But the point made by Hughes is an important one, that the violence in Inanda was not the same as the violence in the townships of Durban and elsewhere (Hughes 1987:334). Whilst Meer did not initially illustrate the distinctiveness of the violence in Inanda in comparison with the neighbouring townships, her leaning towards a conspirational explanation that Africans were set against Indians does illustrate this. By emphasizing the significance of a number of incidents which appeared more than coincidental, she presented the violence as planned, premeditated and involving deep collusion between state, African landlords and poverty stricken African tenants. Referring to the state as the major culprit she stated:

> "Inanda has been earmarked for "release" to Africans in terms of the 1936 Land Act[5], but... the government (has not) enough money to buy off privately owned land. How better to short-circuit the whole process than through a racial attack" (Meer 1985:10, also quoted in Hughes 1987:332).

Although Hughes (1987: 332) is correct in classifying Meer's account as an important "source book, rather than a sustained analysis" her rejection of Meer's conspiratorial account is not matched by a replacement of an adequate explanation. For instance, the mention of Dookie's statement that Indians should vacate Inanda, that White valuators appeared in the area almost immediately after the attacks and that Inanda was incorporated into KwaZulu immediately after the violence, must be located within the context of a conspiracy and viewed against wider state policies, its historical relationship towards its subject communities, and its general ideological interests.

The innumerable interviews, case studies and affidavits from Africans and Indians in Inanda can be ascribed directly and indirectly to a conspiracy. However, it will be too simplistic to reduce the entire violent episode to a conspiracy of the Whites. Indeed the collective analyses of the 1985 violence by Hughes (1987), Sitas (1989) and Byerley (1989) did feed into a general perspective of anti-apartheid writers who have bravely confronted state versions political violence with alternative explanations. Together their accounts illustrate, how the state sought to advance its own interests in KwaZulu-Natal by effectively making

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[4] "Bantustan" is a perjorative term for "Homelands" used by anti-apartheid activists.
[5] The 1936 Land Act is an amendment of the 1913 Land Act, which restricted the African majority to 13% of the land.

the majority ethnic group (Africans) compete for basic resources such as land, against an equally disenfranchised minority (Indians).

Conclusion

Since Whites started feeling threatened against the rising influence of Indians soon after their arrival in South Africa, they had to resort to the power of constrictive legislation to safeguard their hegemony. After failing to repatriate Indians to India, discriminatory laws initially served as a measure to stem the progress that Indians were making as self-employed entrepreneurs. These laws started serving a much more useful purpose as Africans were gradually drawn into the labour market and their demands grew concomitantly with their contribution to the economy. By introducing laws such as the 1946 Pegging Act, later to be consolidated as the 1950 Group Areas Act, they gave one subjugated group (Indians) significant advantages over another (Africans), thereby deliberately setting into motion a process that was loaded with a potential for violent conflict over basic resources. The shrewdness of such a process was that it effectively deflected attention away from the culprit i.e. the White ruling elite. To the uninformed lay masses that were constrained by the inability to conceptualize their disadvantaged position, the group that enjoyed the advantage in the competition for resources became the exploiter, manipulator and culprit, instead of the real perpetrators.

This was evidently the aim of the successive South African governments since colonization and through the period of apartheid. Constrictive and divisive legislation became a substitute for the brute desire to repatriate Indians back to India. Griesman (1975: 254) described such a focus in apt words:

> **"Laws are generally a conservative element in society, in that they help to make interaction predictable. They have the effect of crystallizing behaviour patterns that have already become customary by defining the limits of deviation and setting the penalties for infractions. Laws protect various strata from one another, typically favouring "haves" instead of "have-nots".**

Indeed, it was such laws that served to privilege the White segment of South African society. It also initially facilitated structural violence against Indians and later manifested into physical violence, which was simplistically dubbed by the state, as "Indian-African riots". The circumstantial evidence has shown that these episodes of violence were more appropriately rooted in the discriminatory policies of apartheid rather then the inability of two racial or ethnic groups coexisting with each other. The discussion illustrates that only

when Africans were frustrated in their attempts to participate as self-employed transport operators in Cato Manor and when they were forbidden by the Group Areas Act from remaining there, that their anger was turned against the Indians and the state. The orchestrated violence in Inanda revealed that the clash was hardly about African and Indian neighbours setting themselves against each other.

What this illustrates is that for Indians in South Africa, their minority position places them in a state of perpetual vulnerability and insecurity. Hence they remain prone to political manipulation and varying forms of violence. The 1949 and 1985 clashes provide ample evidence to support this contention. The evidence in the chapters that follow will serve to further demonstrate this point. Although South Africa has produced a constitution that is based on universal adult suffrage and which is intended to forbid the structural violence that the apartheid constitution encouraged, the position of the majority of Indians will remain stagnant precisely because of their minority status. Their disadvantage lies in their inability to mobilise support against the state with the force that the numerically stronger African majority can command. In this context, the state, in its own interests, will be bound to give first priority to those segments that are likely to pose the biggest threat to political and economic stability and which have been deemed to be more marginalised than others.

CHAPTER THREE

Reproducing the under-class among Indians: variation and fluidity in household composition in Phoenix, Durban

Introduction

In the last chapter the discussion showed how the entry into the market by Indians, as small scale farmers and hawkers soon after their indenture contracts were completed in the 1860s, and their collaboration with the Durban Municipality officials in the 1930s and 1940s to block African applicants for transport licences in Cato Manor, created a space for their middle class aspirations. It was these relative successes that increased their competitiveness and visibility in the region's burgeoning economy. However, it was upon these successes that the entire Indian population was widely judged and stereotypes about their standard of living emerged. Often, it was asserted that the Indian patriarchal joint family facilitated household enrichment. Very little attention was paid to the extent of poverty and the material conditions under which most Indians lived in the twentieth century. Even the most critical of the social scientists during apartheid had not realised the extent of poverty that existed within the Indian population. Fatima Meer, an eminent sociologist and activist against apartheid, realised this gross underestimation when she visited the Indian dominated Chatsworth township, to mobilise support against the White dominated political parties during the run-up to the 2 June 1999 general election with the *ad hoc* Concerned Citizens Group[1]. Until this point, she propagated the view that only six percent of the Indian population lived poverty stricken lives (see last paragraph before the conclusion). The purpose of this chapter is to address these issues by analysing the structural characteristics of a group of Indian households, which do not conform to the conventional notion of patriarchal joint family. It attempts to delineate the variations in lower class household compositions in an urban Indian dominated residential area, and to contribute to the ethnographic landscape of South Africa's lower class domestic formations. I emphasise this particular racial category for at least one major reason i.e. South Africa's stratified social ladder, consisting of Whites first, then Coloureds, Indians and Africans respectively, had given rise to differentiated access to political office and economic resources.

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[1] This group was formed with the expressed purpose of swaying the Indian vote away from the White dominated parties to the ANC.

The perceptions of and responses to transformation will be influenced by the manner in which any post-apartheid government handles the damage that has been inflicted upon Indian normative customs.

The effects of white hegemony, consolidated through the ideology of apartheid, are reasonably well documented in statistical and macro based researches, especially as it has affected Africans (Greenberg, 1980; Manganyi & du Toit, 1990; Thompson and Butler, 1975; Wilson & Ramphele, 1989). There is therefore a double-edged criticism against these approaches. Most commonly they have articulated the ills of apartheid in terms of national oppression of the African alone, rather than in terms of degrees of racial and class oppression. They further ignored the variations of the historical experiences and social manifestations of other racial categories such as the Coloureds and Indians. The lack of clarity on the diversity among people of Indian origin is worsened by inaccurate reflections on them, especially in the oversimplified manner in which the form and history of the joint family or their general achievements are articulated. In her Durban study, Jithoo (1978; 1985) generalised that the joint family was restricted to "the minimal genealogical specification of two or more related elementary families". Similarly, in an interview with the *Sunday Tribune* to mark the 100th anniversary of Mohandas K. Gandhi's arrival in South Africa, another prominent researcher made a similar generalisation about Indians in South Africa:

> **Today Prof. Freund estimates that only a submerged tenth of Indian people are labourers, and that more than half are working class: skilled workers and people in supervisory positions, with many using their skills to become small businessmen** (*Sunday Tribune*, 30 May 1993).

Freund's response in this interview is consistent with his subsequent statements on the Indian working class, on which he uncritically projects the pursuit of petty bourgeois interests (Frend 1995). Such positions avoid the impact of racial discrimination and its effects on the cohesiveness of the domestic structure of Indians since their arrival in South Africa in 1860, over-emphasises aversion to the incorporation of non-genealogical kin.

These problems have directed me to three key issues that this chapter addresses. Firstly, what are the specific historical factors that affected underclass Indian joint families, and how are their experiences different from those of Africans? Secondly, what is the nature of domestic structures in Phoenix? Thirdly, what are the theoretical implications of the Phoenix evidence?

The concept of the household

This approach, in favour of examining the oppression of Africans, gave rise to research in anthropology which illustrated the link between the discriminatory effects of apartheid and the erosion of the most basic unit of their social structure, i.e. the family or the lineage. Some of the more careful and critical historical materialist analyses by Murray (1981; 1987), Sharp and Spiegel (1985) and Spiegel (1986) have provided mechanisms, which demystify the complexity of domestic relationships in South Africa's rural areas. Constrained by the applicability of family, genealogical co-resident dwelling groups and conventional kinship structures, they produced out of their data the alternative analytical tools of "household" (Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; Murray, 1981; 1987; Martin and Beittel, 1987) and "site" (Spiegel, 1986). Their evidence on households and sites was not merely for academic interrogation. It provided an insight into how the use of conventional concepts can provide misleading information on the fabric of African social structure. Migration and the breakdown of the lineage had imposed a need for alternative analytical concepts to describe the dynamism of social formations in South Africa's rural areas.

Collectively these writers view the rural African households as conglomerations of economically marginalised individuals who are both kin and non-kin and who 'pool their resources for their mutual benefit. The meagreness of their material conditions has produced a situation of frequent turnover in household residents, and often-complete dissolution of it as a social unit. The temporal nature of the household structure has led Spiegel (1986) to adopt the 'site' on which households set up their homesteads as a more reliable unit of analysis. The household is characterised by male absenteeism - brought about by the export of labour to South Africa's core industrial areas; the emergence of female responsibility and the reversal of gender roles, wide geographical dispersion of genealogical kin - giving rise to differential *de facto* and *de jure* populations; and dependence either upon remittances, or upon subsistence farming through various contractual agreements for their survival. Taking these factors into account, Martin and Beittel (1987: 218) stated that "Constituted by a small group the household is the unit that ensures the continued reproduction of labour through organising the consumption of a collective fund of material - a unit therefore different from the family, co-resident dwelling groups and kinship structures. The household may encompass these units, or be structured along their lines, but it may not and so is not identified with them."

It is in the latter sense that I use the concept household to refer to my data from Phoenix. It will demonstrate that the household in an Indian urban complex constitutes a range of variables, which are different from the characteristics of the rural African household. Not hampered by male absenteeism, or reliant upon remittances, or farming, the household in Phoenix is meant to refer to at least 3 things:

1. institutions of kinship responsibility which include principles of matriarchy and matrilineality;
2. institutions of foster care, arising out of a normative value quite similar to Spiegel's (1986) research in Matatiele, Transkei; and
3. informally arranged agreements derived from financial costs and ethical behaviour, which are of mutual benefit to legal tenants of the local authority and illegal sub-tenants who are forced into this situation through a lack of housing.

In analytical and theoretical terms the household concept has come to symbolise a shift away from the classical notion of family and domestic cycle since Fortes' (1958) pioneering publication on the subject. While its strength lay in its analytical parsimony it allowed two generations of anthropologists to make sense of complex synchronic survey material by understanding an often bewildering variety of types of household composition and representing merely typically different phases in a "typical" diachronic sequence (Murray 1987: 236).

Jithoo (1978; 1985) uncritically used the development cycle in her analyses of the Indian joint family in Durban, South Africa. Whilst she was correct in applying the normative sense of domestic cycle to the analysis of her data on Indian family businesses in Durban, her theoretical position remains in the stagnant trap of over-simplification of domestic formations amongst South Africa's Indians. She generalised that the joint family is restricted to **"the minimal genealogical specification of two or more related elementary families"** (Jithoo, 1978:89; 1985). Such a position ignores the impact of racial discrimination and its effects on the cohesiveness of the domestic structure of Indians since their arrival in South Africa in 1860. It rests too heavily on the normative sense of joint family, as an institution averse to the incorporation of non-genealogical kin into its fold. This generalisation has directed me to three key issues that this paper attempts to address. Firstly what are the specific historical factors which impacted upon lower class Indian joint families? In other words, how are their experiences different from that of Africans? Secondly, what is the nature of domestic structure amongst lower class Indians in Phoenix?

And thirdly what are the theoretical implications for the joint family and household, in view of the data I present?

The Indian joint family: history and experience

From their early history in South Africa (since 1860) Indians were constrained to reproduce the joint family structure. Their living arrangements were in barrack accommodation that precluded provision for families. From archival records Meer (1969: 65) pointed out that "Whatever attitudes the Indians brought to the South African situation, there was at first little chance for them to establish the normal Indian family pattern." Colonial politics therefore gave rise to the formation of unconventional patterns of domestic arrangements, which also led to placing a sexual premium on women. On this issue while in South Africa, Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi commented:

> **"I have not the space here in the present to narrate how they broke through all the restraints which religion or morality imposes, or to be more accurate, how these restraints gave way and how the very distinction between a married woman and a concubine ceased to exist among these people"** (Meer 1969: 65).

White antagonism against Indians was not simply for the sake of it. After their contracts of indentured labour expired, Indians bought seemingly infertile land and turned it into productive ground, and competed favourably with White farmers. They started hawking and opened retail outlets that caused European traders to close down their stores, and their contribution to the construction of the Greater Durban infrastructure was an accomplishment almost without input from other racial groups (Pahad 1972: 16). In this kind of rising prominence European annoyance against Indians started taking root.

Colonial administrators and subsequent Union Governments attempted to curb the economic potential in the Indian community by introducing measures, which militated against the ethic of collective responsibility in domestic, social and economic spheres. The attack against these spheres was first formalised when the Natal Legislature introduced three stifling enactments:

1. Act No. 8 of 1896, disenfranchising Indians,
2. The Immigration Registration Act No. 1 of 1897, aimed at discouraging further Indian immigration to Natal, and
3. Dealer Licence Act No. 18 of 1897, which closed their access to business licences (Swanson, 1983).

These devices set the tone for the relations between Whites and Indians and illustrated the privilege the former would have in determining the nature of policies for the latter, and the impact they would have in the quality of their existence.

The assault against Indians reached another climax in January 1927 in the form of the Cape Town Agreement. This Agreement has as one of its stipulations that Indians who wish to remain in South Africa must be prepared to adopt western standards of life. This was meant to have implications for the joint family. In their Final Memorandum to the Indian Penetration Commission in April 1941(b) (p41: 19d), the Natal Indian Congress (NIC - founded by Mahatma Gandhi), in a plea for tolerance of the Indians acquisition of property for residential purposes, had stressed that since the passing of the Cape Town Agreement there was "a break up of the joint family living system." In what seemed like an attempt to convince and placate the authorities the point was repeated several times in the Memorandum. The NIC made a compassionate plea not to provide council housing on a rental basis, but to permit Indians to buy their own properties so they may build on them according to resources and needs.

Throughout Natal local authorities remained intransigent with respect to relaxing measures that forbade Indians from acquiring properties. For several years in the decade of the 1930's no properties were sold and no council houses were built for Indians by the local authorities. When efforts did begin in the 1940's the design of the houses and the size of the plots permitted occupation of nuclear families only (Ramphal 1989). In effect this ruled out the possibility of continuing with market gardening. In a Memorandum on Housing submitted to the Natal Indian Judicial Commission in 1944 the NIC recommended that certain features of the Indian economy be recognised as a basis for their development. They stated that the dual character of this economy, i.e. employment in industry and trade and in market gardening, was carried out in property that was contiguous with their houses. The authorities were also reminded that Provincial Administrators had recognised that market gardening and the joint families were effective barriers against unemployment and social alienation.

However the state paid no attention to the NIC's plea. Through the inception of the Group Areas Act, 1950, the State's position on Indian housing was entrenched and gained momentum. Ramphal (1989: 81) pointed out that:

> "Resettlement under the Group Areas Act and Municipal Housing Schemes encouraged the isolation of households from their wider family groups, thus obligation to kinsmen is difficult to fulfil. Homes provided under the schemes are not designed to accommodate the joint family pattern of life. A separate dwelling for each nuclear family unit is provided, thus discouraging the joint family household".

But this is as much as Ramphal was able to concede about the disruptive nature of the Group Areas Act. Her emphasis was more on the encroaching force of Westernisation as the agent of change rather than the internal policies of the South African government. Sooklal and Singh (1993) too saw the Group Areas Act as disruptive and manipulative. They discussed it at greater length in conjunction with other associated laws such as the Pegging Act 1943, The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946, Community Development Act of 1966, Slum Clearance Act of 1966 and the Expropriation Act No. 63 of 1975. The joint family was severely hampered by the collective impact of these legislative devices.

However, planning for Indian housing continued on a non-consultative basis and ignored the culturally linked factors of market gardening and the joint family. Two major townships' in the late 1950's (Chatsworth) and mid 1970's (Phoenix) began construction. Lower class Indians were doubly disadvantaged in that these townships failed to fully accommodate homeless Indians, and the Group Areas Act created an artificial shortage of land for them which in turn led to escalating prices for property (Pather 1950; Ramphal 1989; Maharaj 1997). It was problems associated with the shortage of housing together with sentiment and unemployment that sustained the joint family, but not in its conventionally understood form.

Residential turnover: a brief overview
Apart from being forced into nuclear styled accommodation, Indians were further constrained by a lack of or minimum yards, or communally shared yards, and a by-law imposition of a maximum of two people per bedroom. The official position of ignoring the semi-urban status of Indians up to the 1940's, unquestioningly assuming that the majority should be urbanised and of taking responsibility to provide housing for lower class Indians, had led to a situation in at least 50% of the domestic structures in Phoenix that do not represent the nuclear family nor the conventional patriarchal structure. The housing

backlog, unemployment and impoverishment gave rise to circumstances, which enforced a process of restructuring of domestic units in Phoenix.

Residents in Phoenix have demonstrated a greater degree of flexibility about incorporation into the household than existing literature and conventional understanding suggest. Often, incorporation into the domestic unit may include people who are not genealogical kin to the legal tenants. Incorporation usually means sub-letting for a fixed monthly cash payment through an informal agreement. This practice is widespread despite being an infringement of the Durban City Council by-laws. Periods of household incorporation vary and are determined by the ability of the outsiders to adjust to the expectations and rules of the host family, and of the former's ability to pay either their "rent" or meet the costs of incidental expenses. The endemic poverty in Phoenix has led to a process of ongoing fission and fusion that is determined by the resources of the sub-tenant as well as his/her personality.

This phenomenon has led to a level of household fluidity that bears, as the evidence below will reveal, significant similarities to research done in South Africa's rural periphery (Murray 1981; Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; Spiegel, 1986; Martin and Beittel, 1987). The longitudinal data on the *de facto* and *de jure* household composition (Murray 198 1; Spiegel 1986) and the fictive kinship relations which emerged in Lesotho, Matatiele and Qwa-Qwa (Sharp and Spiegel, 1985) respectively, is a signal reflection of the insecurity of people and impermanence of ad hoc strategies in household arrangements, which persuaded Spiegel to accept the "site" as his unit of analysis. But this approach too brought with it its own problems, as he pointed out: "complete changes are possible in the occupancy of certain sites across time, as for example when a site and the houses are transferred from one owner to another..." (Spiegel 1986: 20).

Such a problem did not present itself over the four years of my research in Phoenix. Indians are noted for attaching such strong sentimental values to properties they acquire, that to part with or from them is almost akin to an unwanted sibling separation. In their 1944 Memorandum the NIC stressed this point in similar terms to discourage the state from building rental scheme flats in favour of privately owned property. In their first statement on the subject of Amenities and Housing presented to the Indian Penetration Commission on 2 April 1941 (a) the NIC stated: "Due regard must be had to the character of the Indian which differs vastly from that of the European or Native. The Indian, regardless of the

smallness of his income will hardly ever fail to meet the instalments due on a property he is buying. He has an inborn and burning urge to own his own home however humble, and he will endure amazing personal sacrifices to achieve this end" (Annexure B, p.46). Highlighting similar sentiments Kuper (1960) declared that to an Englishman his house is his castle, but to an Indian his house is his shrine. In a revisit in July/August 1993 to 15 selected rented flats in Phoenix since first contact between 1989 and 1990, all of the legal tenants still occupied the premises. But there was tremendous turnover in composition and size of most houses during the four-year period.

Residential turnover in Phoenix: a profile

Research in Phoenix started with informal interviews in February 1989 on an informal and *ad hoc* basis at the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa in Avoca, Durban, where food was distributed to Phoenix schools to feed indigent pupils. Access to individuals and their households was first gained through recipients of this project and gradually increased through informal networking. Beneficiaries were eager to engage in discussion out of their felt need to discuss the level of impoverishment in Phoenix and out of appreciation for the service to their children.

At my fifteenth interview I isolated one of the twenty-two schools where children were beneficiaries of the feeding scheme. From the housing units that surrounded the school, an arbitrary boundary was drawn around the first ten blocks (60 flats - each block comprising 6 flats). "Housing unit" here refers to the flats owned and rented by the Durban City Council to nuclear families only. A door to door survey was carried out during evenings and weekends when household heads were expected to be home. Fifty-eight extensive interviews were done, out of which twenty-seven cases had revealed compositions that are in constant flux and had more than the legally permitted occupancy of two per bedroom. Between July and August 1993 fifteen of the twenty-seven flats were revisited. All were still occupied by the original tenants. Four of the fifteen continued to take responsibility for parents, married and unmarried siblings, and in one case a father reincorporated his daughter and her family into his household because her husband was an alcoholic.

The approximate average income per household in Table One is R537, which is less than half the current (1993) minimum wage of R1400 required for a household of 6 persons. It is a mere R100 increase or approximately 30 % more than the figure of 1983/4 household

subsistence level (HSL) (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 17). The cash that was needed in terms of the HSL in 1983/4 for a family of five in an urban area, was R296 and that for a household of six persons in the rural area was R246. This constitutes and increase in the HSL of more than 300% over a ten year period i.e., between 1983 and 1993. Comparatively the real average income of 11 of the 15 households in Table one is a mere 30 % of the current HSL minimum.

Out of more than three hundred reports submitted to the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, not a single paper was dedicated to poverty in the country's Indian population as an endemic problem. Only one account (Supersad, 1984) barely alludes to this, but through comparative statistics on South Africa's four major racial groups. Wilson and Ramphele's analysis too, of the contributions and their own input, is largely an analysis of poverty as an African phenomenon only. And for the enormity of their tasks they could at best concentrate and discuss national statistics and related macro issues. The dynamics of interpersonal and household fluidity and change did not fall within the limits of their book.

The joint family as kinship responsibility

Income generation amongst the first four households (Table 1) alternates and sometimes run concurrently through short periods of wage and side line employment, which vary from 3 hours to two days at a time. An important source of income to these households was monthly state pensions and disability grants for the elderly and unemployment benefits for maximum periods of six weeks per year for the unemployed.

Table 1 PROFILE OF SELECTED SAMPLE OF 15 INTERVIEWEES DURING JULY AND AUGUST 1993

Household	No. of bedrooms	Household Size*		Number bringing	Total Income$
		'89	'93	in income	'93JullAug
1	2	5/6	5/6	1	34$
2	2	5	7	1	34$
3	3	5	5	1	34$
4**	2	7	8	1	± 50(
5**	3	8	6	1	34$
6	3	3	1	1	34$
7	2	8	8	2	± 80(
8	2	2	5	2	± 60(
9	3	7	7	1	120(
10	3	9	8	1	50(
11	3	9	8	1	34$
12	2	7	7	1	34$
13	2	4	7	2	120(
14	2	4	6	1	50(
15	2	3	1	1	34$

Includes legal tenants (host family) and illegal 'tenants. -
*** Household number included returning to the original flat and doing follow-up
interviews with the previous illegal tenant (see case 2 and 3 respectively); Household 5 is
the size of two different households in which D.D. lived - see case 6.*
*$ Does not include earnings of illegal tenants. All figures of R345 (Rands - South
African currency) in this column are receivers of state grants or pensions. Everyone of
these interviewees were in arrears at some time over die past year or are still in arrears
with the Durban City Council over rent, electricity and water.*
*N.B. The first six households had accommodated classificatory kin only, while the
remaining nine did not.*

Despite financial constraints, affinity of closest kin to ageing parents and unemployed siblings is still a pronounced feature in kinship relations and is demonstrated by their expressed responsibility to accommodate them. Often, both independent and geographically dispersed siblings share this accommodation. While this is widely articulated as normative pattern and cultural expectation, the oscillation of ageing parents between their offspring's houses is also borne out of the need to relieve most children financially and spatially. The

household itself, as the case below shows, is a fairly fluid one, shifting from two to three generation structures according to resource and convenience.

> Mrs H.J. her husband and three children live in a two bedroom flat. Her husband, who worked in the building industry was unable to find secure employment since 1986, and the unemployment office refused to pay him since then because they claimed he was overpaid in 1980 when he drew from the fund. Mrs. H.J. feels a responsibility towards her mother and therefore accommodates her. Whilst she considers her mother to be a permanent part of her household, her mother does "spend time with another sister in Phoenix." Each sister *shares* the responsibility, as it later became clear, for between two to four months at a time, depending on the exhaustion they feel and their financial positions. Mrs. H.J. suffered from extreme anxiety and rheumatism, and was dependent on expensive medication, the side effects of which added 15 kg to her weight. To meet these expenses she often depends upon her sister, who sometimes borrows from "lending clubs" which the Phoenix Working Committee calls "loan sharks'."

Drawing from a questionnaire based survey of 700 subjects Schoombee and Mantzaris (1986) and Mantzaris (1988) had found an overwhelming response by the younger generation amongst people of Indian origin to care for their ageing parents. Respondents who hailed from varying religious and class backgrounds, which included Hindus, Muslims and Christians, expressed the responsibility. However Mantzaris's (1988) mention of this social responsibility did not go beyond a mere statement which was made as a straightforward induction from a table. His quantitative positivist approach restricted him to be pointedly brief about his data. It precluded the collection of substantive qualitative information that would have allowed him to examine the patterns and dynamics of the Hindu joint family from either a contemporary or historical perspective. He claimed that his research **"has indicated that modern social processes such as industrialisation, urbanisation, secularisation and westernisation and related forces have affected traditional patterns of living prevalent among Indian South Africans, such as extended families..."** (Mantzaris, 1988: 110). Yet he provides a table that is unable to illustrate this. Similarly Ramphal (1992) claimed that westernisation was responsible for the transformation from the joint to nuclear family. Carefully scrutinised, Ramphal's article is actually a collection of generalisations that are consistent and supportive of her theme of transformation from the joint to the nuclear family. Together, Mantzaris and Schoombee's (1986), Mantzaris's (1988) and Ramphal's (1992) articles are devoid of any appreciation of the historical factors, other than westernisation and "related forces" which they do not explain, that militated against the Hindu joint family. To claim that westernisation is

primarily responsible for the breakdown of the joint family is to oversimplify against a complex range of factors that were consciously aimed at weakening it.

Two of the remaining households depicted other versions of the joint-family. One had an unmarried, unemployed sibling (brother of 28 years) of the household head - a male of 35 years who agreed to take care of this particular brother whilst another brother (43 years) agreed to take care of their retired parents. Whilst the home and earnings of the older brother was entirely an independent achievement, it was however seen as the home of their parents. Both brothers saw the accommodation of their family members as necessary and as their responsibility.

The second of these two households was a straightforward three generation structure in which a father was recently deceased, the eldest son recently married, and residing with his wife (pregnant), mother and unmarried brother and sister.

The fourth of this group of four households revealed a situation which demonstrated a conflation of social and political factors reminiscent of apartheid's recent past in the Greater Durban area.

Mr. K.R. was a 55 year-old resident who lived in India since childhood. His parents owned a farm of several acres, from which they earned a living. K.R. was one of 12 children - eight brothers and four sisters. In August 1985, he claimed that his family together with a number of neighbours was attacked (because they were Indians) by Inkatha and the police. He claimed that the Central Government wanted the land to give to the Kwa Zulu Government'. Up to the time of the attack (in 1985) K.R. and 5 of his eight brothers shared the houses they built on their farm as each one married. They saw themselves as a single family although "everyone did not always eat from one pot." However, after the attack in 1985 they received no compensation for their land and other property. A year later each brother was assigned separate houses (flats) in different parts of Phoenix, as the council saw each brother with their wife and children as single nuclear families. After acquiring the dwelling they felt compelled to accommodate his wife's sister, her husband (D.D - see case 5) and child as well as his wife's retarded brother. K.R. claimed that his brother-in-law contributed towards the expenses of the house and should not be seen as a tenant because such a perception would make his stay illegal. But privately the latter preferred to be seen as a tenant since his contribution was actually a form of rent, and he occupied a separate room in which his wife and child lived, cooked and ate. When they spoke jointly they saw themselves as a "family." But when they spoke independently the situation was hardly one of happy coexistence. After having interviewed and filmed this household the brother-in-law protested with a written notice from his host to vacate the flat by the month end. However, the next day K.R.'s wife, who was terminally ill, died of stomach cancer. The brother-in-law stayed on for four more

months. K.R. revealed the convenience and joys of living in Innuendo, where he had ample space; and particularly the joint family, which made him feel secure and live as part of a structure which cannot possibly be replaced in Phoenix. Violence in Phoenix has escalated to a point of making it unsafe for children and the elderly to walk freely, especially in the evenings. By February 1990 K.R.'s brother-in-law moved. Since January 1991 his brother, wife and three children joined K.R.'s household, because he could not afford to live independently.

One significant factor that emerged in the four households discussed above was the social boundedness they attached to the household structure. Incorporation into it was selective and enabled only by the closest genealogical ties. All of the four were Hindu by religion and of Tamil and Hindi speaking backgrounds. Indeed the consciousness of their' religious and linguistic backgrounds added to their aversion to incorporate people who were not close kin. Their poverty was secondary to maintaining their identity and insulated household structure. The position in the four cases has resonance with Sooklal and Singh's view:

> 'The joint family assumed the position of an important locus, which placed Hindus within the context of a worshipping community. Hence it not only fortified the Hindu against the unjust socio-political realities, but perhaps more importantly it became a forum for group identity. It provided a filial model through which Hindus could discuss and mutually reinforce their religio-cultural commitment" (Sooklal and Singh 1993: 18).

In one sense this evidence is consistent with the conventional views expressed about the joint family being a kinship based co-operative which operates in favour of genealogical relations only. But in another it raises a contradiction because the same conventional views portray the joint family as strictly patriarchal. Both Mrs. H.J. and Mr. K.R. accommodated maternal kin, although for different reasons. In this, they also revealed some of the ethics in the dynamics of urban poverty and household relations, illustrating how care for defenceless and homeless kin can be justified as part of the time honoured ethic of collective responsibility. Such care did not have to be based on patriarchal principles alone.

The joint family in the spirit of fostering

Spiegel's (1986) research in Matatiele, Transkei, shows a 40% incidence of fostering. Like Judy Gay's (1980, quoted in Spiegel, 1986) data in southwestern Lesotho, Spiegel also found a broad range of circumstances under which the care for a child is delegated (Spiegel, 1986:23-31). Whilst the justification for fostering often rested on responses such as *"it is custom,"* the evidence suggested that such a high frequency lies more with economic than

social explanations. It was the effects of migrant labour and the lack of helping hands in the households of retired elderly that gave rise to this phenomenon.

Fostering in the Indian community is also an old and acceptable practice. Many women have borne children out of compassion for infertile sisters and relatives, who bring them up as their own. These are related to practices that are derived from support from the wider kin group and the ability of foster parents to rear the children independently. But a frequency as high as that in Matatiele did not surface. At least 2 cases have shown that fostering is more a strategy for income-generation rather than the independent ability to care. A widowed pensioner had the privilege to enjoy the comfort of her own flat by taking responsibility for two grandchildren since 1985. But she found herself at a sudden loss (July 1993) when the new-found responsibilities of her grandchildren necessitated a separation from her. In the second case another 27 year old was taken in by a maternal aunt (who already sublet a room to a non-kin family) as "a duty to see to my sister's child."

Mrs. T.M. is a 65-year-old grandmother and widowed pensioner. Her husband died in 1984. After completing the rituals she locked up her flat to move in with her eldest son in Mount Edgecombe, a neighbouring district adjacent to Phoenix. After 4 months, when she recovered from her husband's death, she decided to return to her flat. Her son and daughter-in-law decided to let their son and daughter stay with Mrs. T.M. until they completed high school. Her son gave her money to care for his two children, whereupon they were decide what they wished to do thereafter. Mrs. T.M.'s granddaughter matriculated and found employment as a lawyer's secretary. Her employment afforded Mrs. T.M. a chance to live with some comfort. But the granddaughter married in 1991 and her grandson left for employment in Johannesburg (approximately 800km from Durban) with an uncle in February 1993. So Mrs. T.M. was (August 1993) living alone and was keen to accommodate "a respectable family" in one of her bedrooms for a rental of R120 per month.

P.P. a 27 year old, unemployed man spent much of his time at a Christian Centre situated in Phoenix Industrial Park. He had completed standard six at the age of 15 years and was thereafter employed as a porter at a beachfront hotel in Durban. He had been unemployed since January 1986. His first wife died after she received 90 % burns through a primus strove that exploded. He received 30 % burns. Since then he has lived with his another's sister, who settled in a 2-bedroomed City Council flat, with 8 people including another non-kin nuclear family of 4. She had been helped (at the time of the interview) by a local church to meet her rent. P.P. had two sons from his first marriage, whom he said were taken away from Durban by the welfare workers for adoption by someone in Johannesburg. He is forbidden to see them. While staying with his aunt he remarried and continued to stay with her. However, the overcrowded conditions there later forced him to live with his mother-in-law, who, through her grant of R345 per month, paid the rent, electricity and water accounts of R180 and bought

groceries with the remainder. P.P. stated that his main meal is mealy meal porridge or *dhall* (lentils). Meat is sometimes consumed if neighbours, friends or relatives are able to give him some - usually cooked.

While the stories above do not fit the conventional perspective of foster care i.e. rearing children from their formative years, destitution at whatever point in one's life could well serve as a reason for such a practice. Cases 3 and 4 illustrate the continuous state of fluctuation, in household composition, oscillation between households and vulnerability to impoverishment through foster care. Only one (case 3) had a regular source of income, 60 % of which was immediately paid off as rent. The regular income she received from her son to care for her grandchildren was no longer welcome to her because she felt deeply for his own aspirations and responsibilities. Her thoughts about wanting to "sublet" a room was a break from her cherished desire to live with family or independently. It is however a necessity. Case 4 on the other hand depended on hand outs from the church and from well meaning community members. His hopes of acquiring secure employment and his own home is "sheer imagination," as he put it. Hotels will not employ more staff because *"they always say they are not getting enough business to employ anybody else."* He was inclined towards hotel employment because of the sojourners generosity towards porters.

Joint family as economic necessity

Each of the remaining 9 of the 15 cases had accommodated another family between 1989 and August 1993 through informal agreements. In six of the 9 households none of the men and women had full-time wage employment in August 1993. In the remaining 3 households, five people had regular wage employment. But all claimed to have a shortfall in their monthly expenditure and justified the incorporation of additional families on the basis of this. Incorporation was dependant upon linguistic and religious backgrounds, amount of movable property, size of incoming family, personal habits, and above all the promise to pay "rent" in time.

Attempts to find accommodation in Phoenix are often decided by these factors and they contribute to the time that is taken finding it.

> The brother-in-law of K.R. (see Case 2) i.e. Mr. D.D. is a 48 year-old unemployed clothing cutter who was retrenched from his job in a clothing factory in 1986. After 6 months arrears in his rent he was evacuated from his council house in July 1987. His wife died in September 1987, whilst he was staying with some relatives in Phoenix. In 1988 he married his late wife's sister (also K.R.'s late wife's sister: case 2) because she felt she was the best person who could love and care for his

child from his first wife. In February 1990 D.D., his wife and child had managed to find accommodation with a childless couple both of who were unemployed and lived in a pensioners' flat. Between this couple, the woman was always a housewife, and the man a motor mechanic whose eyesight was deteriorating rapidly, to the point of possibly rendering him totally blind. In November 1989 he was forced to resign from work and collected unemployment benefits for six months. Thereafter he was put on a state grant of R 1 10 of which he had to pay R95 towards his rent. He was left with R15 for the month on which to live. At that time he received a grant of R345, out of which he paid R210 on electricity, water and rent. As his savings slowly depleted his salvation lay in sharing his one bedroom flat with a tenant. This was an easy incorporation for D.D. as his wife and child occupied the flat's living room since August 1992. Between the period he had left his brother-in-law's home and August 1992 D.D. and family rented in two other places, "with friends." Privately D.D.'s hosts had expressed dissatisfaction because it breaks his privacy, and he was not convinced that D.D was the best "tenant" to have. But interestingly D.D.'s child addressed their host and hostess as "khaka". and "khaki" (in Hindi: father's brother and wife respectively) despite the fact that they were not related.

The adoption of kin related terminology is a widespread phenomenon between hosts and tenants. It helps to facilitate a more accommodating sense of co-residence and achieve a level of integration of the renting family into the household. It allows each family unit to come to terms with the close and regular contact, and the sharing of resources which imposes a sense of familial togetherness upon them.

C.P. was 22 years old and married. He had left school after completing Std VII because of "problems in the family." C.P. had worked at several places but was unable to earn wages beyond a subsistence level. He rented a room from H.H. from July 1989 to January 1990. In August 1993 C.P.'s host H.H. had another family residing with him. H.H. lived with his wife and three sons. He rented out one of the three bedrooms to another couple with one child. He charged them R50 per month for taking care of the child, (who was taught to call H.H. and his wife daddy and mummy) and R100 for the room, in which his tenants cooked, ate and slept. Between C.P. and his latest tenant, H.H had accommodated another couple with 2 children in the same bedroom in February 1992. He had given them notice to leave because the children were too rowdy and the couple fought too much. I learnt later that they also did not pay their rent in time. H.H. was happy with his latest tenants because he has grown fond of their child, they were quiet and they contributed to the upkeep of the house (i.e. paid their rent in time).

The household patterns and relationships in cases 5 and 6 draw attention once again to fictive relationships. It bears a striking similarity to the evidence of Sharp and Spiegel's (1985) data in African population samples in Qwa-Qwa and Matatiele respectively. The case studies reveal that the adoption of "as if" kinship terminology is a result of at least three things. Firstly, it helps vulnerable people to adopt these quasi-genealogical relationships if they are known local people and so be spared from the exploitation of local thugs. Secondly,

it re-emphasised the need for the universal ethic of social responsibility in caring for the defenceless, unemployed and the socially alienated. And thirdly, it is a strategy for survival amidst a depressing economic situation. The sentiments for incorporation into household structures in Phoenix have resonance with these factors but are entrenched in different economic and social circumstances.

The six cases have been selected to illustrate three themes. Firstly, they point to the vulnerability of households to impoverishment despite regular payments of civil grants that are woefully inadequate and below the current acceptable HSL. Secondly, they illustrate the extreme difficulty of acquiring fulltime employment and earning wages, which pays above the HSL requirement. And thirdly, they demonstrate interesting variations in household structures, which differ significantly from the normative patriarchal patterns that are conventionally held as a characteristic feature in Indian kinship patterns. This evidence from Phoenix was strikingly corroborated by the evidence of the Concerned Citizens Group in the Chatsworth township. Their attempts to mobilise support for the ANC in the June 1999 general election was instead converted into an effort to mobilise state support to address the people's excruciatingly painful conditions of poverty. Their evidence revealed that up to 80% of their target group of 1040 people, were either unemployed or underemployed. Most of them survived through meagre state grants that was paid back in bulk to the state as rent, or through well meaning relatives and friends who offered help whenever they could afford it. A large number from target group were paying rents to the Durban City Council for more than thirty years, and have most likely paid towards the cost of the poor quality dwellings several times over without any hope of acquiring ownership over them. The Group discovered that neighbourhood relations and kinship ties became their most reliable social and economic resource against a depressing existence that was ignored by the new takers of power in post-apartheid South Africa. Their recommendations for the upliftment in this target group's living conditions are an important indication of why such people are likely to remain oblivious and even despondent towards major events such as five-yearly general elections. Such people's perceptions of and responses to transformation is not only restricted to their class boundaries, but also filters into the wider domains of their previous racial classification – which in turn has a major impact in determining their social relationships towards the state.

Conclusion

These cases of poverty among lower class Indians in Phoenix, and recent reference to those in Chatsworth by the Concerned Citizens Group, reveals the appalling levels of poverty among Indians that is yet to be recognised by the South African authorities. It is apparent that apartheid evolved diversely through varied legislative devices in order to constrain racial groups in specific ways. On the one hand it aimed to break down the social fabric of Africans by selectively attracting productive adolescent and middle aged males to South Africa's core industrial areas, in order to provide an unbroken flow of cheap labour. On the other hand it inhibited the commercial drive and entrepreneurial skills of the Indians by aiming to constrict and break down its most successful functional social unit - the joint family. The evidence demonstrated that the additional purpose of these legislative devices were to frustrate Indians in order to repatriate them to India (Muller 1968; Meer 1969), and so minimise the risk of economic competition with Whites. While the legislative process was aimed at people across class boundaries the real victims of disjointed families were especially from the lower classes.

The issue of household here then challenges the notion that there is persistence in patrilineal-partriarchal domestic structures amongst Indians across their class boundaries. It further presents a challenge to the simplistic view that the shift from joint to nuclear family is on the basis of wilful transformation, arising out of the theory of global westernisation. The meagre size of housing units has inhibited the persistence of this primordial domestic structure, imbued with the reputation as a social security institution, especially for the unemployed, the sick and the aged. The shortage in housing and the high rate of unemployment has produced a situation of extreme household demographic instability. This occurs in respect of a high rate of household turnover which is determined by available resources of legal tenants, and the ability of illegal tenants to meet their financial commitments and live up to the ethical norms of their quasi-landlords. The unique situation in each household reflects diverse and complex strategies of survival, brought about by the pressure of a wide range of local economic and cultural circumstances.

When each of the six case studies are put together they produce a scenario of complex formulations and combinations. In these circumstances it would be implausible to do two things which are so prominent in the range of misconceptions about Indian domestic patterns. Firstly, it will be impossible to contextualise lower class Indian domestic

structures within the framework of a single model such as the developmental cycle. Any synchronic ethnographic exercise would be at odds in attempting to find an articulation within a diachronic perspective, even if the latter is accompanied by several types of "typical" developmental cycles. A similar stalemate situation is a feature in impoverished rural African domestic patterns and is best captured in Murray's (1987: 246) conclusion about it: "The effort would be analytically gratuitous and politically counterproductive as it would involve imputing to the Bantustans a degree of homogeneity of material circumstances which is entirely vitiated by the evidence available."

This presents significant theoretical and conceptual problems of the Indian joint family as a unit of analysis and its applicability to conventional models. If the oscillation of individuals and entire nuclear families between households are reflections of strategies of survival, then the theories of change, expressed through global westernisation, domestic developmental cycle and class and racial privilege, must be challenged. Together they produce scenarios of homogeneity, and are imbued with the stultifying tendency to blur the variations in material circumstances and historical experiences of racial categories, as well as of households and individuals. Any paradigm, aiming to cover the issue of domestic patterns in any part of South Africa, must be sensitive to the differential impact of its discriminatory laws and the divergence of class interests, material circumstances, and varied domestic structures.

CHAPTER FOUR

Confronting political transformation as an ethnic minority: Cultural entrepreneurship and the culturalisation of politics[1]

Introduction

Chapters two and three have implicitly illustrated how disenfranchising Indians and subjecting them to a system of differential treatment from their African and Coloured counterparts during apartheid, has led to a persistence of their largely ethnically dominated residential areas in post-apartheid South Africa. The result of this has been a mind-set that still revolves around ethnically based politics, not withstanding its existence elsewhere in the world. This has been the determining factor in their participation during the first general election in April 1994 as well as the second general election in June 1999. Most Indians have posed two common questions in 1994 and 1999 respectively:

- **"What have we to gain by voting for an African dominated political party such as the ANC?"** and

- **"What have we gained since the ANC victory in 1994, to vote for them in 1999?"**

Fundamental to such attitudes is the manner in which these questions suggest distinct ethnic boundaries and expectations. However, it is important that responses to these questions be examined within the broader historical and global contexts of ethnic relations and the building of national consciousness in varying situations.

The effects of nineteenth century secularism on nationalism and nation building in the twentieth century had until the 1970s misguided the world about the emotionalism, sentimentality and mobilisation that could take place around ethnic issues. As modern phenomena, secularism and nationalism appeared to have transcended the boundaries created by aspects such as language, religion, and other sectarian differences brought about by cultural distinctions. Noting that nationalism is a modern phenomenon that aimed to standardise values, allegiances, symbols, beliefs and traditions, Gellner stated that in the process of nation building people forget and underplay the significance of each aspect in particular social formations. Seeing this as a form of "internal amnesia" he reminds us that while the process for instance, of nation building in Turkey, followed the trend of standardisation of values, the Turk, Slav, Greek, Armenian, Arab, Syrian, and Kurd are as distinct today as they had been since the first day of conquest. Gellner

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1 A version of this chapter was first presented at the conference on 'Challenge and Change: the Indian Diaspora in its Historical and Contemporary Contexts", at the University of West Indies, Trinidad-Tobago.

explained how the Ottoman empire's centrally regulated system of national and religious communities excluded any possibility of a trend towards an ethnic melting pot (1987:6-10). Even in more concerted efforts as in the U.S.A. in the 1960s, to unite the disparate Hispanic and Black societies through the "American melting pot", the approaches were hardly successful (Eriksen 1993:8). The variations in the U.S.A. remain as distinctive as the variations in Turkey or in any other multi-cultural society.

Recognising the force and universal reality of ethnicity Howe (1993 – page not numbered), in an editorial for a collection of papers on ethnicity, confronts the issue of democracy and nation building in South Africa - enshrined in **"the magical cloak of common values, shared beliefs, and national symbols- thrown over our racially fragmented society"** - as a myth of the democratic panacea. He rightly asserted that what South Africa needed was to build **"a new civil society which reconciles interests and identities at the local and regional level with a new South Africanism at the national level"**. Ethnicity here refers to three things viz. (1) common descent (real or supposed); (2) socially relevant cultural or psychological characteristics; and (3) attitudes and behaviours within a social category (Mukherji 1994: 22). The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East in the 1970s, of Hindu and Sikh fundamentalism in India in the 1980s, and the more recent forms of sectarianism in the Baltic and East European states is indicative of the challenges that ethnicity presents to the secular ideologies. Ending the editorial he assures us of the validity of Peter Vale's warning that **"We ignore ethnicity at our peril- if our society fails to engage it, it may rise to engulf us"** (1993: 4). This ominous warning should not be viewed as a danger that exists in foreign countries only. The conditions that precipitated the genocide in Rwanda, Burundi, the former Yugoslavia, and Democratic Republic of Congo, are not entirely absent in South Africa. For instance, Mare's (1992) account of Zulu nationalism is a reflection of how the militaristic past and numerical strength of an ethnic group can be used in the politicisation of its culture to forcefully articulate their position. The violence in the early 1990s in KwaZulu-Natal is widely deemed as an assertion of Zulu nationalism, which has not been entirely obliterated, despite the political violence associated with it being brought under control. Macdonald's (1996) and Filatova's (1997) presentations are grim reminders of the underlying endeavours in the political power games between Whites and Africans. White hegemony had initially imposed requirements on the transformation process that initially made power sharing between Africans and Whites unavoidable, especially by seeking protection for the National Party inclined state officials. Macdonald (1996: 227) argued that **"Substantively, the ANC preferred not to be**

obligated to share power with rival parties, wanting as much as possible for itself. But recognising that compromise was unavoidable, the ANC accepted that political institutions must take account of rival parties, that it could not get all that it wanted." However, the situation changed drastically when the National Party withdrew from the Government of National Unity that was formed after the 1994 election. Filatova (1997) illustrates how Africanism increasingly seeped into the ANC discourse and set a tone for the entrenchment of African hegemony. She recalled (1997: 51-52) "Three years ago it was difficult to imagine that anything like 'there are too many Indians in Cabinet' could have been openly said by a top ANC official – even though (or particularly though) he went on to say that it 'does not worry' him since 'the issue is that they must insure that their policies put African people in power, in their departments and the constituencies to which they are linked' (*Mail and Guradian*, May 23, 1997). Now this declaration has become just normal. It has become just normal that ethnicity plays a very important role in ANC's appointments for key positions in the provinces."

As a subdued minority, Indians cannot possibly engage in power politics at such a level. In this chapter I attempt to do two things. Firstly I attempt to show how this section of South Africa's population, is asserting their position as a "minority group" through the culturalisation of their politics. Made-up of multi-linguistic, multi-religous, multi-class, South African Indians have by and large chosen the path of "internal amnesia" to assert their exclusivity and minority status. And secondly, I illustrate how the political interests among people of Indian origin are dealt with by a self-styled politician whose unique approach in representing their interests is done by the means and methods of a "cultural entrepreneur".

Contextualising the "culturalisation" process

It is at two levels that the issue of ethnicity becomes more relevant to the political challenges facing South Africa today. First, is the global dimension that the reassertion of ethnicity has taken, especially in redrawing geographical boundaries and redefining rights and interests; and second, is the dynamics that it has unfolded within the boundaries of South Africa. Within the contexts of frameworks for analyses, theoretical paradigms and empirical realities, ethnicity as a tool of social analysis has engendered an ambiguity that either helps to understand and compare the phenomenon externally and internally, or presents scenarios that are unhelpful to the constraints faced by South African policy makers and academics. Intrinsic to both these factors are the broad generalities that dominate the literature, compounded by the glaring absence of greater detail on how ethnicity unfolds to confront the political, economic, social,

religious and related dynamics of everyday life.

Literature on the global dimensions of ethnicity has covered three broad issues:

- attempts to trace the history of the concept and link its current usage to contemporary problems;

- illustrate how cultural and political processes converge and diverge on significant questions of colonialism and nationalism respectively, and

- how collectively they provide challenges to secular ideologies that are rooted in the nineteenth century, and by virtue of their articulation either call for its radical revision or its total refutation.

Mare traced back the use of the word "ethnicity" to as early as 1941 (1992: 3), whereas Eriksen claims that its first usage is attributed to the American sociologist David Reisman in 1953 (1993: 3). Both agree however that the word is derived from a much more ancient source, viz. the Greek word "ethnos" which meant pagan or heathen.

Eriksen informs us that since the 1960s the word "ethnic group" and "ethnicity" was widely used in Anglophone Social Anthropology. Politically it was first used by the British where they were dominant, especially against Jews, Irish, Italians and other victims of subordination. However the discrimination against such groups did not lead to a denial of either their origins or their social and cultural characteristics. If anything, it helped to entrench the notion of ethnic exclusivity, despite the impositions of a hegemonic force that aimed to standardise so many features in modern day living. Eriksen is correct in arguing that ethnicity is frequently a reaction to processes of modernisation (1993: 9), although they may not necessarily constitute an aversion for them. Referring to Jonathan Friedman, he emphasised that ethnic and cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenisation are not two arguments or two opposing views of what is happening in the world today, but two constitutive trends of global reality. To Eriksen there are four dominant though not exhaustive empirical foci of ethnic studies viz.:

(1) urban ethnic minorities;

(2) indigenous people, particularly aboriginal inhabitants of a territory;

(3) proto-nations i.e. so called ethno-nationalist movements; and

(4) ethnic groups in plural societies, where "plural society" refers to colonially created states with socially diverse populations and where secession is usually not an option and ethnicity tends to be articulated as group competition.

When matched against the regionally based manifestations of ethnic struggles Eriksen's fourfold categorisation of the subject is distinctly too broad to capture situational particularities. Mukherji's (1994) study on the crisis that nationalism and nation building has engendered in India has unveiled four types of ethnicities viz. (1) linguistic; (2) religious; (3) caste; and (4) tribal. He described how each type of ethnicity has produced its own peculiar dimensions which reflect the complexity of historical factors, social diversity, political tensions and local, regional and national articulation of requirements and goals. Eriksen wrote more about what the concept ethnicity covers but avoided defining it. Mukherji stated the problem of doing so but proposed that "the logic of identification of an ethnic group should lie in the internalisation of cultural attributes and/or values by its members, since birth or through long socialisation" (1994: 22).

In South Africa this definition is befitting to those groups which have laid claim to "authentic ethnic identities", irrespective of the challenges that belie their positions. In the view of such protagonists, Benedict Anderson's thesis of the "imagined community" therefore is tantamount to a distortion of right wing Afrikaner and Zulu claims for ethnic exclusivism, which to them provisions the right to self determination. The problem with Anderson's concept of "imagined" is that it suggests mere sentimentality and tends to contradict his own thesis of the concretising effect that history, experience and common values have in binding people together. Its an idiosyncratic approach that undermines the power of organisational forms and its efficacious effect on common and separate identities. Mare's (1992) seminal study of Zulu identity is a lucid illustration of how history, imagery and symbolism are used to articulate and assert an ethnic exclusivism, which in its violent manifestations are more real than imagined.

Almost inevitably the quest for ethnic identity is inseparably linked to the issue of nationalism, political manipulation and a competition for power. However there are various levels at which claims for ethnic recognition may be pitched. The nature and velocity of the claims may be determined in various ways. In his examination of the relationship of ethnicity to the democratisation of society Mare explained the need for understanding the differences between "ethnic group" and "ethnic category". The former is aware of and accepts belonging together and being categorised as similar, whilst the latter is a labelling of a number of people or things according to similar characteristics, created by an outside observer (Mare, 1993: 7). Both of these distinctions could serve as an indication of the limits to which requirements may be made accessible or demands may be articulated. Paul Brass suggested that ethnicity could be made

to serve an "interest group" or "corporate rights". In an interest group demands are confined to mainly civil issues such as seeing to their economic wellbeing especially in economic and educational opportunities, and adequate provision of health facilities and housing. In corporate demands there is a transcendence of such expectations which may include a major say in the political system as a whole, or control over a piece of territory within the country, or demand a country of their own with full sovereignty (cited in Mukherji, 1994: 23).

In each of these situations there is a further dynamic that escapes the tendency to speak generally and in broad terms about ethnicity, viz. the role of "cultural brokers" or "ethnic entrepreneurs" (Mare, 1992: 2). This limitation is almost synonymous to the "synchronic syndrome" of freezing the time slot, which leaves us with two problems. Firstly, ethnic demands and expectations are presented within a framework that ignores the ongoing responses and adaptations that could lead to radical transformations and which in turn could have implications on people who are called upon to make sense of the world in particular ways. And secondly the articulation of ethnic concerns as representations of socially undifferentiated calls for recognition produces a homogeneity that ignores how individual styles of leadership becomes an expression of collective concerns. Keesing's (1985) words that "political outcomes are often the result of individual choices and strategies" are a significant expression of this reality. It is in this spirit that Mare, in examining ethnic mobilisation into the "Zulu nation" claimed that **"we have to see who the prime mobilisers are, and what interests the mobilisation serves"** (1992: 52). From this point on he proceeded to demonstrate how the Zulu cultural organisation Inkatha, presently operating as a non-racial political party, has highlighted the centrality of a single symbol i.e. the person of Chief Mangosuthu Buthlezi. Either as a cultural organisation or as a non-racial political party Inkatha is viewed widely as a manifestation of Chief Buthelezi's vision of the place and role of "the Zulus" in the wider South Africa. It is a vision that has illustrated the politicisation of ethnicity largely through one person's efforts, from the platform of a distinctive organisation.

In somewhat similar situations of ethnic mobilisation amongst South Africans of Indian origin there have been several central symbolic figures that vociferously represented their interests. However, the differences in the ethnic mobilisation between the Indians and the Zulus are based on their respective histories and population size. Indians, by virtue of their minority status in the country and in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province, are constrained to articulate their needs as an interest group, while Zulus, by virtue of their numerical strength, are making their demands in terms of corporate rights. The Zulus claim for political custody of the province is predicated

on their claim to be its first inhabitants. This effectively precludes equal and open competition for political and economic privileges between the two groups. As an interest group Indians are unlikely to aspire towards political domination and have resigned themselves to the belief that it is the privilege and responsibility of their Zulu counterparts.

It is their minority status and operation as an interest group that precludes the politicisation of ethnic mobilisation amongst Indians. Instead it enforces upon them the position of culturalisation of ethnicity, which is meant to demonstrate a deviation from the universally politicised discourse of ethnicity. This position brings out two things. Firstly, it finds itself in association with Jain's plea for a decentralised paradigm in order to capture India's "unity in diversity" through its languages and religions. It is through this paradigm he believes that "one may strive for the culturalisation of the ideal of national integration in India" (Jain 1994: 4). It is an ideal that is not inconsistent with what South Africa is presently striving for - and indeed under the limitations of a similar scenario. And secondly, the concept "culturalisation" indicates a distinction from its derivatives "culture" and "cultural". Both concepts include among other issues norms, values and practices that occur within a synchronised time frame, and are therefore too stagnant to capture the ongoing processes of ever changing alliance based politics, political adaptations, and constant reviewing of strategies to remain aloof in ethnic mobilisation. If taken as an adverb and as a useful tool of analysis in the social sciences, "culturalisation" brings out the dynamism of dialectical interactions that continuously shape and determine images and ideologies of individuals and organisations. The sections that follow attempt to capture these notions amongst those of Indian origin, but in order to demonstrate how minorities in similar positions in plural societies would articulate their demands. It begins by briefly trying to capture the already well documented history of Indian politics in South Africa, and is followed by a deeper immersion in the politics of a contemporary ethnic entrepreneur.

A brief history of South African Indian politics

South African Indian politics is rooted in the humble beginnings of indentured labour and must be understood against the background of a tripartite periodisation of political activity. Firstly, the period between 1860 and 1894 when indentured labourers and passenger Indians had no popularly elected and authentic leadership; secondly, between between 1894 and 1960, when South Africa was still a British colony, Indians had to tirelessly fight for their rights, and often used their statuses as British subjects for such negotiation; and thirdly when South Africa became a Republic in 1960 Indians were granted permanent citizenship about a year later but remained without any political entitlements.

The initial conditions of indentureship were harsh and insensitive to social, economic and religious needs of Indians. Pahad (1972: 12) reported that the colonists urgent plea for indentured labour from India was not reflected in the treatment accorded to the first arrivals in 1860. They faced prolonged difficulties by a lack of food, shelter, or an interpreter, which left them confused and in a desolate state. Despite such constraints the Natal Mercury had reported early in 1865 that the employment of Indian labour had increased the export of sugar by more than 300 per cent from 26 000 in 1863 to 100 000 in 1864. Their agricultural productivity and general contribution to the development of Natal province was sustained throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1901 the Protector of Indian Immigrants wrote that the employers realised the indispensability of Indian labour. He pointed out that if Indian labour were withdrawn "the country would at once be paralysed". In 1903 Sir Leigh Hullet felt that "Durban was absolutely built by the Indian people." (Pahad 1972: 13). Such statistics and words of praise reinforced the Indian will to remain in South Africa and encouraged them to consolidate their residential statuses by demanding permanent citizenship. Prior to the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi, political representation for Indians rested more with the Protectorate from the colonial offices than with popularly acceptable or authentically elected leaders. Gandhi's arrival in 1893 and his formation of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in 1894 shone a ray of hope on the political possibilities for the Indian minority.

Since then and up to 1946 Essop Pahad had identified thirteen pressure groups and political institutions that represented the interests of Indians. In 1903 Gandhi was instrumental in founding the Transvaal Indian British Association whose structure and aims were similar to the NIC. In order to introduce a mechanism to conscientise Indians, keep them informed and sustain their struggle he started a weekly newspaper, the Indian Opinion, on 4 June 1903. Initially it was printed in four languages viz. English, Gujerati, Hindi and Tamil, but the latter two discontinued not too long after through lack of support. By the final closure of the paper in 1960 Gandhi's aim of galvanising the multi-linguistic and multi-religious groups to converge around their common problems was considerably achieved.

The character of Indian leadership, the issues for which they fought and the perceptions they created amongst academics interested in their politics varies widely and are sometimes riddled with ambiguity. From four noted writers who covered Indian politics in the twentieth century up to 1960, Ngubane (cited in Kuper, 1957), Kuper (1957; 1965), Pahad (1972) and Frederickse (1990), the former two viewed their contributions as minimal and thinly spread, whilst the latter

two viewed their contributions as substantial. Ngubane claimed that support for co-operation with Africans came mainly from the communists. He denied that Indian interests in South African politics were a popular attempt that aimed at levelling the political playing fields. Leo Kuper who believed that **"in the period 1937 and 1947 Indians remained politically inert"** took the view further (see Pahad, 1972: 10). While Pahad refuted this assertion by referring to the good attendance of political meetings and the formation of the Colonial Born and Settler Indian Association as proof of the popularity of political participation, his position is blurred by his inconsistency. In his introduction he claimed that **"the mass protest meetings organised by the Indian political organisations were generally speaking well attended"**(1972: 9). In his conclusion after agreeing with Kuper that the SAIC and its allies were "caucus" type bodies he declared that **"The Congresses were not mass organisations with a viable branch system, so that decisions were largely arrived at by the small leadership which formed the executive"** (1972: 220).

Pahad's thesis begins properly in 1924 when the Union Government introduced the Class Areas Bill, which was the first attempt by the all White government to encourage Indians to live separately. This measure gave the regionally based South African Indian Congress (SAIC), which was formed in 1919, a springboard to launch itself as a national organisation. Amidst the objective of trying to establish the measure of Indian interest in politics Pahad tried to do three things viz.

- to discuss the virtual co-optation of the SAIC and demonstrate how their moderate leadership pursued accommodationist policies with the whites, especially for the interests of the Indian business class;
- to illustrate how the internal dynamics and contradictions of the moderates in the SAIC led to them being unseated by the radicals; and
- to show how the radicals' adoption of universal adult suffrage helped to forge closer alliances with African political movements such as the African National Congress.

Julie Frederickse (1990), in attempting to describe "the unbreakable thread in non-racialism" in South Africa also brought out the inner tensions in the Indian political movements between the accomodationists and the radicals. She attempted to illustrate how various pacts between the NIC and ANC, such as in the formation of the Passive Resistance Council on 13 June 1946, not only drew the disenfranchised "racial" groups closer together, but also how the organisational skills of the Indian politicians helped to facilitate those of their African

counterparts. These measures however should be cautiously taken as an axiomatic sign of non-racialism, especially against the publicly declared position of the NIC that collaboration with the African masses was key to their own emancipation. This more appropriately conjures up images of expediency rather than genuine commitment. Numerous incidents allude to the sectarianism practised by the NIC leadership in the course of the twentieth century. A glaring example in the earlier years comes to the fore in lieu of this claim. In 1936 when an Agent General of India, Sir Syed Raza Ali married Miss Sammy, a Hindu, prominent Hindu leaders of the NIC resigned their official positions, apparently in protest against the marriage (Pahad 1972: 141). And more recently Singh and Vawda's (1988) account of the ambiguity in the NIC's political discourse is a demonstration of the persistence of a somewhat hidden ethnic exclusivism. They illustrate how their discourse is more appropriately an articulation of Indian middle class political aspirations, which through closer analysis contradicts their image as a custodian of Indian aspirations or as a champion of non-racialism in a post- apartheid South Africa.

It would be a gross distortion however to tar all of the Indian political leadership with the same brush. Aside from Gandhi, whose politics in his early years in South Africa are not without its controversies (Swanson 1983), many activists in the SAIC, NIC, TIC and other institutions have earned their reputations as legends and political mavericks in their own time. The contributions of Yusuf Dadoo, Monty Naicker, A.I.Kajee, V.S.C.Pather, amongst others, are well documented and will not be rehearsed here (Meer 1991; Pachai 1979; Pahad 1972). They stand out as committed politicians whose dedication to the realisation of political emancipation for all South Africans would stand the tests of rigid scrutiny.

In the struggle against White hegemony, Indians continued undeterred until the introduction of the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act which outlawed the Communist Party of South Africa. This Act was used to claw its way to its allies and other political movements such as the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), NIC, ANC and PAC, until they were either banned or heavily imposed upon to a point of virtual obsoletism. However diverse the personal political ideologies of Indian political leaders were, their collective contributions were discerning, and collectively they had at least a threefold impact on South Africa's political landscape. Firstly, their organisational skills and articulate command of political issues were instructive to their African counterparts in their mobilisation and resistance campaigns. Secondly, they broadened the terrain of political resistance against White hegemony and kept their oppressors constantly alert to the problems of containment and control in a country of such social diversity. And

thirdly, the experiences they acquired through their trials and tribulations served as incentives for future generation politicians who still have to deal with African and White opportunism, coerciveness, and subtle forms of exclusion from open economic competition. While much can be written about these aspects, the sections that follow are restricted to the coopted segment in South African politics since the 1960s, leading to emphasis on one particular figure.

From tactical co-optation to total immersion

Since permanent citizenship in 1961 political representation for Indians presented a dilemma to the state. As an easily exploitable and vulnerable minority that was still disenfranchised, the state took it upon them to decide what forms of political representation Indians may have. Through a process of deliberations, that excluded Indians, which went on for several years and which left them leaderless for that period, the state eventually opted for a system of nominated representation. It set up the South African Indian Council in 1972 (hereafter also referred to as the SAIC), a body, which produced an abbreviation of "SAIC", which for a while confused many naive Indians as being the old South African Indian Congress. To the disenfranchised majority the conditions for open and popular discourse were entrapped in a scenario of political paralysis. At the time the Afrikaner dominated National Party and Whites in general were like the "impenetrable and invincible chosen few" in Africa. Yet from within the ranks of the nominated SAIC there was one, Amichand Rajbansi, who dared to challenge the exploitative social hierarchy and mutual exclusiveness that white hegemony engendered.

The role of Rajbansi in the SAIC was controversial as well as challenging. His public commitment to address the inequities in South Africa, to help resolve the racial impasse, and to expose misuse of state funds as well as exploitation by big business immediately earned him the reputation of a "people's politician". By December 1974 the state was tired of Rajbansi's challenging rhetoric and responded with an alleged attempt to pseudo-democratise Indian politics by introducing another party. Rajbansi in turn offered to establish the Congress Party and vowed to use the SAIC as a platform for a non-racial society. In defiance of establishment thinking he stated: **"The Congress Party would work with the Labour Party and the Natal Indian Congress to achieve its ultimate goal... Our policies will be the same, but the tactics will differ in certain instances."** (Daily News, 30 December 1974). This position annoyed the White authorities tremendously and he was to pay a severe price in several arenas of his private and public life. In 1975 he ran a fishmonger's shop in Silverglen (an Indian group area in Durban), and was deputy chairman of the Southern Durban Local Affairs Committee. Both of these occupations suffered tremendously. By December of that year the Livestock and Meat

Industry Control Board (Natal Mercury, 3 December 1975) refused his application for a butcher's licence. By March 1976 Rajbansi's financial interests were being probed by a one person Commission of Enquiry, Mr.W.H.Booysen, who had to act on allegations of him not declaring all of his financial interests as a public servant. Mr. Booysen recommended suspension of Rajbansi for the rest of the Local Affairs Committee's (LAC) term of office (Natal Mercury, 17 March 1976). The efforts to frustrate him out of politics continued. In April 1976 the Post reported that there were secret moves to oust Rajbansi from the Natal regional executive of the SAIC. After a heated debate with two of whom the newspaper described as "ultra conservatives" viz. J.B.Patel and A.M.Moola, he stormed out and told the former who was committee chairman: "Carry on this way and Pretoria will give you your nomination for 1977". Rajbansi refused to heed calls for an apology and vowed to continue fighting their conservatism. His attitude continued to be a source of contention for many, which led to a cabinet council colleague Ismail Kathrada once again challenging Rajbansi to resign from the executive committee. Kathrada accused Rajbansi of wanting to wreck the SAIC and launch a new party.

Rajbansi appeared to want to challenge colleagues in the Cabinet Council and the broader membership of the SAIC into testing their popularity before entering into negotiations for a new constitution with the White government through public rebuffs about their legitimacy. In one week he was quoted twice on this sentiment. On 10 August 1976 the Natal Mercury reported him saying: **"I believe that the SAIC is struggling to find public acceptability, and before we involve ourselves in any evolutionary step, we will have to get a mandate from our people"**. Eight days later on 18 August 1976 the Post reported him saying: **"In view of the general conditions in our country at this particular period, it would be unwise to serve on the Cabinet Council, on which every race group in South Africa is not represented"**. Rajbansi's firmness against the state's apparatuses and their functioning was glaringly critical. He continued to voice concerns about their handling and general abrogation of their responsibilities of Indian education, housing, health and other social services. He accused the state in mid 1977 of spending twenty one million rands on unnecessary shopping complexes for displaced Indian businessmen, whilst in Durban alone there were twenty five thousand applications for accommodation, of which eighty per cent were of sub economic statuses.

While Rajbansi's vociferous attacks undermined the very institutions from which he worked, and continued to annoy the people with whom he worked, his popularity with the constituency appeared to consolidate itself. This was an irksome development to both his Indian colleagues

within the SAIC and LAC and his White political masters. Their concern was expressed by caucusing against him and having him suspended for the second time in two years from the Southern Durban Local Affairs Committee (SDLAC), (Daily News, 15 September, 1977). The constituency's and Rajbansi's responses to this were swift and interesting. More than 800 people met at the Montford Mosque Hall to protest against the suspension, and 5000 people in his constituency of Arena Park signed a petition asking the Administrator General to reconsider the decision. The appeal met a negative response. But the disqualification gave rise to an historic event in that Rajbansi's wife was nominated unopposed and became the first South African woman on an LAC.

Rajbansi was undeterred by the suspension and returned to politics, but somewhat watered down. He continued with his old political alliances outside of the Indian fold, especially with Chief Mangosutho Buthlezi - then leader of the Zulu cultural organisation, Inkatha, in an attempt to broaden the "non-white" political base. As public relations officer for the now defunct all Indian Reform Party, he successfully drew a large crowd of three thousand five hundred people to host a public meeting in Chatsworth with Chief Mangosuthu Buthlezi and two hundred of his followers. At the meeting Rajbansi addressed the issue of Indian disunity and suggested that the various factions get together under Buthelezi's chairmanship (Post, 26 March 1980). This event also appeared to have marked a shift in Rajbansi's political agenda. At around this period Indian and Coloured schools were on boycott and they targeted the state created institutions such as the SAIC, LACs and their allies, and the individuals who made them functional. Maximum public mileage was sought out of the visit and the meal the then Minister of Indian Affairs, Marais Steyn, had at Rajbansi's house (Sunday Tribune, 11 May 1980), whilst the restlessness at Indian educational institutions continued. Numerous working dinners with White officials followed this event. It reached quite a height in May 1983 when the then Minister of Internal Affairs F.W. de Klerk (ex-President/vice-President) was invited by Rajbansi, with two hundred other guests from the designated racial categories, for a meal, which he defended as an exercise in inter-racial socialising.

By this time Rajbansi's persistence about the legitimacy of the SAIC and LAC systems was astutely absent from his public discourse. Then State President P.W.Botha was anxious to work out a new constitution with nominated persons from the Indian and Coloured populations. Rajbansi was keen to be on this team and prior to a visit to West Germany for a conference on "South Africa 1983: Latest Developments, Problems and Perspectives", he affirmed his determination to participate despite the anticipated opposition. Herein lied his first sign of

capitulation. He said that the SAIC might ask to scrap plans for a referendum among the Indian community if pressure was going to be brought by opposing groups to boycott participation for a new constitution - which excluded Africans. He threatened to resort to asking the government to use the findings of a "scientific survey" to justify the SAIC's collaboration with P.W.Botha's government. The unpopularity of this decision was clearly noticeable in the broad community response to the SAIC.

Evidently the Natal Indian Congress was virtually silent about Rajbansi's participation in state structures whilst he tried to fight the system from within. But his about turn against a referendum and his obstinacy about participating in the proposed tri-cameral parliamentary system ruffled many feathers within the NIC. His travel to Germany was not left to carry on without attempts to make the trip uncomfortable. The "first" public signs of the NIC against Rajbansi surfaced when they chastised him for travelling to Germany on a nominated rather an elected capacity, and they called on the Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac to snub him because he conspired with the state to fine people for not registering as voters. The NIC claimed that ninety two per cent of the Indian community boycotted the LAC elections in 1982 (Daily News, 2 October 1983). Rajbansi was further attacked for praising P.W.Botha and for behaving as an apologist for apartheid overseas (Daily News 16 October 1983). He weathered the storm of criticisms and went on to participate in the negotiations for the new dispensation, out of which emerged the 1984 elections for the tri-cameral parliament. Like the 1982 LAC elections the response for this nominated system of politics was clearly far below an acceptable level of participation. In Rajbansi's own constituency there was a fourteen per cent turn out. But for his farewell to parliament in Cape Town, from the Durban airport a staged group of three hundred people were there to send him off.

The tri-cameral system was a unique constitutional experiment by the dominant Whites in excluding a country's majority- by control and containment of two minorities- Coloureds and Indians. It was composed of the House of Assembly- for Whites, the House of Representatives- for Coloureds (people of mixed descent), and the House of Delegates- for Indians. The entire structure was made up of a system of proportional representation, with whites enjoying the balance of forces in their favour. Each House had the responsibility of controlling their "Own Affairs" which included housing, health and welfare, and education, which collectively constituted a task of ensuring that Indians became a cohesive administrative unit. The House of Delegates was dominated by two parties viz. Solidarity, led by businessman J.N.Reddy, and National Peoples Party (NPP), led by Rajbansi. Both parties defended their position in

parliament, as a preferable strategy to boycott politics because they felt it could compromise short-term benefits of such immediate community needs as housing and welfare provisions.

At the time of these elections Rajbansi was on a political high and rode on that ticket to become the leader of the NPP which became the controlling party in the HOD. However, as Moodley (1989) had noted, racial self-administration had revived long forgotten sectarian cleavages within the Indian group. Moodley's paper on "Cultural Politics" captures some of the dynamics of the level of politics that dominated the House of Delegates during its term. He demonstrated how Indians who were once considered unworthy of citizenship gave the proclaimed multiculturalism of the apartheid strategists' visibility and justification. They were a group without a homeland who fitted into the grand apartheid scheme of a "nation of minorities". The extension of state patronage drove wedges into the social heterogeneity of Indians. Whilst Indians share a common geographical origin, political exclusion, and minority status, the class discrepancies and wide social differentiation makes it difficult to arrive at a concept of community that could fall prey to the often misguided notion of homogeneity. This differentiation was especially evident in the ethnic make up of the two dominant parties. J.N.Reddy's party Solidarity was made up of individuals from the majority Tamil speaking community, whilst Rajbansi's NPP were mainly from the minority Hindi speaking community, whose dominance in the HOD was perceived as disproportionate representation of the two major linguistic groups. Once in parliament Rajbansi tried to make good his promise of rectifying the misdeeds of apartheid, especially in the areas of education and allocation of land. But an opposition member in the HOD claimed those new forms of nepotism according to linguistic and caste criteria were being used. For instance, he claimed that 187 people with the surname Maharaj were promoted in the teaching fraternity in one year (Moodley, 1989:98).

The fiasco over nepotistic practices filtered into every possible crevice in HOD self administration. The media abounded with claims of corruption and patronage in the HOD. By 1988 the situation had reached a climax with politics stooping down to the level of continuous character assassinations between the leaders of the two parties. The fight was especially between Rajbansi and Pat Poovalingum from Solidarity. The claims of nepotism, corruption and patronage revolved around educational promotions and preferential allocation of residential and business properties.

After a Commission of Enquiry, led by Judge Neville James made its information available, the state President P.W.Botha was left with no choice but to dismiss Rajbansi from the cabinet, as

Chairman of the Minister's Council, and as Minister of Housing in the HOD, with effect from 1 January 1989. People from within and outside widely applauded the decision. However, Rajbansi defiantly vowed to continue with his political career. He affirmed: "My career continues...I cannot be put down. I have had setbacks in my life before" (Post, 21 December 1988).

The press was particularly incisive about Rajbansi's future role in politics. Under the caption "No tears for the Raj", a Post reporter said: "Mr. Rajbansi, as must be expected will undoubtedly defend himself against the judge's findings, such is the pugnacious character of the man. The judge's further recommendation that his report be referred to the Attorney General to consider whether criminal prosecutions should be instituted, should be the logical next step... The recommendations must surely mean Mr. Rajbansi's final exit from a system he so stoutly defended". The Daily News (2 February 1989) reported: "The report will do much to clear the air. It will help to clean up the political and administrative mess in the House of Delegates. It justifies the initial action of the State President, Mr. P.W.Botha, in removing Mr. Rajbansi from the cabinet. And it is to be hoped the government accepts the recommendation that he be excluded from ever holding public office". In a revolt that occurred within the NPP Rajbansi was forced to step down. But there was none that could step into the position of this maverick.

Rajbansi's refusal to resign from political life was daunting to his opposition who found themselves helpless in trying to achieve their desire of permanently removing him from office. It was reported later that month that "Mr. Rajbansi's politically devious mind is probably amused at the decision by the House of Delegates to suspend him for the present sitting of parliament. Members decided they could not strip him of his membership of the House because he would simply stand for re-election in his Arena Park constituency and probably win" (Sunday Tribune Herald Viewpoint, 26 February 1989). Within two months Rajbansi was reinstated as leader of the NPP which permitted him re-entry into Parliament. Disappointed that his recommendations were not carried through, Judge James said "He is an inordinately ambitious man obsessed with the desire to achieve personal power and is ruthless in its pursuit" (Sunday Tribune Herald, 23 April 1989).

The balance of power in the HOD eventually tilted in favour of Solidarity, and P.W.Botha, after having suffered a stroke, as it was widely speculated by political correspondents in the media, was replaced through a clandestine manoeuvre by F.W.deKlerk. Once again the press abounded with stories of Indian members of parliament continuously crossing the floor to join opposition

parties and Rajbansi continuously trying to hold on to power in the HOD. Eventually he lost all of his members to other parties, including the Afrikaner dominated National Party, thereby making him the only member of his party. One of the latter's member's, Jaco Maree, once remarked **"Amichand Rajbansi is the leader of the loneliest party in the world"**, to which Rajbansi replied **"You are rubbish"**- a rare challenge indeed from an Indian to an Afrikaner politician. Another White politician Dennis Worral, whose political career itself was a rather chequered one, made a more prescient statement: **"Mr. Rajbansi will come back into politics as a personality while Mr. Maree will sink like a stone."** To date, Dennis Worral's statement remains correct.

From uncertainty to the Minority Front

F.W.de Klerk's presidency was a turning point in South Africa's history. In seeing to the demise of apartheid he also had to see to the dismantling of the tri-cameral parliamentary system. Since the unbanning of the ANC on 2 February 1990 until early 1994 Rajbansi persevered and endured a remarkable one person term of office as the sole representative of the NPP in parliament. Undeterred by his status as a minority of one he carried himself through various negotiating forums amidst varying responses of annoyance and admiration at his presence. Soon after the unbanning of the African National Congress, other extra parliamentary movements, and the release of the high profile political detainees including Nelson Mandela, the Conference for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was set up to negotiate the future of the country. It subsequently entered into a prolonged process that split it into CODESA 1 and CODESA 2. Both initiatives were unable to reach consensus on how to reshape and to redirect South Africa. However the assassination of the ANC's chief military commander Chris Hani in 1992, turned the stalemate around when the South African Communist leader Joe Slovo, used this as an opportunity to insist upon the creation of a multiparty conference that will lead to the election of a democratic government.

Rajbansi sat through this process as well and played his role very strategically in order to redefine his position in that swiftly transforming political terrain. There was eventual agreement that the first non-racial election in South Africa takes place on 27 April 1994. The press engaged in random guessing about which side of the political spectrum Rajbansi was likely to swing, although they undoubtedly reflected upon his own uncertainty. Early in 1993 he reached out to test the ANC's public opinion on him joining them, **"but definitely not the Nats"** (de Klerk's National Party). One ANC member responded by laughing whilst another suggested that

he was free to join through the normal channels, but recalled the denigrating words of the James Commission about Rajbansi (Natal Witness, 23 February 1993). The very next day he was reported in the Post as making a plea to his conventional enemies, the NIC and TIC, about strengthening the Indian political movements, despite the fact that they might be ANC inclined. He justified his call by referring to incumbent policies of an impending Black dominated government which was likely to act in favour of Africans on affirmative action, job reservation, education, housing, and other social services. He believed that in the next five years strong minority movements will emerge in South Africa, although at that point he did not feel it was appropriate to form a political party to represent Indian interests in the April 1994 elections (Post, 24 February 1993).

Rajbansi continued to hesitate about strengthening his ties with other Indian dominated political movements, to wanting to join the ANC, to wanting to form a united front of minority movements to participate in collective bargaining for minority rights. The latter was attempted through several initiatives, but to no resounding response. In a letter to the editor of the Post (29 September 1993) he stated **"I have announced the formation of a non-racial United Minority Front..."** while two months later in an invitation to the ANC to join him in a spirit of reconciliation in Chatsworth, he announced the formation of a National Minority Front. One hundred and fifteen people attended the meeting, drawing the loudest applause from them when he attacked the National Party for not ensuring that the religious interests of Indians were entrenched in the interim constitution. Rajbansi continued with several meetings in different areas in the KwaZulu-Natal region, with a still evidently undefined position, but yet continuing in the fashion of an electioneering campaign trail.

The answer to Rajbansi's political future appeared to have come to him when he had to fall back on a letter written to him via the press by a University of Durban-Westville academic, Dr. T. Naidoo. Appealing to Rajbansi to represent the Indians in the multi-party negotiations, Dr. Naidoo pleaded "Our political future is desperately bleak. We have no leader and still less do we have any people of any political worth capable of speaking for us with any political maturity when the talks really get going" (Post, 3 March 1993). A positive reply was printed in the Post a fortnight later when a reader stated "It has taken time but I'm glad to note that people are beginning to see that Mr. Rajbansi is the only Indian leader who speaks and means well" (Post, 17 March 1993).

Up to November 1993 there still appeared to have been overtures to join the ANC dominated

Patriotic Front, which was made up of at least one hundred organisations. As the year 1994 unfolded and election fever speeded towards its due date, the fate of the Minority Front was still undecided. On 23 January 1994 the Sunday Tribune reported that Rajbansi was in demand by the ANC and Pan African Congress (PAC). In its next edition the paper reported "Ever the survivor Mr. Rajbansi had in recent months appeared to be moving closer to different parties at different times". However the overtures to lure Rajbansi towards the ANC to capture the Indian vote was put to an abrupt end when Indian ANC members threatened to resign if he was co-opted.

Unable to attract other minorities to his fold or to get unto the platform of the Patriotic Front, Rajbansi had to shed the prefixes of "United" or "National" to "Minority Front" and proceed to the first historical non-racial election, in his terms as a "political movement", although in constitution, in goals and in rhetoric it was the realisation of one man's conceptualisation of what a minority party should be. Realising his limited potential he put up a list of thirty candidates for the KwaZulu-Natal region, twenty two for the national candidature, and twenty five for the national-regional arena and aimed to capture at least one hundred and fifty thousand votes from the Indian population in order to acquire two seats on the national legislature and two seats on the regional one. Rajbansi placed himself as the head of all the lists, and perhaps found himself in no other position because they were all unknown people with no commendable background of community participation. Indians in the KwaZulu-Natal region make up twelve per cent of the voting population, of which Rajbansi was able to capture 1.3 % (or 48 951) of the total. This won him only one seat in the KwaZulu-Natal provincial parliament.

In confirming his intention to launch the Minority Front he promised that one of the tasks from this platform "will be to take on Durban's customs officials who are allegedly discriminating against Indian women who arrive with their purchases from the east" (Natal Mercury, 20 October 1993). Throughout his campaign trail and beyond the election, Rajbansi continuously singled out issues that were historically sensitive to Indians in South Africa. While pledging to fight for Indian fishermen who were being victimised by White Natal Parks Board officials - who allegedly have a reputation for excusing White fishermen for similar offences, and pledging to bring Indian movie stars to South Africa, he sees it as his task to reassure Indians of their rights and integrity as a minority group, and of their safety under a Black dominated government. His frequent expression of dissatisfaction about the new government's policy of affirmative action is effectively used as a yardstick to demonstrate his determination to expose the insensitivity towards the historically disadvantaged situation in which Indians found

themselves under White domination. Within the ranks of his party the only woman representative situated her campaign on a religious platform and crusaded for "the separation of the races". A housewife and mother of five, from the working class Indian township of Phoenix, Mrs. Ban Haripersadh called for an exclusion of Indians and Coloureds from the label of "Black". She claimed that through religion she could show how the substantive cultural differences create the conditions and need for exclusive existences of the various "racial groups". In more ways than one Ban Haripersad's campaign reflects the concerns about which Indians in South Africa are so anxious viz.

- fears of being overshadowed by a black majority or possible domination by other competing ethnic formations;
- survival of religion, languages and social institutions; and
- maintenance of an identity- whether imagined or not.

In the June 1999 general election, these concerns resurfaced and Rajbansi once again used them to mobilise support for his party through playing on the anxieties of Indians. He managed to acquire a fair amount of support, but had it split in most cases by people voting varyingly for his party. The statistics revealed that although the ANC increased its support from Indians since the 1994 election, the majority still voted for other parties. Most Indians voted for one of two combinations i.e. Democratic Party/Minority or National Party/Minority Front (Independent on Saturday: 12 June 1999). The common factor here is the Minority Front, which was widely chosen for regional representation, while the Democratic Party and to a lesser extent the New National Party were chosen for representation at national level (The Mercury 8 June 1999). However, Rajbansi used his share of the votes shrewdly to find a niche within the ranks of the ANC (Sunday Tribune 6 June 1999). He entered into a coalition at regional and national level with the ANC without consultation with his constituency. This gesture led to the ANC acquiring a two-thirds majority in parliament, effectively permitting it to change the constitution at its will. Public reaction to this merger led to continuous letters to the editors of newspapers criticising or defending his action.

Overall, the pattern of Indian voting in the 1999 general election still indicate a leaning towards "interest group" politics. But significantly, the IFP did not feature in the list of preferred political parties among the Indian voters. What it illustrates here is that the differences between Indians and Zulus have manifested as a quiet form of antagonism by the Indians. Voting for political parties is in essence a vote of confidence. The opposite of this indicates a lack of

confidence, which in KwaZulu-Natal, must be seen against the background of the traditional rivalry between Indians and Zulus. The IFP draws its support mainly from the Zulu population of the region and as such is seen as a party representing mainly Zulu interests. The Democratic Party on the other hand, aggressively campaigned for minority concerns around affirmative action, education and security, as well as touted the legal course of an Indian female matriculant who passed with six As and who was refused entry into the University Natal's Medical School. These actions helped the party to capture the Indian vote with relative ease. Having voted mainly for the Indian and White dominated parties, Indians have symbolically cast a vote of no confidence in the African dominated parties. It was Rajbansi's subtle act of aligning his party with the ANC, only after the 1999 general election, that possibly blurs this situation.

Conclusion

Throughout all the trials and tribulations that Rajbansi has undergone, it has only served to strengthen his perseverance as a politician and his beliefs about his role amongst those of Indian origin. While his position is largely one of a cultural entrepreneur the way in which he goes about articulating the needs of Indians does indeed capture their broad expectations and aspirations. Through participation in co-optive politics and acceptance of a secondary role in national politics during the apartheid era, Rajbansi and his colleagues have distinctly marked out a path for Indians as a community that can operate only, in Paul Brass's terms, as an "interest group". Although his claims for democracy shifted between calls for non-racialism and recognition of "minority rights" his image was tarnished as one with a spurious commitment to honest politics.

More broadly, group consciousness amongst those of Indian origin in South Africa has heightened significantly through cultural entrepreneurs such as Rajbansi. The historical events in the Baltic states, Eastern Europe, India and Sri Lanka, and the aggressive demands by Zulu and Afrikaner nationalists for control and autonomy over large vestiges of territory have no doubt stimulated and strengthened the call by many Indians for greater recognition. For instance, when Rajbansi simultaneously sought to gain restitution for the victims of the 1950 Group Areas Act, chastised the National Party for not including Indian religions in the then Interim Constitution, and took up the struggle in Indian education on behalf of its teachers, he was making effective political statements through the medium of raising historically contentious issues. However, his more culturally oriented role in his representation of concerns for Indians is vividly captured in for instance, his declaration that curry is very important negotiating instrument, his promise to fight for Indian women and their overweight baggage at the airports

when they return from the near and far eastern countries, his stated intention to bring popular Indian movie stars to South Africa, and his determination to defend the rights of Indian fishermen. His political stature as a representative for a minority group is reassuring when he highlights the plight of the Indian youth's reduced prospects of employment by challenging the state's policy of affirmative action, but simultaneously tries to reassure Indian South Africans of their safety under a Black dominated government.

In reifying these issues, he is sending out at least three resounding messages. Firstly, he is conveying to Indians his understanding and appreciation of their concerns and his willingness to fight for them. Secondly, he is actually capturing and articulating the level at which Indians wish to make their demands as an "interest group". And thirdly, fundamental to all that has been discussed here, is the inescapability of the strength of ethnicity as a force in national and global politics. Together these three factors feed into the process of the culturalisation of politics. It demonstrates the practicality of at least two writers words of wisdom:

- in Graham Howe's terms, for a new civil society which reconciles interests and identities at the local and regional level with a new South Africanism at the national level; and

- in Mukherji's terms, with reference to the Indian sub-continent, for the creation of "democratic space" in order to give greater recognition to social formations that prefer to define themselves in terms of language, religion, common origin or otherwise within the framework of national politics.

CHAPTER FIVE

On the Ground: Perceptions of and Responses to change since April 1994

Introduction

The first democratically held post-apartheid general election that was held in South Africa on April 27, 1994 generated a euphoria and excitement that reverberated positively throughout the length and breadth of the country. This occurred despite the assertion of Zulu and Afrikaner nationalism and the disruptions it generated. The ANC, which was the political party that was widely expected to win the general election, was generally successful in its campaign to bring about a strong measure of confidence in the population by convincing the electorate on their ability to take over as the incumbent government.

The South African media, once notorious for its constant reference of the ANC as a terrorist organisation, had changed its discourse with more favorable reference to it. Its role during apartheid was a distinctly biased position that favored White minority rule. There were visible signs that the media had accepted the reality of political transformation and the unbanning of the African dominated political movements. Special supplements on voter education were periodically issued in all of the daily and weekend newspapers. In attempts to encourage voters' participation, it published responses from the public and encouraged them to participate in the election. While non-racialism and democracy were the cornerstones of the election, viewing it in racial and ethnic terms by many was unavoidable. In one supplement a voter's viewpoint was recorded in the following words:

> **"I'm so excited I can't even wait. People must learn to be more optimistic and patient. This is politics and cannot be solved overnight. I may be seen as Indian and better off, but I also never had a chance to decide on this country's future. For the first time I'm going to decide on my future myself."**

The media certainly helped in creating the required climate for free and fair elections to take place in most parts of the country. Soon after the election the ANC was depicted as the only possible party to have been worthy of winning the election. For instance, the Daily News (3 May 1994) produced an article with a striking caption **"ANC'S election win a victory for the people"**. The president elect, Nelson Mandela, declared himself ready to work with the leaders of the other political parties and appealed to South Africans to work together to heal old wounds. Many believed and correctly so, that he was committed to this task. Such gestures brought many to present Mandela to the rest of the world with the status of a messiah and many began to see him in this light. Mandela epitomised the miracle that the world was looking for in South Africa – a person serious about and committed to non-

violence – which could galvanise the diverse political forces and bring them to merge into a single political process, despite their differing ideologies. His international status and winning smile helped him to succeed admirably in this task.

The world as well as South Africans was pleasantly surprised to witness the first non-racial general election take place with a minimum level of violence. The occasion was marked by long queues of people that stretched in many places for more than a kilometer. Voters from all the historically designated racial groups stood together for hours before they got their opportunities to vote. It was generally a widespread and visibly light-hearted and jovial atmosphere. The Indian dominated residential areas that were under observation for this project were Clare Estate, Reservoir Hills, Asherville and Overport. Besides Overport, which has a substantial Colored population and which added to the racial diversity of the queues, the former three areas were predominantly Indian and to a lesser extent, African. However, despite the fact that these areas have been designated Indian Group Areas, and somewhat remain this way as a spill over from the apartheid era, many polling stations had queues that were predominantly African for large parts of the day. The reason for this was the unbridled proliferation of informal settlements in these areas. At this particular juncture there did not appear to be widespread concern or opposition to this situation. The positive outlook that the democratic elections engendered, especially through the ANC's promise to build one million houses in five years, subdued any major opposition from the residents, to Africans setting up shacks in close proximity to their houses. The need to accept and appreciate one another across the racial divide and to build a common future together acquired prominence over the more destructive elements that were not willing to accept the changes that were taking place.

In some parts of the country the level of disruptions and violence did mar this otherwise acceptable and peaceful process. The internecine violence that occurred in these areas was deemed as the work of "third force" elements, in which the previous white dominated government of the National Party and the regionally based Inkhata Feedom Party in KwaZulu-Natal was accused of being instrumental. In some areas voting was not possible because of the extent of interference by locally dominant politicians and their supporters who did not expect to win the election in their areas, while in other areas losers were expected to squeal over the results. On May 4, 1994, the Daily News produced an article with the caption: **"Massive election fraud"** – covering the accusations and counter accusations of electoral fraud by opposing politicians.

In an attempt to emulate the style of North American politics the ANC led government called for an assessment of their first one hundred days in office. After publicly calling for assessments Mandela stated that he felt positive about the Government of National Unity[1] and the country's relative calm. But criticism still abounded about there being no sign of how the Reconstruction and Development Program was to be funded. In KwaZulu-Natal there was still no sign of collaboration between the IFP and ANC to end the violence and build the organs of democracy. Several months later, with the persistence of such problems, the Daily News (1 October 1994) editorial made the following comment:

> **While much fault for the breakdown lies with the IEC, certain political leaders too must take the blame for needlessly exacerbating those doubts through rhetoric laced accusations of vote rigging by their opponents. It was crystally clear from the moment the count started that they were positioning themselves to repudiate the various outcomes and erode the legitimacy of the dominant party in the new legislature, if they fared poorly. Political parties have nonetheless declared themselves ready to endorse the elections as substantially free and fair."**

Up until middle of 1995 the socio-political ethos was characterised by widespread optimism and the

recognition by most South Africans to work together. There was renewed foreign investor confidence as well as local business sector enthusiasm. However time had shown that this scenario was like riding on a crest – with the country's confidence levels on all fronts taking a nose-dive through rapid escalation of criminal violence[2] and organised crime.

Some observations of the people and their areas
The areas in which research was done showed visible signs of a population under siege. As crime spread to most parts of the country the populace started becoming more conscious of their personal and family safety and began taking measures to meet the challenges that it presented. Apartheid's segregation of the classified racial groups helped to maintain control of the disadvantaged masses, especially Africans, from the neighbouring townships and rural areas. It insulated them from the poverty, hunger and crime that became a characteristic of indigent African areas. But after the April 1994 general election this insulation was hampered even more by the proliferation of informal settlements in the empty spaces that permitted this phenomenon, although the movement into traditionally "non-African" residential areas by Africans started prior to this period in the mid 1980s,

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[1] Immediately after the general election a Government of National Unity was formed, incorporating all the major political parties in the running of the state.

[2] Towards the latter part of 1995 the levels of political violence in most affected areas in the country had subsided. But other forms of violence through escalating criminal activity were replacing it.

when the influx control laws were relaxed and later repealed (see chapter six below). For the first time middle class Indians were being exposed to the degree of deprivation, unemployment and crime that became part of the lifestyle of African townships almost since their inception. The gun licenses by the Indian residents increased drastically. The number of licenses that were awarded annually since 1994 was 431 for 1994, 577 for 1996, 420 for 1997 and 380 for 1998[3]. The reason for the downward turn in 1998 could only be based on conjecturing – that the state was determined to reduce the number of guns owned by citizens. In a random survey in February-March 1997, of 100 houses in three of the research areas viz. Reservoir Hills, Clare Estate and Asherville, sixty seven claimed to either be in possession of firearms or be able to acquire them at short notice. Several of the respondents walked either with their guns around their hips in a somewhat openly provocative manner, or had them tied around their ankles in a holster. Of the sixty-seven who had guns, eighteen made at least one of four claims, that they had been forced: into using them to avert hold ups, to ward off car-jackers, frighten off suspected burglars by firing into the air, or going to the assistance of neighbours.

A number have been victims of shootings themselves, or have lost family members in hold ups that led to shootings.

Houses have fast been transformed into near fortresses through the measures that residents have taken to minimise burglaries, hold ups and theft from their yards. At least four striking features have become increasingly visible since 1995 viz. heightening of fences upon which spikes have been added, steel burglar guards around every window and door of the house, dogs trained to be vicious, and monitored alarm systems with armed responses by the monitoring company – at an added cost. Clare Estate and Reservoir Hills, among the middle class areas, and parts of Phoenix as the under-class area, especially those bordering the African townships of Kwa Mashu and Ntuzuma, were the major victims of spiraling squatter settlements. These suburbs have large tracts of unoccupied land, which have been an attraction to Africans who were affected by the violence or lack of space in the townships, or the sheer poverty in the rural areas. Their rapid rise has been greeted with ambiguous cries of sympathy or total opposition to their presence by the rates paying residents. The establishment of the squatter settlements was a mixture of sheer helplessness on the part of some and an aggressive response by others to the inability of the state to

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[3] Interview with Inspector Vinesh Singh, Sydenhm Police Station, 1 March 1999. The figures for 1995 were not available at the time of interview.

enforce control in the country. This actually amounted to land invasion of both private and state property. It radically altered the entire landscape of these areas, widely generated fear of walking the streets alone – especially at night, and substantially reduced the value of property. Numerous attempts by residents to sell their houses either took years to do so or simply failed. Several homeowners were unable to emigrate because they could not sell their houses – which formed the major part of their transferable investments. Despite the predicament that the Indian residents in the middle class found themselves, their taxable property values remained the highest among the suburbs of Durban. This was brought about by the artificial shortage of land created through the 1950 Group Areas Act, which restricted Indians to minimal space for housing development. Despite innumerable representations by individuals and organised meetings and protest marches by the communities, the Durban City Council refused to lower the valuations of the properties to bring them in line with other White dominated suburbs.

However, the anxieties of the crime situation in places like Reservoir Hills and Clare Estate were no less in more built up and densely populated areas such as Asherville and Overport. Despite the significantly smaller and less visible number of squatter settlements in these areas, home protection measures were equally observable. There has been widespread collaboration among the residents of these areas – especially in monitoring the squatter camps and forming vigilante groups to reduce burglaries and violent attacks against them and motorists. The formation of vigilante groups had to be under strict surveillance of the local police and they did not have any powers to make arrests. In Asherville and Overport the residents devised various strategies to counter the problem. However the Asherville group was more active than the one in Overport. Within single roads and smaller radiuses that incorporated several roads - covering more houses than the former - they either formed patrol groups or discussed ways in which they could operate more vigilantly without having to be out in the streets at night. The effectiveness of the patrol groups since they first began proved to be of tangible support to the residents. It significantly reduced burglaries and car-jackings and led to the arrest and conviction of numerous people. This success led to the vigilante groups becoming targets for the criminals who operated in the area. Several attacks took place against them, leading to a change in their tactics to patrol the area. Initially two cars made up of four males in each, each individual armed with one gun or more, split up and alternatively drove around and parked in strategic places throughout the night. At least four recorded attacks against these patrols took place. On two occasions they were shot at, at another stones were thrown at them and during the fourth attack people

in two vehicles chased them until they were rescued by a passing police patrol. These attacks took place within a three-month period in 1997 although there was no evidence to suggest that this was the work of an individual or a single group. After they occurred the vigilantes felt compelled to increase their numbers by having a second car with four more armed individuals behind each leading patrol car. Their strategy has been to follow the leading car by a distance of at least one hundred meters in order to avoid detection as a team. No subsequent attacks took place after these events although the vigilantes did curtail more attempted burglaries, and they helped in the arrest of several thieves breaking into cars.

In areas where people did not feel the need to have patrolling vigilante groups but did feel the need to have at least a measure of vigilance, they formed cluster groups of ten or more houses. They periodically shared and exchanged information and collated their addresses and telephone numbers. During weekends and holidays when the occupants of a particular house went out for more than a night, all houses within the cluster were informed and were in a state of readiness for any eventuality. The pattern of break-ins changed for a period late in 1997 when residents were least expected to be robbed. These attacks, at least five reported, occurred during the most unsuspecting times of the day. Three incidents happened on Sunday afternoons and two on weekday mornings between 10h00 and 12h00. One of the Sunday incidents occurred in Asherville when all the occupants of the house were gone out. A man casually walked into the yard at about 15h00 and attempted to enter the house by trying to climb through an open bathroom window that was neither visible from the road nor to the immediate neighbors. But the owners had just returned and witnessed the incident. When they thought they had managed to subdue him, the burglar broke loose and started running. One of the men of the house shot him in the right leg and had him arrested by the police. In another incident in Clare Estate a woman walked into the yard of a house at about 14h30 and casually started taking off the clothes from the lines. A ten old boy, alone with his granny at home while the rest of the family were out, witnessed this and thought that she was employed by the family, so he kept quiet not knowing that his clothes too for school the next day were being stolen.

Such incidents of theft from yards and houses have become a widespread phenomenon. Almost 60% of the interviewees revealed information of such incidents, and almost inevitably they emphasised that it was "Africans" who were responsible. They consistently accused the state of failing in their duties to protect them and their properties and therefore

find themselves in the situation of having to form vigilante groups – which although tolerated by the police – is not entirely welcome. This does however reflect poorly on the ill-equipped and often apathetic South African Police Services, whose ability to execute their responsibilities with expectation has been frequently raised. These have been the most general responses from residents whose responses to transformation in post-apartheid South Africa appeared to be embedded in the situation of crime and insecurity.

A profile of the interviewees from 1996 to 1998

Those interviewed were from diverse backgrounds and included males and females. They resided in the under class township of Phoenix, and the middle class suburbs of Reservoir Hills, Clare Estate, Asherville, Overport, the Central Business District of Durban, as well as in the neighboring towns of Verulam, Tongaat, Stanger and Umkoomaas. Additional interviews for comparative purposes were done in Cape Town where there are substantially smaller Indian populations and who are generally from middle class to more affluent backgrounds.

Table 5.1 reflecting basic information on 255 people interviewed from July 1997 to March 1999.

Suburb	INTERVIEWEES	PERIOD OF INTERVIEW	MALES	FEMALES
Phoenix *township	30	June, July, August 1997	22	8
Reservoir Hills Clare Estate Asherville Overport	120	July 1997; October-November 1997; July-November 1998	78	42
Central Durban	30	June, July, August 1997	18	12
Tongaat	15	April/May 1997	12	3
Stanger	15	January/February 1997	13	2
Umkoomaas	15	1997	11	4
Cape Town	30	November 1998	13	17

From the table above it is apparent that more men than women were interviewed. One hundred and sixty seven (167) of the interviewees were male and eighty-eight (88) were female. There was no deliberate intention to limit the number of females for interviews. The actual contact situation during fieldwork was dictated by several factors. At the workplaces such as in schools and in community based organisations such as in temples,

those who were interviewed were the ones who were available, while at houses women often called males because they were either too shy to talk or their conservatism dictated that men should speak to strangers for any prolonged period. In the smaller towns of Tongaat, Stanger and Verulam conservatism was more pronounced and visible, while in the suburbs of Durban there was a greater tendency for women to either respond themselves or to participate in the interviews while their senior males were responding.

A number of conventional features with respect to Indian households still prevailed in the 1990s. For instance, the number who either resided in a single house or who occupied another abode in the same property were usually consistent with the conventional norms of extended or joint families. Both these structures, comprising of genealogical kin that in most cases consisted of three generation structures, have been common among people of Indian origin. The issue of joint and extended families are treated here as depicting different household scenarios. While the concept of the joint family is often used as an equivalent to the notion of extended family, its specific reference here is to indicate three generation households that is made of patrilineal corporate groups where sons continue to reside with their parents after marriage. The dependencies between the two generations may vary according to earnings and resources at either generation's disposal. Extended family on the other hand is reference to a composite of domestic groups consisting of two or more nuclear families. Evidence for this project has limited such composites to married siblings and their nuclear families from patrilineal backgrounds. The historical reasons for the perpetuation of this structure is generally based on economic reasons. All working members of the household either pooled their earnings and allowed the most senior person, either the patriarch or matriarch, to administer the purchases and payments of the household, or each one assumed a monetary responsibility according to their earning capacities. This structure was also a platform from which siblings built up their capitals in order to establish their own nuclear households.

While the economic reason is still the prevalent factor for the existence of extended and joint households, the contemporary political climate was the first reason to be attributed for its continuation. In the middle class suburbs where second and third generation individuals have been unable to amass sufficient funds to purchase houses, their reasons to remain in their natal households were socio-political. Respondents generally felt that the political climate for investing in real estate in South Africa was too risky, and that for young couples to be purchasing properties while both are employed, is impractical and dangerous in view

of the extent of burglaries. The latter reason has often been the first and most widely cited explanation for the retention of conventional household patterns. Expressions such as *"It's too dangerous and inconvenient to let our children buy their own houses in this day and age"* and *"Properties are too expensive to invest in right now when our future as Indians in this country is so dicy"*, have been made in variations in every interview that presented such a scenario. From the 255 interviews mentioned above, 163 of the individuals came from three generation households. While there was a uniqueness to each situation and interesting variations across the number of three generation households, not all of them could have been followed up for more detailed information. Of the 120 interviews that were carried out in Overport, Clare Estate, Reservoir Hills and Asherville, 73 belonged to three generation structures. Variations of this structure were at least fourfold viz.

1. Being part of a single unit where all cooked, ate and shared responsibilities collectively;
2. Extended the existing structure to accommodate the growing family of younger sons, and still collectively engaging in household responsibilities;
3. Extending the existing structure to build an independent unit including a separate entrance and kitchen, whereby the financial responsibilities become more distinctly demarcated.
4. Building or renovating an independent structure on the property in order to acquire a measure of independence, but like the above having expenditure more distinctly demarcated.

The table below provides a breakdown of the 73 households from Overport, Clare Estate, Reservoir Hills and Asherville.

Table 5.2 depicting number of joint/extended household type where each number represents the corresponding type mentioned in the fourfold depiction immediately above.

1	2	3	4
23	18	17	15

Most of the 73 households depicted above considered the joint or extended family situation as an unquestionable phenomenon. Discussion about the situation sometimes made it difficult for the respondents to try and understand why this presented such a curiosity. The responsibilities that parents or grandparents felt about keeping their kin either in the same yard or under the same roof was articulated as a moral and cultural one. It was presented as

a norm that would have made any deviation from this totally unacceptable either to parents, children or grandchildren. Normative kinship responsibilities requires parents to shield children and grandchildren up to a point until they are sufficiently independent to set up homes of their own. The reciprocal expectation is to ensure that elderly members of the household are cared for by immediate kin and not shunned away in old age homes.

The feeling to reciprocate care was generally mutual among young and old although more direct hints from at least two daughters-in-law intimated that such situations are neither the ideal nor preferable. Such daughters-in-law felt strongly about living on their own as nuclear households but were only willing to succumb to such circumstances because their spouses felt they had towards their elders. When the opportunities arose for them to express their dissatisfaction with their living arrangements during the interviews, they either hinted at the inconveniences or gestured in disapproving ways to get their spouses attention. One commented "But the house is fully burglar guarded, it has a monitored alarm and the neighbours are reliable. Although there have been break-ins in the area, this is a generally safe area. I think we will appreciate each other more if we live on our own". In the second incident a woman expressively and cynically retorted when her spouse stated that he would not leave his parents to live on his own because of their vulnerability to attack: "Hmmm, how now nice eh? Where are the attacks coming from and who is the daily victim here?" Not surprisingly both women were full time housewives and had to contend with their husbands parents everyday and throughout the day.

Most wives however presented an impression of having resigned to their fates in joint and extended household situations. Their preferences were not always openly expressed. Despite the independence many wives have acquired through their professions and personalities, they generally felt inclined to follow the normative pattern in household structure and their spouses' feelings of obligations towards their parents or grand parents. There was often an expressed obligation to reciprocate care and the difficulties of breaking affinal bondage in tightly knit households. Likewise, there was an expressed need to cluster together as family in a climate of fear, economic instability and ensuring survival of cultural norms. At least twenty of the women participated in the interviews and spoke positively of living in joint/extended household situations. They were all professional or working women who enjoyed at least one or more of the following common benefits:

- caring for children who do not go to school
- taking and picking up children from school

- caring for them thereafter
- cooking and keeping the kitchen clean
- laundering and ironing clothes
- general administration of household care through the employment of maids, gardeners and odd job employees.

The benefits in these cases outweighed the disadvantages and the women communicated this as though they have been the major benefactors. One of the respondents, from a mother of two children aged four and eighteen months, replied in these words: "You know, having my in-laws at home is such a blessing. My father-in-law takes my children for walks during the day and buys everything we need for the house when it's necessary. He takes them shopping with my mother-in-law and breaks their boredom during the day. My mother-in-law baths and changes the children and cooks the food. She also sees to the duties of the maid. When I come home tired in the evenings there is very little for me to do. I just eat, enjoy my children and the clean house. After having lived on our own for a while, I really appreciate this set up. If I live on my own I'll die!"

The high frequency of joint families required a more in depth examination into the lifestyles of the respondents. An arbitrary figure of twenty was selected to acquire detailed information and life histories from among the bigger pool of respondents.

Table 5.3 depicting information on seven issues from 20 households

	Household type	Previous occupation of retired couple	Occupation of second generation	House size by number of bedrooms	Household number	Joint income, in excess of R5000.00	Domestic assistants
1	Joint	Clerical; housewife	Teacher; Bank	4	6	yes	Yes
2	Joint	School principal; housewife	Lawyer; University lecturer	5	8	yes	Yes
3	Joint	Bus owner; housewife	Mechanic; Hotel receptionist	4	5*no third generation	yes	Yes
4	Joint	Teacher; Teacher	Bank; teacher	6	9	yes	Yes
5	Joint	Insurance; housewife	Computer analyst; housewife	4	7	yes	Yes
6	Joint	Electrical contractor;house wife	Electrical contractor;teacher	6	8	yes	Yes
7	Joint	Owner;printing press;assistant	Printing press;assistant	5	6	yes	Yes
8	Joint	Truck driver;	Welder;	5	8	yes	No

	Household type	Previous occupation of retired couple	Occupation of second generation	House size by number of bedrooms	Household number	Joint income. in excess of R5000.00	Domestic assistants
		housewife	Doctor's surgery				
9	Joint	Deceased; housewife	Dentist; attorney	4	5	yes	Yes
10	Joint	Deceased; housewife	Teacher; Teacher	5	6	yes	Yes
11	Joint	deceased	Bus owner; hotel receptionist	7	8*four generations	yes	No
12	Joint	Teacher; housewife	Computer technician;housewife	4	5	yes	Yes
13	Joint	Insurance agent; teacher	Doctor; physiotherapist	5	5	yes	Yes
14	joint	Deceased; housewife	Butcher; Housewife	7	10	Yes*two maids —own and common entrances	Yes
15	joint	Truck owner; housewife	Clerical-with "retired" father	6	11	Yes	Yes
16	joint	Deceased; housewife	Attornney;attorney	4	4	yes	No
17	joint	Supermarket owner; housewife	Optometrist; pharmacist	7	6* no third generation	yes	Yes
18	extended	----------	Vegetable vendors; school assistant; school secretary	6	9	yes	No
19	extended	----------	Bus owners; hotel receptionist	6	8	yes	No
20	extended	----------	Garage owners	8	12	yes	Yes

The table above illustrates the variations in household sizes, occupations of the first and second generations in the households, the number of kin who make up the household, their combined earnings, and the domestic assistants they employ. It is apparent from the evidence that joint households are greater in number than the extended households. The latter however, were originally joint households as well, but became extended households after the deaths of the first generations. The diversity of their occupations and their combined incomes are indications of their relatively well off economic positions. The amount of R5000.00 was based on the cut-off point used by banks and building societies which calculate home loan repayments of up to R2000.00 per month and basic living

expenses for a family of seven to be in the region of +R2500.00 per month. Every one of the households had incomes that exceeded the amount of R5000.00. All of them had displayed situations of relative comfort and did not indicate any desperate need to transcend their contemporary earnings. The homes were well furnished and curtained and the yards and houses were sufficiently spacious to accommodate the number living in each home. Five of the twenty houses did not have domestic maids. In four of the cases there was an expressed desire to take responsibility for their own household duties. In one case the practice had stopped because the maid was allegedly responsible for setting up a burglary in the house. In all five cases domestic work was associated with the employment of African women, for whom there was a distinct aversion because of mistrust and the association of burglaries with African men. The domestic responsibilities were generally understood as a gender based responsibility and were carried out by the women of the houses while men usually saw to the gardening. However, the latter activity was often done through the part time employment of gardeners, who were mainly "trusted African" males. There was profound emphasis on this issue, which was linked to the political climate and the perceptions that so many residents spoke about as a necessity. The screening of part time gardeners and their familiarity either to members within the household or to some other known person of the household was a crucial factor in the employment of the "trusted African male". Such fear emanates from an allegedly high record of attacks by gardeners who have been employed without the householders checking their credentials, as well as attacks by those who have been employed for a longer period[4].

Despite the generally large sizes of the households domestic cleaning and gardening had become too menial, too tiring to do or just not possible with the time they had at their disposal. There was a distinct division of labor that was either gender or racially based. In most cases their middle class statuses afforded them the opportunities to employ full time or part time maids or gardeners.

An Analysis of the Responses

Almost inevitably the interviews and periods of participant observation turned into *laissez-faire* conversations about the fear psychosis that prevails in South Africa. The open-ended nature of the questionnaire induced such conversations and they became unavoidable to entertain. Often, it was in these discourses that the unanimous feelings or differences within

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[4] Attempts at acquiring statistics on this issue from the police public relations sector were unsuccessful. The reason was that such crime was recorded under general categories of assault, murder, burglaries etc.

the households, about the nature and pace of change, emerged. Each questionnaire comprised of a basic outline of twenty-two questions (see appendix), many of which produced answers that required follow-up questions. For instance, when respondents commented on either the negative or positive changes, which they thought occurred after the April 1994 general election, their replies provoked additional questions. From the 255 respondents to these questions, 171 responded with outright condemnation of the South African government. From the remaining 84, 58 of the respondents were ambivalent about change while the remaining 26 were positive about the future.

The most common replies to the positive changes from the positive respondents were:
- Repeal of the 1950 Group Areas Act, which permits people to purchase homes in areas of their choice
- Promotion of a human rights culture
- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of movement
- The right to vote without reference to race
- The right to marry a partner of one's choice
- Freedom to communicate with people of other race groups
- Increased investments from overseas
- Better opportunities for Indians through affirmative action
- The right to join a political party of one's choice
- Evidence of Indian Cabinet Ministers who fought against the apartheid government
- Increased, improved and legitimate communication with India.

Those who were negative and ambivalent about the future of South Africa were in the majority and they mainly produced the inverse of the responses above, although several of them did allude to some of these answers as well. Their despondency was more complex than the variations of the answers that centered on the violence that so many had spoken about. The negative issues ranged from strong belief in a situation of disorder and chaos (most negative) to manageable issues of control and hope over time (the ambivalent):
- No positive change at all and unlikely to occur
- The country is going the same route as the rest of the countries in Africa
- Uncontrollable violence and inability of businesses to function normally because of hold-ups
- Increasing costs of home and business security measures

- Rapid increase in car-jacking and car theft

- Inability of the state to control crime

- Lack of ability and willingness on the part of the state to deal with criminals effectively

- Drop in the standards of education but an increase in its costs

- Inability of the state to provide housing and employment

- Drop in health standards and deteriorating conditions in state hospitals

- Affirmative action being selectively employed for benefit of Africans at the expense of Indians and Coloureds[5]

- Rising cost of living

- Increasing belligerence by taxi operators and the inability of the police to contain their violent behavior and lack of discipline on the roads

- The rapid increase in vigilante groups because of the ineffectiveness of the police – many of whom lack training or who enter into the forum with preconceived racist notions

- The state's lack of vision to produce a meaningful program of action to boost development and confidence in the future of the country, considering the failure of the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) and the introduction of the controversial Growth, Economic and Redistribution (GEAR) plan

- Lack of overseas investor confidence because of the problems listed above

Both sets of positive and negative comments allude to the contemporary feelings of hope, fears and anxieties of the respondents. What they have been articulating in the interviews, public meetings, and one on one conversations and social gatherings are important reflections of how people of Indian origin feel about transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. In the set of positive comments 83 people deliberately chose to speak in non-racial terms. Forty-seven of the 83 responded by emphatically denouncing the label of "Indian" with reference to themselves, while the remaining 36 put their South African origin before that of their Indian origin. They preferred to avoid the label "Indian", but were not totally averse to it being used in describing them. But it had to follow a particular order. They were emphatic, if the word Indian had to be used, that they were first referred to as "South African Indians" and not vice versa. An important political statement was made in this manner of emphasis in that their South African identities had to receive priority before their Indian identities. Their general defense of this position was that they were born and bred

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[5] According to the state decree on affirmative action Africans, Colored and Indians are considered as disadvantaged and therefore should be considered on equal terms for employment

South Africans with no Indian identity other than that of their ancestral backgrounds. For this reason their positions as South Africans were unique and not easily comparable with either their counterparts on the Indian sub-continent or with Indians in other countries. They often commented on those who preferred to see themselves as "Indians", viewing them as actually denying or being ignorant of their real identities. These respondents were generally aware of the political world, very articulate and hopeful for the future of the country. They did not associate the turmoil in other African countries with the present lack of direction that so many others believe to be the major problem in South Africa. The general feeling among these respondents was that the population at large should understand the constraints under which the state is operating and it is therefore unable to deliver as swiftly as people would like. This was despite the fact that the ANC, before being elected into government, themselves created expectations by making promises such as creation of jobs, building one million houses in five years, free education and improved health facilities.

An assertive respondent, who insisted on being called South African, was a civic leader and a staunch supporter of the ANC. He grew in popularity for challenging the Durban City Council for the high taxes they charged property owners in predominantly Indian residential areas (previously Indian Group Areas). But he lost favour with a number of Indian residents for ingratiating himself with neighboring African squatters. While he publicly defended the existence of African squatter camps he also fought against over rated Indian properties as a matter of principle, because during apartheid they were overvalued and therefore over taxed. This was a result of the artificial shortage of land created through the 1950 Group Areas Act. He saw his role as being one of reconciliation between Indians and Africans. The problem in his area was the increasing rise in crime, resulting in tension between the Indian residents and African squatters. He remarked: "A number of Indians do not like the fact that there is now a Black majority government in place. Some of them who are unhappy are doing the right thing and leaving the country while others are continuously moping about the slow pace of change and delivery. Many of them see crime as an African phenomenon, but they don't see how many Indians for instance are dealing with drugs and going to India to bring thousands of rands worth of mandrax! What about the violence and lawlessness in these acts?.... When it comes to delivery for the whole country everybody must realise that it is going to take a very long time to undo the effects of apartheid.... And the Africans too must realise that they must start paying up for the services they get, otherwise it won't be long before the local municipalities run bankrupt. Maybe on this score the Indians have a

better track record than the Africans – but they must also understand their (Africans) history too".

Another equally popular ANC supporter, a teacher[6] in Phoenix township, withdrew his support for the party and became ambivalent about the future of the country. He had a long history of mobilising to change old mindsets and increase membership for the ANC during apartheid among the township residents. But events since their takeover after the April 1994 general election led him to seriously rethink his support for them after two stabbing incidents. One of them was fatal which led to him having to flee his school and go into hiding for several weeks. While he maintained that he was South African before any other designation such as "Indian" was assigned to him, he was losing faith in the future of the country and of the ability of the ANC to govern it and address legitimate minority issues. He taught in a school which had 60% and 40% Indian and African pupils respectively. In a room in which he arranged for himself and seven other teachers to be interviewed as a group, an impressive range of posters were pasted on all the walls. The posters were graphic illustrations against aids, sexual control, responsibilities of the pupils in the classroom, advise against vandalism, a picture of President Nelson Mandela as well as a picture of the new South African flag, the importance of recognizing the multicultural nature of South African society, career opportunities and a copy of the new constitution. With reference to the posters on the wall, he commented: "Becoming a multicultural teacher first means becoming a multicultural person. We need to learn more about ourselves, confront our own racism and biases, and learn to see reality from a variety of perspectives. I thought the ANC was going to promote this sort of culture. But the changes they have effected are on a superficial level only. We probably have one of the best constitutions in the world, but there is little else to it. The ANC's failure to control crime and deal with criminals effectively, and live up to the expectations it created, led to it being trounced in the local government elections in 1996. In Chatsworth it lost to the Minority Front and in Phoenix it lost to the National Party – which is a disgrace for a party that has such huge support in the African areas. I really did not get much support from the party big wigs during the elections when I was neither mobilising for them nor when I was in trouble during the stabbing incidents. They would not have done the same thing in an important African constituency if a by-election were to take place there. So why should I bother anymore about them?" The teacher's serious rethink about his support for the ANC and his

shift from "South African" to "South African Indian" began when an Indian pupil in his school was allegedly stabbed by an African pupil. A few days later, uniformed African pupils stabbed a twenty- five-year-old unemployed Indian man who went to fetch his nephew after school to death outside the school. The neighboring Indian community, described by a parent as generally apathetic, galvanized in what appeared to be a knee-jerk reaction. Indian parents demanded that African pupils be removed from the school. For several days after the murder they gathered outside the gate shouting: "We don't want Blacks here!" During this the police from entering the area until the tension was reduced to safer levels forbade period African pupils. The community also viewed the teacher under discussion as being the main perpetrator since he fought a sustained battle to have his school integrated. Community anger against Africans led to a segment of mobilised members to turn against all the Africans who passed through their area. The first attack led to the stabbing of an innocent African worker who was passing through the area after work. He was saved by the police. The Daily News (March 6, 1997) presented a front-page color photograph of the victim with a torn blood splattered shirt. The teacher under discussion was also warned by angry community members for trying to force integration. He was forced to go into hiding for several weeks and claimed that the ANC leaders in the region did not give him any meaningful support. This led him to abandon his leadership role in the area for the ANC, but claimed that he would still work independently towards racial harmony in the country. For the first time he thought seriously about emigration, but felt stifled by the thought of having to start life all over again in a foreign country. However, he vowed to leave South Africa if he had enough money to do so. This was echoed by his other colleagues in the group interview. Their main reason for remaining in South Africa was financial and their common reasons for wanting to emigrate was lawlessness, corruption and a generally bleak future for the country. They however conditioned themselves to think positively about the future despite the realities by which they are confronted, in order, as one person stated, *"to keep our sanity"*.

On the contrary, the 172 respondents who saw themselves first as "Indians" were doing so for several reasons. Among many of these respondents there was still a high degree of continuity from the apartheid era with reference to their identities, when circumstances conditioned them to think of themselves as an ethnic category i.e. "Indians". In numerous instances, such reference was made in innocence and in ignorance of the more recent efforts

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[6] Interviewed on 24/6/1997, 26/6/1997 and 30/71997. The first interview was a result of a leading front-page article in the Daily News 6 March 1997, with a color photograph of a bleeding African worker and a story of

by the state to build a national consciousness that is free from the ethnic labeling of the past. Such individuals tended to determine their identities on the basis of their religious beliefs and practices, their eating habits and their general exposure to mainly people of Indian origin during apartheid. Their indoctrination during this period, brought about as a result of the insular effects of the 1950 Group Areas Act, has kept them adamant about maintaining such an identity. The response in this issue was often coupled with reference to their pride in their ancestral homeland i.e. India, and to the way in which Indians in general will be viewed as a minority in South Africa irrespective of what the state might propagate. They demonstrated a strong tendency to view politics in ethnic terms and a tacit to overt pronouncement that politics will always be ethnically based. One elderly male respondent, a retired school principal, retorted on the issue in these words: "What difference will it make despite what the state says it is doing to create a culture of non-racialism? The fact that they are targeting Africans in the job market at the expense of capable Indians, is proof of the inconsistencies in the new South Africa. The African government is trying to do what the National Party did for the Afrikaners from 1948. But I must warn you they are incapable of doing the same for their own people. As a former school principal, I must tell you that education as we received it through the Department of Indian Affairs is going to be like a dream very soon. There are already signs of the system cracking by encouraging the best people to resign by offering them packages. The African has got no experience in the administration of education and they are sure to make a mess of it. I know what the quality of teaching is in those schools – my brother is an inspector of schools and he goes to the African townships from time to time. The teachers don't really care there. We were much better off under the White man!"

There was a visible degree of belligerence among most of these 172 respondents because of the ways in which their lives have actually been affected by transformation. Several factors were common in most of their experiences, including being
- burgled
- car-jacked
- held up at home or in the family business
- mugged in the street
- murder through a hold-up or violent confrontation,
- victims of theft of clothes, children's toys or other household belongings stolen from the yard, theft of cars

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the violence between Indians and Africans in the interviewee's school.

- victims of devalued properties by living close to a squatter camps and not being able to sell their property
- victims of overcrowded schools with second language children from African based squatter camps, forcing them to send children to schools outside their suburbs at phenomenally higher costs – especially in predominantly White suburbs where teaching standards, good management, control and discipline are still in tact
- victim of affirmative action
- and not being able to continue with normal social life in the evenings and nights because of the security factor.

The issues highlighted above are represented in the table below, outlining the incidents to which the interviewees and their household members had fallen victim. A number of individuals and households have been affected by more than one incident. The impact in each case brought the overwhelming majority of respondents to view life in South Africa in terms of their experiences.

Table 5.4 illustrating the issue by which the 172 respondents were affected – either personally or by a family member being a victim.

ISSUE	NUMBER
Burglary	68
Car-jacking	53
Hold-up in home	58
Held up in business	26
Mugged in the street	17
Murder	15
Theft of household belongings	112
Property devaluation	132
Inability to sell property	37
Living close to squatter camp	56
Choosing a school outside the suburb	102
Affirmative action	85
No/reduced social life	151

In each category listed in the table above the descriptions and traumatic experiences that the respondents underwent are too vast and varied to incorporate here. There was widespread unapologetic nostalgia about the rule of law and relative peace that existed during the previous White dominated government of the National Party. In at least 173 of the total of 255 interviews, variations of a common sentiment were made: "At least under the White

government we could walk the streets peacefully", or "Under the White government crime and corruption was controllable". From the 172 respondents who are represented in the table, 77 of them experienced two or more incidents either in their homes, businesses, in the streets or at work. The common incidents, as reflected in the table, were thefts and the devaluation of property. There has been a variety of ways in which personal and household property has been lost. The most frequent occurrence that has been reported was theft of washed clothes drying in the outside lines and to a lesser extent children's toys that were left outside.

The 68 burglaries, 58 hold-ups in the homes and 26 hold-ups in the businesses recorded losses and experiences that ranged from mild physical attacks to severe damages to property and life. The burglaries that were recorded were of three types viz. in the absence of the householders, while they were either unaware that the incident was taking during the day or at night while they were asleep. To this extent the burglaries were non-violent attacks in that householders were not physically harmed, although the damage to their houses and financial standing was serious in several cases. In at least seven cases the household contents were either not or inadequately insured and their losses ranged from approximately R1000.00 to R150 000.00. In the former cases, which were four, video machines, televisions, car radios, stereo sets and tools, including lawn mowers, were stolen. In the bigger burglaries the maids were the first to be blamed – accused of either willingly or under pressure – supplying the burglars with information. Of the three who were affected by bigger losses, all blamed their maids for the occurrences. Their evidence was cited by the fact that their maids either did not return to work or was acting suspiciously after the incidents. Two of three were not insured at all, while the third was insured for only a fraction of what was lost. The estimated amounts of R40 000.00, R65 000.00 and R150 000.00 were recorded respectively. The victim, indicated by the last amount, had insured his household contents to the value of R90 000.00 only. He did not include his furniture, which was also stolen and given an estimated value of R60 000.00. He claimed: "My house was completely wiped out when we went to the Wild Coast Casino in December last year (1998) for three nights. By the second night I had to break away with my family from the rest of my group and go back home.... I can't tell you how much my wife cried for the next week and how little sleep we had for the next few months. Our house became a nightmare to us – we didn't feel like we owned it anymore".

In the 26 business hold-ups seven of them occurred between 8h30-10h00 when only women were present, 5 occurred early in the morning when the business was just being opened between 06h00-07h00, and the remaining 14 occurred in different times of the day. Home made guns were reported to have been used in 2 robberies, while in other cases regular pistols, knives, choppers and sticks were also used. In 4 of these cases, 4 members of the households were killed through shooting, 8 were injured through either shooting, stabbing or been beaten with a variety of weapons or through being punched, kicked or banged against the walls. In 3 cases the robbers were shot dead by the owners, in 4 cases they were shot dead by the police, and in 2 cases arrests of a total of 6 were made.

The other issues relating to devaluation of and inability to sell properties because of the squatter problems, choosing new schools for children and affirmative action are amplified in the chapters that follow. Against the background of such experiences respondents were only too eager to articulate their frustrations in terms of their unpleasant experiences and the growing lack of morale that prevails in the country. This severely impacted on their perceptions about future socio-political scenario.

Some predominant socio-political trends

A major component in tea-room gossips, socialisation among friends, "street corner" conversations and weekend family based social gatherings is the predominance of discussion on the nature of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. Inevitably the issues that are depicted in the table above acquire prominence. It is because of the extent to which this is occurring throughout the country that the media coverage it is receiving is widespread. The conversations in any one scenario often:

- elicited strong positive views on the recent past of White dominated rule and intense debates on the nature and pace of change,
- induced talk on negative effects of affirmative action – especially where under-qualified Africans are being favored,
- got people hoping about the manner in which voting for the forthcoming 1999 general elections is likely to take place – most frequently in the hope that the ANC will substantially reduce or lose its support base,
- the preferred political choices and
- heard yearnings and dreams to flee the country with adequate bank balances.

In respect of the above, transformation has almost become synonymous with corruption, inability to govern effectively, a lack of state vision, violence, car-jacking, bank robberies and a time to emigrate. In the same vein social gatherings have become synonymous with a time to talk about these problems. The newspapers abound with these headlines on a daily basis: **"Indian fears misplaced, says Mandela"** (Daily News, October 28, 1998), **"Community (Indian) living in fear"** (Sunday Tribune Herald, August 9, 1998), **"Freeze, flee...or fight"** (Sunday Tribune Herald, August 16, 1998), **"The killing goes on..."** (Highway Mail, November 14, 1997), **"Crime stats queried – figures don't add up, say the experts"** (the Saturday Paper, February 14, 1998). The first two headlines that are quoted had opening paragraphs that were consistent with the ethnographic information that is presented above. For instance, the first report opened with the following words: "Crime, affirmative action, education and unemployment were some of the concerns and fears raised by Lotus FM listeners yesterday when they were given a chance to question President Nelson Mandela." The other started off with these words: "There are three physiological responses, which every animal displays when it is in a state of fear: it freezes, flees or turns to fight. Now, if there is one characteristic that defines the Indian community in South Africa it is fear, as expected, it responds as the way nature decrees". Several newspapers have also reported on the extent to which conversations on the negative aspects of transformation in social gatherings have become an unavoidable aspect. People now address the issues with virtual obsession about the state of the nation.

This has had traumatic effects on evening and late night socialisation. Most of the respondents have developed an aversion to socialise during these hours because of the dangers such as being car-jacked, shot at or robbed. One person commented: "You just have to drive out after seven at night and you'll find the streets deserted. You'll only find Africans roaming the streets after this hour. If you are alone walking in the streets you are sure to be attacked. So many people have been hijacked at robots at night that it is now too dangerous to be out. If we do go out it is always more than one person, or we make sure that we are not out too late. Because then you don't know who's waiting to attack you in your yard."

The types of crime that are spoken about here are generally associated with Africans. It has evidently increased the racial divide between Indians and Africans, since the areas in which research was done have a particular orientation about them. They have been middle class Indian Group Areas during apartheid and as settled tax paying residents they have been

forced to coexist with African squatters who have been branded as land invaders. The latter's poverty stricken situation has bred among them a number of criminals who have considered stealing their only way to transcend their marginalised existences. And the victims in these areas are usually people of Indian origin – who do not have much knowledge on for instance, the extent to which innocent Africans become victims of African thugs as well. In an interview with an Indian tuck shop operator who relied on business from neighboring African squatters, he related an eye witness account of a street mugging: "People think only Indians are victims. But last Tuesday I saw an Indian guy walk past about eleven o' clock at night. These two African guys left him and attacked the other African guy walking behind him. They stabbed him twice, took his wallet and finished him on the floor. The poor guy's clothes were all torn, and they even stole his shoes."

Conclusion

The perception on the ground, which influences the socio-political trend, is thus pervasively ethnically and racially scarred. There is common mistrust among both Africans and Indians, who generally loathe their forced coexistence as people of significantly varying means. A careful analysis of both segments will reveal that their differences cannot be simplistically viewed either along racial or class lines. The perceptions are not just a creation and continuity of the apartheid era but are powerful reminders of the mistrust between ethnic and racial categories that has risen to the fore at a frighteningly accelerated pace throughout the world in the 1990s. The state's handling of racial mistrust is to date a virtual denial of the realities on the ground. A part of the empowerment process for the disadvantaged Africans has been to accept their land invasion on privately owned properties, thereby widening the schism between Indian landowners and impoverished Africans. The divide is rooted in Indian ownership and African invasion. Its approach to nation building shows that the concept of the rainbow nation exists largely as a tool for political rhetoric rather than a genuine characteristic of peaceful coexistence that the concept suggests. In the all of the research areas, besides Phoenix, the most visible signs of differences are actually class based. While Indians live in solidly structured brick and tile houses with carefully landscaped gardens, Africans are crammed together in nearby small empty spaces of land that is saturated with houses built out of card board, timber, masonite and plastic that are unlikely to withstand prolonged spells of inclement weather conditions. Social services in the form of electricity, sanitation and water supply, are the privileges of only those who are legally occupying property and who are the ones who have the means to afford it.

However the endemic crime levels are re-entrenching racial perceptions of the past. It has eroded the euphoria, nascent racial trust and hope that characterised the pre-election period of April 1994 throughout South Africa. Police and media records, as well as interviewee responses indicate that that in the research areas Indians are the victims and Africans make up the majority of the criminals. Out of this situation emerges an articulation that is more race-based than class based. Most Indians however are not adequately schooled in the history of class development and racial privileges in South Africa and are therefore not able to conceptualise the associated problems in terms other than with ethnic or racial dimensions. This is a major preoccupation in people's spare time and is further elucidated in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER SIX

Residents' perceptions of informal settlements: the situation in Clare Estate

Introduction

"When South Africa got its freedom this year the Indians lost theirs".

"This district is finished. It's gone to the dogs".

The quotations above are characteristic of the type of conversations that residents of Clare Estate engage in regularly. They surfaced on a blistering hot midday conversation, at a house where the funeral of a seventy-four year old pioneer resident of the area was taking place. As family members sat in mourning around the body which lay in state, guests and relatives sat under a marquee tent and gathered under shady trees observing with the curiosity of very disturbed minds, the movements of occupants from the sprawling informal settlement across the road. The sadness of the occasion was exacerbated by a tension in the atmosphere that was generated by a recently foiled robbery in the corner store opposite the bereaved family's house. At 09H00 on the Sunday before the day of the funeral the store was held up by three armed men, one of whom had a loaded pistol. Before they could make off with their loot the police arrived, surrounded the shop and shot two of the three suspects, killing one of them and wounding another. A shop assistant was also shot and killed in the crossfire. In the confusion the third suspect managed to escape into the informal settlement with the cash box of the shop's till. While I was ever mindful of the fact that I was attending a funeral, my curiosity and interest in the Clare Estate residents perceptions of the sprouting of informal settlements in the area urged me to make mental notes. I moved within the space of about half an hour to several little gatherings at the funeral, to greet many long lost friends. At each little gathering, as I rightly guessed, the conversations were about informal settlements, security, and the situation in a transforming Black dominated South Africa. At least one comment appeared to have fused the occasion to our wider surroundings. The remark was made as a gesture of insecurity, as a person of a minority group and out of sheer frustration with the problems of crime and informal settlements: *"Mr. Harribaran was born and brought up in Clare Estate and he helped to build it up with pride from nothing. He is now going to rest in peace while we see these people tear everything down".*

Clare Estate is one of Durban's northern suburbs, which, during the years of apartheid was earmarked for Indian occupation only. Homes are privately owned by people who work in

the civil service, as petty entrepreneurs, and as legal and medical professionals. Amidst the undulating and scenic landscape individually architectured homes are a prominent feature. Most roads are well constructed with asphalt and are flanked by elevated pavements on both sides. Most of the homes are surrounded by an average of one metre high concrete fencing within which are relatively well-laid out gardens. They are situated on plots of sloping land that averages about one thousand square metres. In the road facing part of the homeowners' yards or the entrances to their homes emblems such as red flags swaying high on bamboo or aluminium poles, flowers strung across the top of front doorways, or writings in Arabic, English, Sanskrit or other variations of the Indian dialects, serve as distinctive ethnic, religious or linguistic markers. Despite the diversity of the religious and linguistic backgrounds the Group Areas Act of 1950 had encouraged the residents of Clare Estate to mould for themselves an image of "Indianness". There was never really a need to collectively and publicly assert this image over a sustained period. However, since 1991, when the unbridled proliferation of squatters in Clare Estate besieged their residents, a collective and assertive community consciousness has been enforced upon them.

A brief insight to Canaan

Canaan's history is rooted in the Apartheid era when Africans were criminalised for finding employment and shelter without permits in South Africa's urban and industrial areas. The settlement conjures up images of other sprawling shack settlements in Durban's Cato Manor, where the policies of the Apartheid government and subsequently the ANC government were put through substantial strains and tests by the marginalised African masses. Makhatini's (1994) case study of the shack settlement in Cato Manor is a descriptive account of how it developed and by who it was inhabited. The authorities have built up a reputation for not providing housing within the time limits it proposed to provide for the shack dwellers, and neither did it provide services for them when they needed it most (Makhatini 1994: 63). Cato Monor has a history of dynamic and volatile relationships between Indian residents and African squatters, as Edwards and Nuttal's (1990) instrumenatlist analysis reveals. Their paper on the riots in 1949 between Indians and Africans revealed the disparities that led to the tension and violent clashes between Africans and Indians. Similarly, Hindson and Byerly's (1993) report on a survey of households in Canaan squatter camp, reveals tremendous disparities between Indian residents and African squatters in the early 1990s. However, their conclusions about the relationships of the people in the squatter camp and Clare Estate are paradoxically different from the

information that was collected for this chapter. Their presentation, being tabulated representations to questions of their survey undertaken in April-May 1993, with a few lines commentary under each table, lacked any clarity on their methodology and analysis on their data. In commenting on the responses to the question *"What is the nature of the relationship between people in this area and Clare Estate?"* they wrote: "From the responses it seems that residents of Canaan felt that relationships between the two areas were good." Such a comment can only be derived from an impersonal approach to the research and a lack of comparative responses from the Indian residents themselves. My approach to understanding the residents responses to the squatters was a long drawn out qualitative process that spanned over several months and with people from both sides.

In March 1993 I managed to trace an individual who was identified as a pioneering resident in Canaan. A doctor I used to help on Sunday mornings as a paramedic for a mobile clinic set up by the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa introduced him to me. His name was Amos, and was described as "a man who lived all his life by his wits alone". Our involvement in the clinic was voluntary. The residents' appreciation of this made my task of gathering information a lot easier. At the time of the inetrview Amos was a fifty-three year old single parent with a two-year-old daughter. He was an ever-willing respondent who found it neither tiresome nor burdensome to divulge information about his history or events in the settlement. Amos retraced the history of Canaan to a period in 1987, when he was invited by a friend to build a shack for himself in an area he considered safe, later to be called Canaan. Up to 1987 Amos recalled that he made a successful living in Central Durban as a squatter. But the political situation then, under P.W. Botha, was becoming increasingly tense and led to the evacuation of all squatters from South Africa's city centres. The process was justified by the state as a necessary security precaution. Moving place to place daily and living under constant fear of the security forces, Amos agreed to his friend's invitation.

In that period squatting in residential areas was totally forbidden. Mindful of this, Amos, like his friend built what he referred to as a "dog shack". This structure was an ingenious way of eluding the police and public by making sure that it was not visible from the road. It was built up to a height that was lower than the long savannah type grass that grew in the area, just big enough to accommodate sleeping space for one individual. Amos recalled that as African anger against apartheid intensified and people were no longer prepared to return to either the troubled townships or the impoverished rural areas, they became more resilient

and began building more "dog shacks". As their numbers grew and the reign of P.W. Botha was being evidently increasingly challenged and loosened, bigger shacks were being built. Eventually the large numbers in Canaan and in nearby informal settlements generated a measure of solidarity that encouraged them to build more solid and bigger structures, which in many instances have grown to include two rooms and a kitchen.

Amos was quite enterprising in the art of building shack dwellings. From his meagre knowledge in carpentry skills he learnt some cost-effective ways of building shacks and earning a living. He collected most of his building material from a nearby dump, which has become an indispensable resource for many residents in Canaan. One of the most effective and profitable types of material that Amos depends upon are forty five gallon metal drums, which he cuts open and then flattens in order to put up as walls or roofs. With these, together with plastics and straightened wooden boxes Amos has also built for himself six rooms, three of which he rents out for thirty rands per room per month. In addition he managed to acquire for himself a caravan by means which have not made too clear in our conversations.

The more overt appearances of these shacks encouraged more people in search of safe living space, into the area. The polarised and troubled African townships lured thousands of people away from them and into informal settlements. As the area in which Amos stayed grew in size, its residents decided, in view of the relative peace they enjoyed there, to give it a Biblical name viz. Canaan (the Promised Land). However the province's Ministry of Transport, which owned the land, did not take too kindly to this. After failing to evict the occupants on the grounds that it was dangerous to live there because of the unstable eca-shale[1], they numbered every shack, up to 329. No more shacks were to be built thereafter in the area. A further condition was that each shack has only one entrance and one window. This condition was abided by up to the end of 1993. By early 1994 these conditions were totally ignored. Canaan grew in size in leaps and bounds, as did other neighbouring informal settlements. It is no easy task to estimate the number of shacks or the population in the settlement during fieldwork.

Informal settlements in South Africa are an endemic feature of our history. In Clare Estate the phenomenon has conjured up various images of South Africa's past and present realities.

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[1] Very unstable sedimentary rock formations having the property of splitting into thin layers. Building on such ground requires specially engineered foundations.

The poverty that apartheid has engendered in the rural areas and African townships are currently manifesting itself in all the social problems that impoverishment carries with it. For many the informal settlements are the sources of the social problems that prevail in the area. There are innumerable visual illustrations of the measures that residents have taken to protect themselves from the problems that emerged since the rapid expansion of the informal settlements. In an area that once enjoyed peace and quiet, and where residents boasted of sleeping throughout the summer nights with opened windows, the situation has changed to a radically different one. Viewed from motor car windows while driving, or walking through the area, there are striking security features that now characterise the homes in Clare Estate.

To escape car jacking many are electrifying their gates with remote control features. On the tops of fences, sharp spikes or barbed wire are attached in order to discourage burglars from climbing over them. Both gates and fences are being increasingly heightened as further deterrents to potential burglars. In the windows, balconies and verandas of many homes custom made wrought iron burglar guards, which are solidly driven into the walls, have become added features of security. Rottweillers, German Shepherds, American Pitbulls, Ridgebacks and other fearsome dogs patrol the yards of their masters every hour of the day. Most are professionally trained as killer dogs and are used mainly for this purpose rather than as pets. Sensor lights, which go on at the vibration of human movements, are installed in strategic places around many homes. The globes, which are a minimum of one hundred and fifty watts, are intended to surprise burglars. They cast their light very brightly and have a radius of at least twenty metres. Within the houses hi-tech security systems that are monitored by security companies and police stations are a feature in almost every home. The activation of these alarms are picked up by either the monitoring security company or the local police stations, which in turn respond by sending rapid reaction units to the signalling addresses. Gun ownership and increased applications for gun licences constitute an almost full circle of security measures that Clare Estate's residents have taken to protect themselves.

Against the background of these realities, especially the fact that the established residents are of one ethnic extraction and the squatters are of another, some serious issues pertaining to ethnicity emerge. Before taking this issue any further it would be interesting to recall some of the earlier responses since 1991 to the burgeoning informal settlements in the area.

Some early responses

Since the beginning of 1991 residents in Clare Estate had become increasingly aware that the area was being rapidly infiltrated by African squatters from various parts of the country, but especially from within its own province of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Although there was a widespread belief that people living in the informal settlements were from the impoverished rural areas, information from the surveys I carried out in 1991 pointed to a different scenario. Most residents were victims of the internecine violence that was taking place in the Greater Durban African townships and semi-urban areas. The violence was mainly between supporters of the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party. While this was being widely covered in the media as Black on Black violence, the residents of Clare Estate, like, I must hasten to add, the residents of most other middle and upper class areas inhabited by Whites, Coloureds and Indians in other parts of South Africa, were unable to conceptualise the processes, history, events and contemporary circumstances that led to the expansion of informal settlements. The separation of residential areas by racial legislation precluded a proper understanding of these issues. It rendered most residents incapable of comprehending the extent of the violence in the townships and semi-urban areas, as well as the impact it had on their lives, social fabric and community structures.

Although, at the end of 1990 most respondents recognised the potential threats posed by the informal settlements, they remained indifferent to them for two reasons. First, many believed that complaints to the local authorities i.e. the Durban City Council, about the situation would be ineffective. Its all White members had a reputation for not giving sympathetic consideration to problems in Indian Group Areas. Some respondents dwelt on a conspiracy theory believing that White officials were encouraging Africans to squat in Indian Group Areas in order to induce racial friction. And second, others believed that the situation was confinable and did not expect the settlements to proliferate as they already have. By early 1992 the social problems that are usually associated with impoverishment and relative affluence began to emerge.

For many of the Indian residents Canaan was an untapped market that was waiting to be harnessed by the advantages of their capitals and better knowledge of accessibility to consumer goods at lower prices. Along the fences and pavements of one of the main arteries of Clare Estate viz., Clare Road, and from the garages of many homes, residents began setting up petty commodity stalls to attract the business of Canaan's residents. Basic

vegetables such as onions, potatoes, tomatoes and cabbages were displayed on makeshift stalls. When the sale of these products was seen to be producing rewarding returns the range of services steadily increased. Those who had the advantage of space through their garages began retailing refrigerated cold drinks, cigarettes, canned beans and fish, frozen poultry offal, paraffin, mealie meal, mealie rice, samp, wood and charcoal for fuel, and even water. Two major corner stores, owned by Indians in Clare Road, had drastically reoriented their businesses to meet the needs of the growing African clientele. Apart from capturing the major share of the business in the items mentioned above, these stores also capitalised on the lack of water supply in Canaan. Shopkeepers soon became the major retailers of water to the informal residents at fifty cents per twenty-five litres.

Water in the area became a highly politicised issue. The Durban City Council (DCC) initially refused to situate taps at strategic points in Canaan because they believed that its residents would see this as an endorsement of their illegal occupation of unsuitable and unstable land. Canaan's residents, in their early stages sought water from nearby flowing streams and from a tap granted by the Durban City Council to another informal settlement "closeby". This neighbouring settlement is a minimum ten minutes walk away from Canaan and is separated by a six lane national highway i.e. the N2, a hill of approximately three kilometres in length upon which many houses have been built since the early twentieth century by people of Indian descent, and a road that services this residential area. Informal residents here objected to Canaan's residents use of their tap because it lengthened their queues for water. There were additional accusations that Canaan's residents' did not treat the service with the respect it deserved. Canaan's residents' accessibility to the tap became questionable and on at least two occasions differences flared up into violent disputes. On the other hand Canaan's residents return journey with the water was an even longer, more arduous one. With their twenty-five litre containers of water strenuously swaying on their heads, many have fallen victim to the perennially speeding traffic on the N2. A number of people lost their lives trying to cross the busy road with their water.

When their neighbouring informal residents eventually forbade Canaan's residents from using their tap, pressure on the front yard taps of Clare Road's residents increased significantly. By February 1992 the D.C.C. admitted the difficulties and political implications of ignoring the plight of Canaan, especially since the unbanning of the extra-parliamentary movements the year before. As an admission of their difficulty to relocate

Canaan's residents to more suitable conditions, one tap was at long last situated on its eastern entrance. It served more than three thousand people. The requirement was that the residents pay a monthly fee of two rands per household. This collection system was unsuccessful and people were then asked to pay for water as they came for it at twenty cents per twenty-five litres.

By July 1993 a committee member estimated the population of Canaan to be in the region of fifteen thousand people. Hence the need for more taps became obvious. By October 1993 a second tap was granted on the southwestern corner of Canaan. The newly introduced payment system of "pay as you take" did not last very long either. More politicised residents having recognised the strength of their numbers and the difficulties the D.C.C. would have in withdrawing the service of the water supply, tried to mobilise residents against paying for water. When their attempts failed a frustrated activist shot and killed the person responsible for recording and collecting money for water. The service in this tap was immediately discontinued by the D.C.C. for at least one month.

Once again residents of the informal settlement were in desperate need of water. While many purchased water from the local shops and residents, others found other ways of acquiring it. One devious method that became common was to fill their containers late at night and after midnight when residents were asleep. Clare Estate's residents began protesting about receiving incessantly high water bills. Numerous media reports revealed that water bills increased by up to five hundred per cent and more in one month. While the D.C.C. initially responded insensitively to these queries about inflated water bills, many residents were threatened with their lives or were warned that informal residents would burn down their houses if they were stopped from filling water. Virtually every household thereafter removed their outside taps.

The process of removing taps planted the seeds of a newly found consciousness and solidarity among the residents in Clare Estate. This factor, together with the increasing crime in the area has led to the mobilisation of residents who once had a reputation for being indifferent towards their own civic problems. Many civic organisations such as the Clare Estate Ratepayers Association and religious bodies rallied to either assist or protest against the presence of informal settlements in the area. The local South African Police stations acted upon a mandate to create structures that would foster better understanding and

relations between the established residents and informal settlements. These efforts have enjoyed limited success.

Individual perceptions and organised responses

In most interviews concerning the presence of squatters in Clare Estate, it was difficult to ascertain consistent responses from them. Conversations usually began with some form of racist remark about Africans, or with gestures such as throwing of hands into the air, expressing disgust at the situation. It was clear however, whether residents were in sympathy with the squatters or against them, that there was unanimity in the view that they should be removed.

Those who showed sympathy with them were in the minority. They were mainly from the educated elite who showed an understanding of the events that led to the formation of informal settlements. Some did attempt, on an *ad hoc* basis, to play a conciliatory role between the residents and informal settlements. They tried to nurture an understanding of the divisive history and White domination of South Africa in order to explain the contemporary circumstances. This was still being done on public platforms, at family and social gatherings, and in one to one conversations. The aim of these individuals is a noble one. Their intention is to contribute, in their own small ways, to breaking down the historically entrenched racial barriers that were consolidated under apartheid between Indians and Africans. One important aspect in their mission is to foster a sense of appreciation of one another and acceptance of the different social and cultural backgrounds.

Other individuals from among the sympathetic ones have gone further in taking this mission forward. They have either become pioneers in community based projects or they attached themselves to existing civic organisations in order to address the issue of informal settlements. These individuals are playing an important organisational role in holding the peace between the established residents and Canaan, as well as other informal settlements. The Clare Estate Ratepayers Association is one such platform from which they work. It has been in existence for several decades. However its role for most of its existence has been insignificant. It was these enlightened individuals, who saw the need for such an organisation, helped to build up its image, increase its role and legitimacy and introduce a

more liberal perspective on the informal settlements. In several instances they negotiated with:

(1) Religious bodies to mobilise the neighbouring communities to provide health care, food and clothing;

(2) the D.C.C. to provide water, and advise on sanitation services, as well as advice on alternative locations for informal settlements;

(3) the South African Police to adopt a more sensitive and sympathetic approach towards Canaan;

(4) various sectors of the community to establish liaison committees in order to build up the trust and sensitivity in an environment that desperately needs it.

Their efforts were significantly rewarding in that they succeeded in getting the co-operation of all major role players in Clare Estate and even beyond.

One such illustration of this is the Police Public Relations Forum that was inspired by these well meaning community members and initiated by two members of the South African Police viz. Inspector Suresh Ramdayal and Director Bisnath Ramsaroop. In July 1993 both members identified at least forty-eight informal settlements within the radius of the areas they patrolled viz. Asherville, Springfield, Reservoir Hills, Sydhenam, Overport, Sherwood and Clare Estate. They invited all chairpersons and other senior committee members in informal settlement structures to a meeting with themselves and community representatives. Their aim was to engender trust and good relationships between the established residents and themselves. The meeting was a success and there was agreement that it should continue on a monthly basis. By the end of 1994 several senior officers in the South African Police expressed their satisfaction with this unofficial initiative and asked for the structure to be formalised. This offer motivated other such initiatives in the Greater Durban Area, which eventually led to the formation of a regional liaison body. One of the major successes of this initiative has been the relatively easy entry of police into the informal settlements for routine patrols and investigations, and the co-operation of informal residents in the identification of criminals. The police claim that their investigations in informal settlements have been made much easier since their public relations initiative. A number of cases were more easily solved because of it and this helped to control the escalation of crime in Clare Estate.

However, many residents remain unconvinced about this view. They believe that the crime is uncontrollable and is likely to remain that way for as long as the informal settlements

remain there. One mature response about the Clare Estate scenario was once made to me in a convincing tone. The words were: *"You cannot have peaceful co-existence between two racial groups that mistrusted each other ever since they came into contact. One group feels more brutalised and impoverished than the other does and they stake their claim to the areas they occupy on the basis of their Africaness. The other group on the other hand, i.e. 'We Indians' have worked very hard for what we have. Yet Africans believe that we took all this from them. They outnumber us, so how can we win".* This statement was made by one of those residents do not share the perceptions, vision and positions of his liberal counterparts. He belongs to the majority group who makes up the disappointed, disillusioned and conservative elements of Clare Estate. In personal conversations and in public meetings they have expressed their total outrage at the existence of informal settlements in the area. The extent of the crimes, especially in daylight robberies when women are alone at home, armed hold-ups in homes in any part of the day or night, theft of drying clothes from washing lines, carjackings and car break-ins, stealing of children's toys from the yards when they are unattended, assaults, murders and rapes have become unbearable problems to them. In addition the sight of the structures in Canaan is considered as an unwanted intrusion to the aesthetic surroundings of the area.

Like their liberal counterparts, the conservative individuals had also found that the organisations which tended to their civic issues and informal settlements, served as convenient arenas to mobilise support for their views. In each of the monthly meetings of the executive of the Clare Estate Ratepayers Association as well as the several public meetings they held, the antagonism against the informal settlements dominated the meetings. Apart from the popular outcry against crimes in the area, two other related areas of concern emerged. First, is the rapid deterioration in the quality of life in Clare Estate and the possible breakdown of civil order. Interviewees frequently referred to the drastic slowing down of the school syllabus. This, many teachers claimed, had become necessary since the intake of large numbers of African pupils. They needed greater familiarisation with the English language, which is the medium of instruction. The closing down of several shops which had fallen victim to several attacks in a short space of time made their purchases of incidental needs problematic in that they felt too unsafe to send their children to shops that were then further away from their homes. The need to safeguard themselves against the prevailing insecurity gave rise to expensive security measures. The effect of this has been evacuation of homes by a number of residents who have fled the suburb out of sheer fear and

frustration. This has had a drastic impact of their normal social lifestyle characterised by evening and weekend visits to the area by family and friends. Frequent thefts of radios and other items from vehicles had significantly reduced the frequency with which family and friends visited one another - for fear of falling victim to such criminal activities. A number of respondents had complained that family members had stopped visiting them in the evenings and weekends because they felt insecure with the squatters in the area. The topography and relatively small plots of the property owners often compelled visitors to park on the pavements instead of parking inside the yards of their hosts, thereby increasing their exposure to the criminal elements. This has led to a hardening of attitudes towards African squatters by the residents[2].

In addition, these circumstances have led to the rapid devaluation of land and houses. Many have tried to sell but failed because of the informal settlements. Others have tried to use their houses as collateral for loans to finance extensions to their houses or for business interests elsewhere, but were either refused loans or had their assets drastically reduced in valuation because Clare Estate was declared by the lending institutions as a high-risk area.

These factors have for the first time in more than forty years created a level of solidarity that has helped to mobilise the residents of Clare Estate to collectively fight for the official recognition of their plight. They are currently using this situation to wage a war against another aspect of the past viz. the taxation system of their properties. Since the 1960s residents have demonstrated how apartheid structures in local authorities such as the D.C.C. have engaged in a conspiracy to falsely inflate the value of land and houses in Indian dominated Group Areas. The aim was to give higher ratings to properties in order to eke out higher yearly taxation on them. White dominated areas are paying fifty per cent and less than these amounts in land and house taxes. African residential areas on the other hand do not pay rates on houses and land. In every executive and public meeting of the Clare Estate Ratepayers Association (C.E.R.A.), the problems of inflated rates and taxes, and of the informal settlements have taken priority.

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[2] By June 1999, after the research for this project was completed, residents began expressing feelings of relief that the settlement had been almost totally dismantled and that this augured well for a return to normal lifestyle.

In two of the three C.E.R.A. public meetings I attended there was an all Indian audience of about four hundred. The moods of these meetings were strongly against two things. First, there were continuous attacks against the D.C.C. for remaining a white dominated structure, even after the repeal of apartheid and the general election in April 1994. There was unanimous support for the cries against racism and the unfair system of rates and taxes in Indian areas. Similar responses were received when individuals took the platform to accuse White officials of engaging in a conspiracy to tolerate informal settlements in Indian dominated areas in order to subtly induce racial friction between Indians and Africans, and so spare themselves of the accusations of racism and mismanagement. Second, there was a majority sentiment that the informal settlements be immediately relocated, and that the local authorities take responsibility for this.

The third meeting I attended was in November 1995 and was interestingly different. For the first time a number of committee members from Canaan and surrounding informal settlements, and a White person, attended. All were members of the African National Congress and were nominees on the recently instituted local authority viz. Transitional Metropolitan Council (T.M.C.). Several of these individuals took the floor after the chairperson delivered his twenty minute introductory address. They spoke in very conciliatory terms and appealed to the residents for patience and understanding of their circumstances. One informal settlement's committee member captured the attention of the crowd when he declared total support for the residents fight against crime and the removal of Canaan and other informal settlements from Clare Estate. He made a passionate plea for all to remain patient until suitable alternative locations and accommodation can be found for them. Another female member of this team spoke as a representative of all Clare Estate on the T.M.C. She had to quickly retract this tone when she was challenged by a member in the meeting about the legitimacy of such a claim. A third informal settlement member appealed to the house not to radicalise the discourse about the rates and informal settlement issues. The residents who challenged him by accusing informal residents of targeting Indian areas only to settle too quickly rebuffed him. Whites, they claimed were intolerant of such formations and would rid their areas immediately if they attempted to create settlements nearby. One frustrated resident challenged, to a loud applause, the White member of the A.N.C./T.M.C. in these words: *"Could the White gentleman from the T.M.C. please give us Indians the solution to keep these African squatters out of our areas. Who is he to tell us to bear this situation when they are living comfortably in their areas? I am totally fed*

up with these squatters because I have lost more than thirty thousand rands worth of tools. These are the people who have stolen them. And every one of my neighbours has been hit. We are living in total frustration and fear". The appropriate person with understanding responded to this emotional outburst: *"I appeal to you once again to co-operate with us so that we may relocate these unfortunate people in an orderly way".*

While the T.M.C. members sounded persuasive and convincing some residents did not hesitate to bring to the house's attention that their presence was linked to the postponed local authority elections in Kwa-Zulu Natal which were rescheduled for March 1996. There was caution expressed about the sweet talk of political parties when they are out campaigning for votes. Despite the differences of opinion and sometimes heated and emotional debates, the meeting ended amicably with consensus resolutions for further liaisons among the different groups and for further negotiations with the D.C.C.

Conclusion

The issues discussed in this chapter are intended to highlight an aspect which research on informal settlements often ignores. The circumstances that lead to people living in informal settlements, their squalid conditions, and environmental impact are usually the targets of journalistic or investigative research. While these are very crucial issues in research for various purposes we must not ignore the devastating impact it has on those who are part of a long generation of people who contributed towards the areas infrastructural development. In the number of papers that McCarthy and Hindson (1994) edited and presented in their book, not even one paper dealt with the impact that the informal settlements have had on the established residents in Durban. For this reason it is unlikely that it will have a productive impact on policy formulation. When academics of their calibre do research on such a topic, guide and edit others work, and qualify for large amounts of funding, as they did for this exercise, their work should focus on influencing policy making on a broad front. The entire book is extracted out of survey type material that discusses issues in very generalised terms. In addition its title "They Are Here To Stay..." suggests a permanency about informal settlements in South Africa's urban areas, and a sense of helplessness of our society to act upon this problem innovatively. Their recommendation is to upgrade informal settlements in most of South Africa's urban areas.

Their position has resonance with the guidelines of the recently introduced Reconstruction and Development Programme for the country. The aim is to rapidly urbanise South Africa's African population. It appears to be guided by the beliefs that this will be the surest way of social service delivery to the most downtrodden segment of its population, as well as social integration of the various ethnic and racial groups. Researchers such as Hindson and McCarthy (1994) as well as the politicians remain adamant about this. I contend here that in view of some of the issues this chapter raises, the above position is dangerously incorrect. Recent history has demonstrated to us that no post-colonial or developing state has successfully integrated its impoverished masses into its structures. Where people have moved in droves to metropolitan centres elsewhere in Africa, or in Asia or Latin America, experience has taught us that informal settlements provide more problems than solutions. In South Africa, as much as they have been necessary places of relief for those affected by township violence and rural poverty, informal settlements should not be "...here to stay". Their impact has been seen in the disruptive anti-social behaviour it has generated by the armed robberies, assaults, rapes, murders and other thefts in the affected areas. The rapid devaluation of land and houses, and the rapid deterioration of the environments within informal settlements, had broken the morale of the residents and exacerbated the brain drain in South Africa (see chapter ten). The poverty, created by virtue of high density living and a lack of space to grow crops in the squatter camps has also produced an extremely large number of beggars who move from house to house and who stand at traffic lights. The insecurity has made the residents prone to conspiracy theories about beggars. Many are often of the belief that thieves first tend to visit their homes under the guise of begging, but are in actual fact surveying the place to provide information to others or to rob them at a later date. The broader impact of this situation is that it has impacted negatively on tourism and has rapidly slowed down the pace of work in schools after taking in large numbers of children from the squatter camps. Overall, the pressure that the squatter camps have exerted on public services such as health care, water supply, ecosystems and education, has been extremely costly and has exacerbated racial tension between Africans and Indians.

Together, these issues point towards the enormous difficulties that the metropolitan centres in South Africa will be facing in this painful period of transformation and reconstruction. A demotivated middle class, such as Indian homeowners in Clare Estate, could sink into a state of economic apathy or simply emigrate. This could do irreparable damage to the infrastructure of the region, as it had done in countries like Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. It

is because the labour and knowledge of highly motivated and hard-working middle classes, more than that of the upper and under classes, that sustains sustain the economies in any situation. South African policy makers should take a leaf out of the present development process of one of the very few African countries that is showing genuine signs of progress. The country is Ghana. A recent CNN documentary has shown that General Rawlings's policy of reduced reliance on foreign investment and International Monetary Fund Loans, and of redistributing major resources for rural development, has created sufficient incentive for Ghanaians to return to the rural areas to rebuild their lives. The idea should not be to create unnecessarily high expectations with South Africa's impoverished masses. Instead, it should be to educate them realistically on what the resources of the country can afford to deliver and by when in their lives they should be able to reap the benefits of their sweat and toil. It is not unlikely, they should be told that they might only conveniently acquire the comforts of the latest technologies two or three generations hence. As one visiting retired United Nations seed geneticist and agricultural development advisor from Trinidad-Tobago suggested to me: *"South Africa need to teach their poor how to live, instead of keeping them waiting for houses they may never be able to pay for, or for jobs they are unlikely get in an environment that looks for the cheapest way out in everything they produce".* If South African policy makers can take such advise seriously enough, they would be contributing more positively to the negativity that has engulfed Clare Estate and other affected areas throughout the country. It could drastically remould their anxiety-ridden lives as well as their opinions of the African mentality.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Small Business Opportunities and Informal Settlements

Introduction

The rapid increase in the population sizes in the squatter camps radically altered the dynamics of movements and requirements by the residents who shared the living spaces in the research areas. There were as a result of this, two segments within the areas i.e. the established tax paying residents and the squatters who acquired for themselves a degree of legitimacy that included representation in the Durban City Council, as well as voting rights for local councilors. Their legal status encouraged many to expand upon their dwelling sizes and increase the number who shared the spaces under a single roof. This added to the number of people who began building new structures in the squatter camps, who in turn brought in more people. As a result emerging characteristic features in the squatter camps were high density of people and high unemployment.

The visibility of the unemployed people was obvious in several ways. During the day most either spent time outside their dwellings in view of passing motorists and the residents, or walked up and down the streets either aimlessly or looking for casual work with the residents. In several daytime visits to the outer rings of the squatter camps there were groups of young men seen gambling with cards, drinking beer and cooking food. Others simply sat around talking to one another and not engaging in any activity. While some opened tuck-shops within the squatter camps, they were neither adequately stocked nor had the range of goods to meet most of the squatters requirements. Capital, as each one that I spoke to responded, was the constricting factor in the expansion of their operations. Their lack of privately owned transport, a lack of knowledge to purchase in ways and places that saved on their buying and that could increase their profits, and the refusal of wholesaling companies to deliver in the squatter camps added to their difficulties as nascent entrepreneurs.

These features within the squatter camps added a new dimension to the character of the research areas. As populations whose basic needs did not require large capital inputs, the squatters provided a captive market for many Indian residents. They were better endowed than the squatters with spare capital and privately owned transport that encouraged many to engage in casual to more formalized types of retail trading. The latter type of traders should

not be confused as retailers who operate in licensed, fully equipped shops that are sanctioned by the laws of the Durban City Council. Their formalized trading actually constituted an operation from an enclosed space such as a motor car garage or a part of the house, both of which were road facing and which have been transformed for purposes of trading.

Understanding the relative successes of smaller unlicensed traders (hereafter referred to as traders), who operated either from the pavements or from part of their houses, require an understanding of how licensed businesses have been affected since transformation. Since 1994 the number of armed robberies that have taken place in businesses have escalated at alarming levels. This resulted in shopkeepers opening later in the mornings when the streets were busier, making sure that there was always more than one person in the shop at any one time and that they are armed with guns, closing early in the evenings when it is safer to do so, and either selling their shops or just disengaging from business because of their failures to sell their shops or to operate profitably. Of all the shopkeepers who have been interviewed, every one of them had some unpleasant experience with robbers either in their shops or at their homes. Since all have been family operated businesses, inevitably a family member was a victim of the incident. The casualties ranged from being traumatized to being stabbed or shot to death. The case studies below are constructed from interviews with shopkeepers who operated within a radius of just a kilometer from each other.

Mr. M., a shopkeeper for more than forty years, inherited his general dealer business from his late father in 1969. It was then situated in a different location about a kilometer away from where he was operating at the time of the interview. He worked with two other brothers who, like him, were married with children and living in their own houses. The profits from the business were shared equally by all three brothers. They considered it a thriving business and lived comfortably after paying their entire monthly debts and overheads. Between 1994 and June 1997 they were held up three times in their shop and twice at home. On one occasion one of the brothers was severely beaten with the butt of a gun, while in another occasion at home the interviewee, his wife, mother and a sister who was visiting during the day, were badly beaten and robbed. His wife spent two weeks in hospital with a swollen face, cracked ribs and trauma. His confidence in the business fell drastically after June 1997 because of these incidents. From January 1997 he installed wrought iron gates and served their customers from behind them. However, the volume of his business took a serious downward turn when a neighbor, two doors away, first started selling fruit and vegetables from his garage. As this enterprise improved he apparently increased his range of stock in groceries, directly affecting the former's family business. By January 1998 he decided with his brothers, to abandon the business after failing to sell it.

Mrs. M.E. rented a shop directly opposite a squatter camp named Lusaka, about one kilometer away from Mr. M. above. Robbers shot the previous owner of the

shop dead in 1995. This discouraged others from taking over the premises for at least eight months, until Mrs. M.E. and her husband decided to take the risk of running the shop at a significantly reduced rental. Since then they were robbed thrice, in April 1996, August 1997 and March 1999 respectively. She ran the shop with her husband and was helped by her unemployed nephew at least three days a week. In April 1996 her was husband was robbed when he was alone, but was not physically harmed. In August 1997 her nephew was held up and shot in the stomach. Fortunately he recovered in hospital and was back at work after three months. Allegedly there were women across the road who were witness the incident but were too afraid to talk to the police. Two arrests were made for the shooting but the suspects were released because nobody was willing to give evidence against them. In March 1999 Mrs. M.E., her husband and nephew, were accosted once again by two robbers. This time however, Mrs. M.E.'s husband was better prepared and had already suspected the two from the time he opened his shop. He cocked his gun and had it ready. At first one went into the shop and bought a box of matches, and later the other came for the same thing. The third time they walked into the shop together. Mr. M.E. asked his nephew to serve them, while he stood with the gun in his hands. As he suspected, one of the two robbers produced a homemade gun and pointed it to his nephew while the other raised his hand with a long knife warning them to cooperate. Mr. M.E. unhesitatingly, but surprisingly, raised his hands and shot both of them, killing one and seriously wounding the other. With both in their fifties, and two of their children still studying, Mr. and Mrs. M.E. found it difficult to close down the business and do something else. They consider themselves too old to divert their energies in another enterprise, despite their meager earnings and high risks in a volatile area. They have one of two places to go to i.e. Cape Town where her brother is, or overseas, "anywhere there's peace and respect for life".

The high degree of fear that has become prevalent among business people reached obsessive levels. Several interviewees have as a result started trading behind wrought iron gates. The purpose is to keep clients outside the shop and reduce the possibility of being robbed.

Opening and closing shops later and early respectively, and disengagement from business created opportunities for the potential unlicensed traders. Many started off by setting up make-shift stalls on the pavements, but withdrew from such a practice within a short period because all of them had fallen victim at different times to thieves and had their money and goods stolen and were beaten up. The stall operators were from both gender groups and from a range of age groups and employment backgrounds. They opened earlier than the normal shops in order to serve the pedestrians from the squatter camps, who were on their ways to work. There was a simple logic to this – most do not have the firewood to prepare meals early morning, so bread, eggs, tinned fish or beans were ideal items to sell to them for lunches at work. The early morning human traffic became a thriving market for many of these traders – who enjoyed the advantage of confidence from the major bread suppliers and other wholesalers who delivered to their doors. The aversion to deliver in the squatter

camps was complimented by the establishment of these smaller unlicensed trading outposts. The manufacturers and wholesalers recognized the potential market in the squatter camps and agreed to deliver to the household enterprises, despite the protest from licensed shopkeepers. The latter complained about the rapid decline in their businesses because of the proliferation of unlicensed traders. However, these stalls provided conveniences for the working people and others from the squatter camps because of their proximity to them. Unlike the stalls and tuck shops within the squatter camps, the household run stalls had a wider range of goods at generally more competitive prices. The one item that the squatters could not avoid from the household stalls was bread. This requirement induced other purchases such as tinned food, paraffin, frozen chicken, maize meal, candles, firewood and other basic incidental items.

The experiences of hold ups led the traders as well to work with the same caution and security of the licensed shopkeepers. They too started trading with anxiety and from behind wrought iron bars. Their layouts, investments, volumes of business and working patterns provided interesting ethnography that was symptomatic of conditions in developing countries.

An insight into the unlicensed traders operations

Most, if not all household members were engaged either full time or peripherally in the trading activities. These household enterprises expanded to a point that required inputs from more than one person, as well as space that could adequately cater for the things they knew were profitable and quick to retail. The enormity of the tasks eventually gave way to a distinct gender and aged based division of labor. Work for most traders began from about 04h00 in the summer months and 05h00 in the winter months, and ended not earlier than 20h00. The day usually began with women's domestic duties in their kitchens, when they saw to the needs of their school going children, their working husbands and other household members, and later to the general neatness of the home. The business activities usually began around 5h30 to service the early morning commuters going to work. Among those who retailed fruit and vegetables work had to begin before this time for at least three days of the week. This was determined by the working hours of what is generally referred to as "the bulk market" in Central Durban, where wholesalers in fruit and vegetables sell in bulk to retailers for resale to the public. The operating hours of the bulk market are from 04h00 in the mornings and at most times require that business people do their purchasing early in the mornings from this hour to ensure that they get quality goods. On these days work actually

begins for the women of the household from around 03h00 to provide breakfasts for those who do the marketing. The efficiency with which the traders do their work demonstrates a range of factors relating to the successes in their enterprises. Many have had to work with brute determination to survive because they were victims of unemployment that was brought about through retrenchments, resignations from work out of frustration or through a shortage of work in their particular fields. Others among the traders included pensioners and housewives. In most of these enterprises they were also helped by school going children and others who were in tertiary institutions, as well as by friends and relatives who helped only to keep themselves busy during the day, without any remuneration.

The details of the daily lives of twelve unlicensed operators were collected through repeated visits between February and November 1998. Some basic information is illustrated in the table below about how few of the traders have always lived while others have had to reshape their working lives.

*Table 7.1 illustrating number (1), household size (2), number in formal employment (3), previous employment of stall holders (4), range of goods (5), type of clientele (6), and no of working hours per day (7). *The number in brackets indicates the issues in the table below.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	6	0	Building trade; heavy duty driver	Firewood, candles, paraffin, vegetables	Mainly squatters	12
2.	2	0	Plasterer/tiler	Groceries	Mainly squatters	16
3	5	0	Shop assistant	Groceries, firewood	Mainly squatters	16
4	5	0	Vegetable stall in Durban market	Groceries, fruit, vegetables, frozen chicken	Mixed	16
6	7	1	Taylor in a clothing factory	Regular Beer, liquor, African beer	Mainly Africans	18
7	6	0	Shebeen	African beer, regular beer, liquor	Mainly Indians	10
8	6	2	Vegetable stall in Durban market	Vegetables, fruit, poultry	Mainly Indians	12
9	7	1	Bricklayer	Vegetables, fruit	Mixed	8
10	4	1	Market gardener	Vegetables, fruit	Mainly squatters	10
11	13	0	Vegetable stall in the market	Vegetables, poultry	Mainly Indians	12
12	8	2	Builder	Vegetables	Mainly squatters	10

A number of interesting factors emerge from the table above. Only five of the twelve households had people who were engaged in wage or salaried employment. In three of

these five cases (numbers 8, 9 and 12) the working members' salaries were crucial to the survival of the household. The profits from the trading that was done by household members did not yield sufficient returns to meet their expenses, but only meagerly complimented the wages and salaries that were brought into the household. In these cases it was the retired first generations from within the households who were engaging in fruit and vegetable retailing. Their responses to questions about the reasons for their trade were unanimously about the difficulties of meeting basic expenses and saving their properties from expropriation by the Durban City Council, should they fault on paying their property taxes. Each of the traders operated from makeshift mobile stalls that were set up every morning and dismantled every evening. Their range of mainly vegetables and to a lesser extent fruits, evidently made them significantly smaller traders than the others mentioned in the table.

It is apparent from the table that all of the traders' previous employment was from outside professional fields. Their range of employment types placed them in the lower middle class category and all of them owned the properties from which they traded. They were residents in their respective areas for four decades and more. Those who worked in the building trade were either retired or frustrated in trying to acquire secure employment. One of the respondents stated that Indian tradesmen were being ousted from the industry by cheaper African labor. This point was evident in the contemporary building construction industry in Durban. Africans were previously excluded from engaging in skilled labor, so their entry into the market brought them in at significantly lower rates than qualified and certified Indian tradesmen. The building industry in South Africa also suffered a major recession in the late 1970s and did not recover since then. It marginalised a number of its employees and forced them to seek alternative sources of income. Others who have either been market gardeners or stall owners in the Central Durban market have had various experiences that also had a racial basis to it. The market gardener reflected in the table lost his farm in the Springfield Flats area when it was expropriated through the 1950 Group Areas Act in 1968. This forced him to relocate to the market where he had to shift from being a producer and wholesaler of vegetables to one who had to start buying to sell as a retailer. But like the other market stall owners he had to leave the market because it was being over traded by African "squatter sellers" – who entered the market in large numbers and sold from the pavements outside the market and from empty spaces inside the market. The Durban City Council, who administered the cite was unable and unwilling to control the numbers who traded inside and outside the market.

Those who made a living out of shebeens were from two different backgrounds. One became unemployed after the men's suit factory (number 6) in which he worked drastically retrenched staff in 1994, while the other (number 7) ran his shebeen independently for at least thirty years. The difference in these operations was that the items they sold were not publicly displayed like those of their fruit and vegetable counterparts. During apartheid, such businesses were under constant surveillance by the police because they were not tolerated. Only over the last decade or less, laws against shebeens were relaxed, but they had to acquire official approval from the local authorities. The two individuals engaged in the same trade for different reasons and were affected in different ways after the 1994 election. While one operated with relative ease over the last thirty years the other functioned under constant threat of being reported by his neighbors and raids by police.

> *K.P., an unmarried 57-year-old man, was seriously injured in a fight in 1968. After his recovery he was considered unemployable because his right hand was no longer able to perform normal duties. He decided in 1969 to open a shebeen because the friends he had were regular drinkers and there was no local pub in which they could socialise in the evenings and weekends. He knew he could draw their attention towards his enterprise at home, which was separated from the rest of his family's privacy. Up to 1993 his clientele were mainly Indians. But after this period he spread word around in the squatter camps, through friends, that he was selling African beer. Over a period of six months his clientele changed to 40% African and 60% Indian. However only known Africans were allowed to sit in his business and enjoy their drinks. The normal service to Africans was to take away only. K.P.'s service extended to at least 18 hours a day because that is all he ever does. His business approach is totally informal and he enjoys the company of various friends who stay overnight with him at different times.*

> *S.R. a 46 year old retrenched tailor started his shebeen in August 1995 when he decided he was too frustrated to look for employment and his capital was being drastically eroded through household expenses. Selling liquor was totally against his moral values but survival had pushed him into doing so. His house was situated on a road that was regularly used by squatters from a neighboring camp about one hundred meters away. Regular and African beer was especially touted with the squatters who eventually began to support him in large numbers. The City Council refused him permission to operate a shebeen, therefore making his enterprise unlicensed and illegal. He complained that the neighbors continuously objected to the sight of Africans frequenting his house to buy liquor and threatened to report him to the police. He managed to win their confidence by challenging them to find him employment and he promised to stop his sales of beer and liquor if this was done for him. He believed this generated some sympathy from his neighbours, but at a cost. He is to refrain from selling his items at night because of the fear of attracting the wrong people who might mingle with the genuine clients and commit crimes against them. Hence his working hours were reduced in comparison with his counterpart K.P. above.*

It is apparent from the table that the working hours of these respondents are longer than usual. The figures in the last column reveal an average of approximately thirteen hours per day, making it five hours higher than the normal working day in South Africa. The difference between the two case studies above is that one feels a sense of protection because the former is usually patronised by old friends and known district people, while the latter had risked exposing himself to totally unknown people from a different racial group. Hence the number of working hours between them is vastly different. Both however ensure that men do the work and serve their clients. Conventional norms in Indian households forbid women from participating in these kinds of activities, although their support in these two cases was less visible.

There has been an equally profound division of labor among the fruit and vegetable sellers, but with more overt support for the enterprises from the women. The first four listed in table 7.1 operated as two pairs of neighbors with tacit understandings of each other's businesses. Numbers 1 and 2 were immediately adjacent to each other while numbers 3 and 4 were about 40 meters apart from each other and about a kilometer away from numbers 1 and 2. Numbers I, 2 and 3 converted their motor car garages into shops, while number 4 extended his house to create an enclosed space for his business. In the cases of numbers 1 and 2 their enterprises were intended to compliment each other, especially after the shop close by closed down after its third brutal robbery, in which two people were killed and another seriously injured (see chapter six). The closure provided an opportunity for them, which was grasped soon after. They worked in harmony together as old friends and regularly discussed their day's activities. Their years of association and operating in close proximity to each other could be equated to a social club because it drew other district friends and nearby relatives to them at all times of the day. While one sold groceries and frozen food, the other sold domestic fuel items such as firewood, paraffin and candles. The men ran both stalls with active support in the trading only sometimes from women, as illustrated below.

> *I.M., a 52 two year old unmarried plasterer, gave up looking for employment in his trade since 1992. His complaint was against the cheaper African tradesmen that building firms were hiring. At the rate that he used to earn, he considered it too demeaning to return to the trade for such low wages. He started his business in March 1995, but stopped it in August after he was robbed at gunpoint. He reopened it in December 1995 and stopped it again after his nephew, who stayed with him, committed suicide in 1996. He restarted in November 1997, but this time with metal gates blocking the steel door and a small centralised space cut out from the metal gates to serve his customers. He was barely visible from the road because of this precautionary gate. He began work at 5h30 and closed between*

22h00 and 23h00 every day. He lived with a friend in his three bedroomed flat that was part of a three-floor building. Below his flat were two other flats, which were occupied by his two married sisters and their families. Both helped him when he needed assistance and cooked his food by taking turns. All three households paid significantly reduced rent because the building was directly opposite an unsightly and unsafe squatter camp, named Canaan (see chapter 6). Under the circumstances the occupants of the block of three flats believed that their occupation of the building was more of a favor to the landlords than for their own benefit.

G.H., a seventy two year old retired plasterer decided to trade from his garage and incorporate his two unmarried sons, one a plasterer and the other a heavy duty driver into his activities. While both complained of the difficulties of finding work, their parents also complained of their alcoholic tendencies. They thought it was appropriate to trade with the squatters and hopefully keep their sons' minds occupied and away from liquor. They succeeded only up to a point in disciplining them. When business improved by selling paraffin and firewood, G.H. decided to buy a deep freeze from which he started selling frozen chicken and chicken giblets. This investment paid off well, but was soon stolen when the garage was broken into and the entire deep freeze was stolen. He felt disinclined to continue trading and stopped for a while. When his sons returned to their drinking habits he decided to reopen his business. After four months from restarting, three people who made it appear as though they were from the squatter camp held up the father and two sons at gunpoint. Each of the three was badly beaten up and they all had to endure the embarrassment of not being able to defend one another. This brought an abrupt halt to their enterprise in October 1996.

While stalls 1 and 2 were operated mainly by men, the women helped by ensuring that they received their beverages, snacks and meals at the required times. Although there was a tendency to ignore the role of the women in these enterprises their contributions were equally important. The men often counted themselves only in their trading and spoke in terms of their working hours, without acknowledgement of the women. Their duties were taken for granted and not counted as substantive work that was indeed integral to the work of the men, despite the fact that they helped to clean the garages and stand in for a few hours on the days when the men had other chores. They tended to draw a distinction between help and work.

In the cases of 3 and 4, the scenarios were significantly different. Both were married and had experience in retail trading. Their proximity to each other was of no consequence to their trading. While number 3 had converted his garage into a space for his retail activities, number 4 had extended his house for this purpose. Interestingly, both had licensed businesses on either side of each other, which were once thriving retail outlets. But however both closed down because of their inability to sustain themselves in the changing political and economic situations. Their rentals were high and they felt that they were too

easy targets for hold-ups. There was a continuous stream of pedestrian traffic for most of the day, starting from at least 05h00 and winding down after 21h00. The early morning hours and particularly the early evening hours were their busiest. Both stalls were supported by hundreds of squatters during these hours, clearly bringing in substantial amounts of cash into their businesses. The backgrounds of the men in these two outlets made them more persevering since their experience in retail gave them a better outlook on how to deal with clientele in such situations. They worked for most hours in the day and the inputs by their wives were significant and emphatically appreciated by them. But the fear under which they functioned was a perennial problem.

A.R., a fifty year old fresh produce trader, began using his double garage in 1992 to sell fruit and vegetables to people in his neighborhood (emphasis on Indians). He started this business from home as an experiment to test its viability. His intention was to withdraw from trading in the market in Central Durban because "there the Africans are overcrowding us and only robbing the Indians". While he worked in the market his wife ran the business from home, producing a turnover of between R500.00-R800.00 per day. It did not take long for this to show even bigger returns, encouraging A.R. to withdraw from his market stall. He was receiving more support than he expected because his African clientele grew substantially. From April 1994 he paid full attention to his venture from home. From August 1994 he started retailing a few grocery items such as tinned beans and fish. By October 1995 his wife was attacked and robbed. The second robbery took place in February 1996. His house was burgled twice in 1995 and 1996. After these incidents he decided to install steel burglar guards and serve clients from the pavement. The house burglaries took place when nobody was inside. All four incidents occurred during the day when A.R. was absent from home. He increased his grocery selling in November 1994, directly affecting the two shops close to him. He started selling cigarettes and frozen chicken. By November 1997 he was retailing at least 1000 kilograms of chicken, 500 packets of cigarettes and at least 1000 tins of beans or fish per week, taking his daily turnover from between R500.00 – R800.00 to up to R3000.00 per day. Support for his business had a distinct ethnic breakdown to it. His Indian clients supported him during the day while African clients supported him early in the morning and in the evenings. His wife usually awoke at 03h00 and he began his day from 04h00 when he had to go to the bulk market for fruit and vegetable. Thereafter she made breakfast for her two children and mother, packed her children's school lunches, cleaned her house and started trading from 06h30. A.R.'s affinity for the bulk market encouraged him to return to it, but this time as a wholesaler. He had eight stalls, which were managed by his son and younger brother. While support from the squatters had helped to finance his expansion, he felt he "could do without African business. They have no respect for us and there is no future for us Indians in this country. I am not a racially biased person, but I worked long enough with Africans to know that they are not interested in real progress. The moment they see someone progressing they want to rob and kill him. That's why I rather take my family away to India. Over there there's lot of poverty but not so much killing and hold-ups like here!" Because of their insecurity A.R. stood outside the garage with friends while his wife traded from inside. He believed this is to be a deterrent to any would-be robbers.

M.J. a 43 year old father of three children started his business in 1994. Prior to this he worked with an uncle as a shop assistant for 13 years. He later found employment with the Durban Corporation as a laborer. While he worked there he decided to emulate his neighbor A.R. and start selling fruit and vegetables to the squatters. But he had to borrow money from relatives, which he claimed he is still paying back. His day begins at 04h00 and ends at about 21h00. His business grew to a point of evidently turning him into a formidable competitor with his neighbor and induced his resignation from the Durban Corporation. His space was stacked with crates of fruit and vegetable, African beer and groceries. The trading was done almost entirely by his wife while he saw to the purchasing of stock, and like A.R. he stood outside the counter area to act as a watchman for his business. M.J. had at least three burglaries that cost him an accumulated amount of R8000.00. He relies on the squatters for his survival and is unhappy to hear of their relocation through the housing schemes that are being developed all over Durban. He is optimistic about the future of the country and does not envisage emigration, despite the fact that he believes that "since the elections the country is all upside down". To him "Wherever there's people there's trouble. So where are we going to run to?" M.J. was reluctant to divulge his daily takings or the volumes that he sells per day or week. It was equally difficult to estimate how he fared with his neighboring competitor, although he certainly appeared confident and liked the success of his venture.

Both A.R. and M.J. were evidently from different class backgrounds. While the former was had a relatively more convenient material background, the latter had substantially fewer comforts. But the neighboring squatter camps provided them with ample opportunities to uplift their material circumstances and offset the statuses of established licensed shops. While one was able to return to the market with greater capital potential than previously, the other worked himself up to a position that permitted him to resign from a job that ensured him a regular and guaranteed income. Both their enterprises were effectively recent manifestations of post-apartheid change in Indian dominated residential areas. Their relative successes raise a number of important questions about the failure of established licensed businesses and their replacement by unlicensed smaller ventures that fall within the category of informal businesses. At least eight reasons, both fact and conjeture, may be posited as explanations for this situation. The factual situations were visible and became self-evident over time, while conjectures are based on assumptions from the ethnographic evidence:

1. The unlicensed traders operated at an advantage from the licensed shops in that their expenses were comparatively lower. The rentals and other expenses of the licensed traders were generally higher.

2. This gave the unlicensed traders the advantage of trading at lower costs, thereby drawing the bulk of the clientele towards themselves.

3. Unlike the licensed shops, their counterparts relied more on household labor than on hired labor.

4. The unlicensed traders generally came from an employment background that exposed them more to African behavioral habits and patterns of socialisation, allowing them to adapt easily to the hardy ways of people from the squatter camps.

5. Unlicensed traders appeared to gain the confidence of the squatters much faster than the shopkeepers because of this.

6. There was an apparent class distinction between the shopkeepers and the squatters, which drew a distinct line between the two groups. The latter group, as it was reported on more than one occasion, did not like the social distance that Indian business people wedged between them. They preferred a more casual approach in dealings with them – which was seriously lacking by the licensed traders. This created an aversion among the squatters to support such enterprises.

7. Through a more personlised approach towards the squatters, many of the latter were able to acquire credit that was not so easily acquired from the shopkeepers.

8. The personalised relationships allowed individual unlicensed traders a more knowledgeable insight into the structure and functioning of the squatter camps and their residents' requirements.

The issues above provide a glimpse into the relationships of the unlicensed traders and the squatters, which is further amplified in the section below.

Their relationships with African clientele

Understanding the relationships between African squatters and Indian traders must be understood against the background of the nature of contemporary violence, state based corruption and the lack of progress in service delivery since the ANC takeover in 1994, and the historical mutual mistrust between Africans and Indians. This is despite the general cordiality and the dependence on both groups for support and service respectively from each other being a visible characteristic in their day to day affairs. From a purely observational viewpoint, several characteristics were made obvious. The traders who carried out their business from behind metal and steel bars made the fear and anxiety with which they operated very obvious. After their losses through theft and the violent episodes that each one suffered, they too, like the licensed shops, had to draw a line between clientele and themselves. All were fully armed with guns, always had friends and relatives with them, had monitored alarm systems, and generally operated with a constant measure of vigilance.

Most unknown male clientele who were either seen for the first time or who were seen only at intervals were usually viewed with caution and suspicion. When the circumstances permitted, the practice among the traders was to quietly ask another client if the new face was a familiar one and whether he was from the neighboring squatter camp. When no other known squatter was close, the traders either broke into their Indian dialects or gestured or whispered to one another, indicating the presence of the unknown person/s. During these moments trading was done with utmost care and a virtual readiness on the part of the male traders to either fight back, run, shut the doors, or call for help. Each one had stated that their overtly demonstrated readiness had helped to foil other likely holdups on more than one occasion. The presence of neighbors at the trading outpost, the watchful eyes of the neighbors from their balconies, and their closeness to either panic buttons or the telephones were equally helpful in this regard. Another major deterrent were the signs, attached to the walls, of the security firm monitoring their alarms, with notices such as **"Armed response in under ten minutes"**. Each notice had a picture of a gun and was glaring with the expectation of swift and violent responses to possible attacks. The metal and steel gates were also a wedge between traders and clients in that they helped in keeping accurate records of purchases and sales and shoplifting, especially during busy hours. Traders had to ensure that their clients were a safe distance away from their stocks, in order to minimise or obliterate pilfering, especially when they were busy. It was also for this reason that more than one person had to be in attendance during trading hours. While one served, the other/s kept a watchful eye on what was taken away after the exchange of money and goods. The traders reported huge losses in their stocks prior to the installation of the steel gates. After taking this precautionary measure and ensuring that there was vigilant assistance at all times, they believe that they could account more accurately for their stocks. It was also easier for them to be served and controlled from behind these gates. It reduced the possibility of being held up and therefore permitted them to trade with greater peace of mind. For instance, ever since the gates for numbers 2, 3 and 4 were installed, and after their introduction of vigilant assistants, there were no robberies or recollection of pilfering. Their experiences taught them important lessons in safety and the need to realize the kind of political climate in which they functioned.

But their functioning is not only about negative issues with people from the squatter camps or a one-way track of simplistic ethnic divisions. For instance, the trader's reliance on clients from the squatter camps for information on unknown faces is an indication of a measure of acquaintanceship and friendship that existed between the two groups. Many

from within the squatter camps have become willingly vigilant on behalf of the traders. The squatters were aware of their holdups, burglaries and the generally vulnerable positions under which the traders operated. For these reasons they were genuinely empathetic and were very supportive towards the traders. This relationship grew out of regularity of support and a growing sense of mutual respect from both sides as their familiarity with each other grew. But it began more as a tendency from the traders touting for support than from the squatters wanting to buy – at least initially.

The point at which the traders made their entry into the market was the most crucial for them. Those who realised that the success of their ventures depended more on the squatters than on their Indian neighbors had to operate with greater tactfulness. An important mechanism in this exercise was the ability to talk to the squatters in the dominant local African language i.e. isiZulu. This had an almost immediate endearing effect on the relationship between the client and service provider. Speaking in isiZulu opened up the channels for communication, for the understanding of particular ethnic requirements and a cordial and preferable manner through which to conduct business. In more ways than one, most of the traders worked towards ingratiating themselves with the squatters in order to attract more business and win their confidence. The latter aspect was also crucial in acquiring a measure of security against other known criminals in the area. As one trader stated: *"You got to know some of the right guys in there if you want to be safe."* A particular approach has been to ensure that a close relationship was established with the executive committees in the neighboring squatter camps. Every squatter camp had an executive committee that came into existence through a manner of voting that was actually only a semblance of democratic procedures. Most executives were "elected" in at least one of three ways viz.

1. Through the popularity they achieved through their entrepreneurial skills. Such individuals were able to muster support for themselves either through the sale of various kinds of beer and liquor,

2. Or their oratory skills and the political backing that the respective squatter camp showed for a particular political party,

3. or sheer brute strength and belonging to a powerful gang within the squatter camp.

These executives wielded tremendous amounts of power and enforced disciplinary codes as they saw fit – but only while they managed to last in office. Their existence enforced procedural norms that first required their recognition as the legitimate local authority. The

respect they commanded encouraged the traders to befriend and consult with them on issues of common concern. Squatter executive structures were the avenues through which the traders also befriended the inhabitants within the squatter camps. This served as an effective entry point into the purchasing power that was so latent within the squatter camps. Receiving the approval of the local executive was a crucial issue in their support of the nearest trader. But it did not come without any risks. In this type of poverty-stricken situation, where cash is not always readily available, credit and trust are two sides of the same coin. They have proved to be significant in the processes of cementing closer relationships and inducing a closer bondage between the two sectors. Providing credit was an important way through which the traders acquired some form of recognition. However it took place only after the client was deemed sufficiently regular, well known to the trader and trustworthy enough to warrant credit. An assessment of figures that took several months to collate because of the sensitivity of the information and the unwillingness of the traders to divulge it, revealed that at least three traders from the table above had amounts of R7000.00, R6500.00 and R5000.00 outstanding to them. While, from most of these amounts there was hope that the debtors will repay, a substantial amount in each case was carried over for months. Amounts of R2700.00, R2200.00 and R3500.00 were respectively carried over for a period of more than three months. These amounts, which were owed interest free, were unlikely to be recovered, although the traders were still hopeful that the day might arrive when the debts could be finally settled.

There were several accounts of individuals reportedly being disciplined by the executives, after being reported by the traders, during the fieldwork period. After taking the matter directly to the local executives the issues did receive their attention. The traders were satisfied that the persons responsible for the problems, especially relating to matters of bad behavior and not paying overdue accounts, were dealt with amicably and to the satisfaction of all concerned. But the success of these cases depended upon the appropriate person being located. Many of the squatters who had debts relocated to other squatter camps or found employment in distant places and therefore had to relocate, making it difficult for them to traced. When relocated people were traced, the local executive did not have any jurisdiction over them, and therefore could not impose their will upon them. While these losses do add up to substantial amounts, they were evidently not destructive to the entrepreneurs in view of the volumes of cash business that they were doing.

The social advantages in giving credit had paid off enormously in the favor of the traders. They were seen to be humane in the eyes of the squatter communities and as people who reached out to them in times of desperate need. Credit had facilitated the images of the traders in positive ways among the squatters, making them acceptable and approachable people to deal with. Their understanding of basic and incidental requirements and their provision at comparatively affordable prices were significant in the services they provided to the squatters. In addition, their proximity to the squatter camps and long hours of service that went beyond the normal trading hours, had acted as a center of convenience that were travel free retail outlets. To some extent, the trading posts became convenient spots, for friends from the squatter camps, to meet. Small groups were often cited standing for hours talking to each other, often drawing in the chief trader and/or his assistants into their conversations. These meetings were generally light hearted, jovial and free from any tensions and suspicions of any sort, providing situations of normalcy among familiar people. It demonstrated the informality and highly personalised manner with which business was generally conducted. Many of the squatter clientele were known by their first names to the traders and their daily requirements were often given to them after gesturing or using sign language. Often, the words "usual" were used to stipulate requirements at the point of transaction. With understanding and a willingness to serve, a parcel such as a loaf of bread, a packet of frozen chicken and a tin of beans or fish would be put together in a packet and either exchanged for the required payment or booked down as credit. It was also a frequent sight to witness cordial conversations between the traders and squatters of the day's events or of each others well being, or about conditions inside the squatter camps. This had engendered a broad sense of acceptance for the traders, revealing a somewhat tacit integration into the squatters' lifestyles. The cordiality between the two groups revealed several interesting incidents about the contradictory scenarios of harshness and common human decency that prevailed in their world of transformation – which the section below highlights through reference to certain incidents that were witnessed in the course of fieldwork.

A few significant events and ambiguous ethnography

The data that was gathered during fieldwork required several visits to ensure reliability of information and its careful crosschecking. However, the nature of the responses that were collated, presented difficulties with arriving at a clear understanding of the true perceptions of most of the traders and their views on transformation. Their responses were often inconsistent and were often determined by the pressure they felt due to the busy or difficult

periods, what they felt – dependent upon what incident prevailed at a particular time, and what was being witnessed in the course of interviews and conversations. For instance, in the case of one of the respondents[1] who was visited for the third time in four weeks, a closer look at his set-up helped to acquire some familiarization with his methods of operation and his personal views. His single motor car garage, which was converted into a tuck shop, had well laid out shelves packed with groceries, a refrigerator, four freezers, a metal gate and a steel door, each of which had a contiguous opening of one square foot through which he served his clients. The interview began with what appeared to be a balanced perspective on the current political and social changes of what was perceived to have taken place since April 1994. His response to the issue was that there are two sides to the African majority, the government and the people who reside in the squatter camp. If one had to look at either side, he argued, then one is bound to find the good and the bad. Unfortunately, as he put it: "One bad egg among them makes everybody look bad. Not all of them (Africans) are bad." In the course of the conversation, he teased a female client, saying "Can't you and I get married now?" – acquiring a positive nod from her. At the same time he scolded a seven year old African child who helped him in his business from 07h00 to 21h00, calling him: "You Black bastard!". The awaiting African clients, whom he evidently befriended, felt totally at ease with him and had enjoyed the amusement of hearing racially loaded jokes.

However, the trader's views hardened almost immediately when, in the space of within thirty minutes, two separate fights between African youths from the neighboring squatter camp across the road had broken out. This brought out a side of the trader that was clearly hidden and which he preferred to initially suppress. He retorted in the course of the first fight: "Ay brother, with these guys I have a very hard time. As it is on Friday night they were pulling out people's wives from their shacks and stripping them naked. The crime is gone fuckin' high here...." A friend interjected saying: "We don't care which government rules, but we just want our freedom to walk about freely. How can we do it under these circumstances?" Several minutes later a second fight between two other people started. The friend of the trader stated: "This is a fight over women. You see when you put three hens with two roosters in one pen you are bound to have trouble!" The trader added: "When the white man was in power it was peaceful here. These Blacks just take things by force and all they ever want to do is fight. What can we do? We just have to live here! We are too old to go anywhere and run away from this fuckin' country!"

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[1] Interviewed several times in 1997. The particular incidents below were witnessed on 10 November 1997.

In the anxiety of these tense moments a squatter approached a friend of the trader and asked to hire his truck. The purpose was to transport a load of his belongings to his rural home about 120 kilometers from Durban. In the process of negotiating the deal and the price, there were interspersed comments about the ongoing fight across the road. The squatter, feeling a sense of irritation, exclaimed: "I just don't know when we Africans are going to learn to stop fighting! This is the problem everyday over here. We just can't do anything about it." This issue opened up an aspect of the wider inter-dependencies that emerged since the established of the squatter camp. Indians with vehicles, especially trucks and vans, were increasingly providing transport services for squatters, entrenching a somewhat invisible client-patron relationship. The truck owner later stated: "There's no problems with us here. We all get along very well. When they want to use my transport they come and ask and we settle on a good price. Because of this I am able to park my vehicles outside without problems. They know me and I stand outside late at night, they all talk to me, and nobody does me anything!" The transport was always at negotiated rates and usually paid in advance. Evidence had shown that a lucrative business was emerging between some of the Indian vehicle owners and the squatters.

The conversation at that moment turned to a revealing episode that occurred on the N2 (national coastal highway), relating to an attack that took place several kilometers away from the place of interview, a few weeks earlier. The victims were a young White couple and their two infant children who were travelling from Gauteng for a weekend in KwaZulu-Natal's north coast. As the story was reported by an interviewee:

> *One of the children asked to urinate, making the father stop on the side of the road to allow the child to do so. They were then attacked by several Black youths that shot dead the father and mother. The children were then left to themselves under very cold and rainy conditions. A passing highway police patrol vehicle stopped and found the children sitting and crying on each parent. The police suspected that the murderers were from one of soon after arrested three of the suspects at about 16h00 the week before the third visit to the respective trader. The information for their arrest allegedly came from paid informants from within the squatter camp that was opposite the trader being interviewed. The arresting officers were Whites and Indians. Allegations are that the White policemen wanted to shoot dead all the three and then claim they resisted arrest, but the Indian policemen apparently did not share the same sentiment. The former's reason was based on a perception that the suspects were constantly engaged in deliberate attacks and murders against Whites.[2]*

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[2] The information was not verified, but is used in this case to illustrate the impact of racial and ethnic divisions in South Africa.

In a different episode at another trading post, the trader recalled an incident of a fatal stabbing that took place close to his operation. Information on this incident was already gathered prior to the meeting with this trader. The incident was about a stabbing which involved an Indian youth and two Black men. Attempts to reconstruct the story and ascertain the truth about what actually happened brought out six different versions of the incident, which are presented in direct language:

- *"You heard how these Africans were attacking the Indians in the bus this afternoon. For once the Indian boys stood up to fight them. They killed one and hurt the other one quite badly! We must stop sitting back and taking this from them. I'm glad we taught them a lesson this time."*
- *"Yah, last Saturday three Africans came to hold up Matthew in his shop and tried to steal his money and whatever they could lay their hands on. Some of the Indian boys were there and saw this. They caught two of them and killed one. I heard the other one is critical in hospital"*
- *"You know what these lighties (boys) are? They just get drunk and start interfering with innocent people. They just killed those two guys for nothing – because they were African."*
- *"Yah, these bastards killed my brother last year. This time they started with our guys and they didn't fright... They just fucked them up. They think we are going to be scared of them all the time! These were not the guys who killed my brother. W e are still going to get them."[3]*
- *"Those Africans started with these lighties. They were drunk and they started interfering with the Indians. One of the lightie's had a mes (knife) and stekked (stabbed) both of them. One died same time and the other died after a couple of days. When it happened a couple of hundred Africans suddenly got wind of what happened and came fully armed and started singing anti-Indian songs. They wanted the police to do justice straight away, otherwise they were going to start attacking the Indians. When they first saw only Indian policemen, they started acting wild. The Indian cops had to call for back up, and only when the White cops came they calmed down and dispersed – but only because they were going to be tear-gassed! But some of my clients from the squatter camp told me not to worry and not to close my business. They promised to stand and defend me if they attacked us."*
- *"Hey, these youngsters get drunk every weekend and look for trouble. They stabbed two drunken people, who I heard were old men! They made it bad for everybody now. Just and go and stand in the corner, and you won't see anybody there anymore. Why? Because they want to behave like gangsters and now they can't face up to it. The Africans are angry, and are going to attack them at night. That's why they are not coming around anymore!"*

The last respondent's words about the evening gatherings were correct. Driving through the respective area over several evenings, as an observational exercise, had revealed a complete absence of youth, both Indian and African. A tense atmosphere in the area prevailed for several weeks. It brought out the historical and latent animosity between Indians and Africans. A distinct atmosphere of mutual mistrust and the fear of being attacked under the

cover of darkness by either side persisted for at least several weeks. A nearby shop, which was converted into a billiard room and social club for the youth, mainly Indian, closed immediately after the incident. Youth from the squatter camp avoided the area, while the Indian youth gathered in the safety of several of the neighbors fenced yards. The predominant conversations among them for at least two months, was about the stabbing, the possible reprisal from Africans and how they envisage defending themselves and their properties. Conversations often took the extreme ends of mass attacks and mass destruction by Africans, whom they believe will show their anger at the incident only in this way. Their preparations were firstly to start with servicing of their guns, finding out about where to get more guns and ammunition, and asking the local police, who were mainly Indian, to be on constant alert. However, there was a general lack of faith in the police services, especially in view of their record of the poor ways in which they handled cases or failed to arrest culprits. One person was arrested and released on bail three days later, while his apparent accomplices went into hiding. The entire neighborhood was geared into a state of perpetual readiness to vacate their homes, defend themselves and mobilize as widely as possible in order to be sufficiently prepared for a possible attack. As both groups cautiously viewed each other with suspicion, the issue calmed down after a period of about six weeks and the area returned to a semblance of normalcy. African and Indian youth who were on talking terms with each other either spoke carefully about the incident or avoided talking about it. They started gathering at their old places and the social club *cum* billiard room was reopened. It was a conflict that only time and responsible behavior had helped to resolve.

The incidents and responses illustrated above are important reflections of inter-group dynamics between Indians and Africans and the manner in which socialization actually took place in the areas of research. The nature of cordiality that existed between the traders and individuals from the squatter camps stopped at the level of acquaintanceship and hardly developed into entrenched friendships. There are various reasons for this, the main one being the unavailability of time for either party to go beyond an acquaintanceship. But there are also taboos on the part of Indians to keep out unknown people, especially if they do not belong to the same racial, ethnic or caste groups. Their social distances were not simplistically based on the aversions that arise out of possible racial or other forms of social prejudice only. However, there has been a distinct pattern of racially based socialization among the Indian and African youth. Wherever they gathered around the traders' outlets, it was always as clearly visible groups of Indians and Africans who were in total separation

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[3] The respondent of this statement was not at the scene of the stabbing when it occurred.

from each other. While Africans communicated in their respective dialects, especially isiZulu, Indians communicated in English. Language was a distinctive demarcation between the two groups of youth. It helped to create specific identities within each group and demonstrated the segmented nature of the communities in the vicinity. English was an indication of education and to some extent it also meant elitism. isiZulu and other African languages such as Xhosa, Sotho and Shangaan, which were less widely spoken, often determined the working class or marginalised statuses of the squatters. Their limited ability to speak in English often placed them at a disadvantage and lowered their self-esteem when they had to negotiate for employment. Their ability to speak English was an indication to many potential employers of their exposure to good working environments and an indication that they were or could be trained to become quick learners.

The traders' outlets were convenient spots for "street corner societies". Coincidentally, or perhaps even as deliberate choices in view of their properties market potential, most of the traders were located either at the intersection of two or more streets or within close range of them. Their attraction was particularly strong because of the services they offered. Cigarettes, sweets, beers and cold drinks formed a major part of their evening gatherings, thereby making the traders outlets convenient centers for their socialization, but within distinctly defined ethnic groups.

Conclusion

The dynamics of trade, socialisation and general movements in the vicinities of the traders' outlets are an epitome of post-Apartheid interaction between Africans and Indians. The analysis here was challenging because it mostly represented two classes which happened to be people of two major race groups in the province, one a mainly middle class segment being a distinctly settled urbanised community (Indians) and the other, being under class, showing characteristics of both rural and urban lifestyles together with a high degree of residential mobility (Africans). It was the middle class Indians that exploited the opportunities for retail service provisions and it was mainly the under class Africans whose support sustained this segmented population. It was the Indians knowledge of the wholesale markets, their strong family ties and collaboration, and entrepreneurial flair that made them more successful than their African counterparts. As land-owners who had the advantage of access to capital and credit, the Indian residents *cum* entrepreneurs were evidently building up above average cash reserves under political and economic conditions that would generally not permit the average person to acquire. These conditions afforded them a

hegemonic advantage over their African counterparts, who were seen more as sojourners rather than as a permanent part of the neighbourhood. The entrepreneurs recognised the phase in which they were operating and often commented that they have to exploit the opportunity the squatter camps presented while it lasted - since the situation was not likely to last beyond a few years.

However, not all the Indian residents in the research areas were of middle class status. Many who either supported the entrepreneurs or who socialised with them as neighbours were tenants and unemployed impoverished people. While all of the Indian interviewees were born and raised in Durban, they did not feel a sense of security as South African citizens in the same way that Africans felt. In the course of conversations, they often diverted from the questions by referring to their minority status, their feelings of insecurity and the difficulties of having to live their lives in constant fear. Their trading skills and fortitude in a climate of uncertainty has urged them with hope and optimism that some day in the near future they might be able to trade, walk around freely and live without feeling intimidated as an ethnic minority. These have been the profound fears of the traders and their Indian clients. While many hoped for change and relocation of the Africans to decent housing, some traders were ambiguous about this because their livelihoods depended upon the continued existence of the squatter camps.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Public Transport in Durban: Indian privilege versus African empowerment

Introduction

In the course of researching the dynamics of the sprouting "informal" businesses in the research areas, at least two significant incidents took place. Both incidents were about the passenger transport industry and the racial tension that prevailed between Indian omnibus operators and taxi operators, mainly African. Before delving into the dynamics of Indo-African relations in the transport industry, a brief insight into the African taxi industry will help to contextualise the problem of competition between the two groups. Like the Indian entrepreneurs in Clare Estate who grasped at the opportunity to capitalise on the trade that African squatters provided, African taxi operators grasped at the opportunity as private transport entrepreneurs. But it came at tremendous cost to their dignity, freedom of movement and freedom of participation in the country's economy. Khosa (1990; 1992) has discussed the total repression of the African taxi industry between 1930-1976, its limited tolerance after 1976 and final acceptance of it as a means towards facilitating the creation of a conservative petty-bourgeoisie in the African townships - in order to stem the rising tide of African radicalism. Up to a point apartheid had succeeded in achieving this by subtly coopting the South African Black Taxi Association (SABTA). The taxi industry has grown from a few dozen six-seater taxis in the 1930s to more than a hundred thousand mini-buses in the 1990s (1991: 2). By 1992 the purchasing power of African taxis had grown astronomically. They were reported to be enjoying the biggest share of the taxi-bus-train commuter service, purchasing over 800 million litres of petrol and 3.5 million tyres per annum (Khosa 1992: 182). Khosa largely depicts the taxi industry as "one of the most extraordinary socio-economic phenomena in recent years" and as "a silent revolution transforming South Africa into one of the most integrated economies" and as "fruit of popular non-racial capitalism" (1991: 2). But the industry has not been without its problems. Khosa (1991: 18) acknowledges, but dismissively, the following: rank marshalls overloading taxis to gain lucrative favours from drivers, raising fares without consulting the affected community, commuters having to wait long queues at ranks, taxis not serving certain parts of the townships, and taxi feuding - innocent passengers becoming victims. These problems were compounded by the interviewee responses to taxis and played a role in their broader perceptions of transformation in South Africa.

Indian and Coloured taxi operators were also deemed a problem, but they were not as many in number and as big a threat to the bus owners as were the African taxi operators.

Numerous media reports about tension between Indian bus owners and taxi owners in the Indian townships were reported in the press, but were never raised by the interviewees. While Indian residents saw African taxis as responsible for anti-social behaviour, Indian bus owners singled them out as a threat to their livelihoods. This created a level of tension that spilled over to Indian residents who continuously complained about the unacceptable ways of the taxi drivers – particularly their flouting with traffic rules and turning most home frontages into passenger stops, in whichever area they operated. Many had also blamed the increasing car jacking and the rise of crime in their areas to the taxi industry. They also felt strongly that this would phase out the Indian owned bus service that served their populations for decades. The Indian owned bus service in Indian dominated suburbs and elsewhere were viewed with a passion by many, despite their complaints against the quality of service and the residents complacency in dealing with it. In a "conversation" with several residents in Clare Estate a comment was once passed about the history of the omnibus service that Indians had provided: "My family was the first to own buses in Durban. Where the hell do these Africans come from and take over this route that we built over so many years. They just park anywhere, stop anywhere and show no respect for passing traffic. When you hoot at them they just swear at you and if you try to challenge them they are sure to shoot you!" The comment was made in the context of the violence that marked the passenger service industry at that time[1], particularly in the light of the murder of several Indian omnibus owners in recent years and the abrupt halt to which many had to bring their services.

There was a noticeable atmosphere of racial tension between Indian and African passenger service providers, with the former feeling a sense of increasing alienation in a climate of African economic empowerment. While Indian omnibus owners were licensed and legitimate operators' African taxis were not. Most omnibus owners nostalgically recalled their thriving past performances and spoke of the contemporary helplessness that they felt against African taxis, who, as one claimed with approval in a group interview, "...operate with a ruthless mob mentality. You try to challenge them and you're finished. They'll just gang up on you." The comment about the history of Indian involvement in passenger service and the anti-social elements that taxis brought into Indian dominated suburbs was made several times in the filed, often in racially loaded statements. The frequency and passion with which these comments were made prompted an in-depth analysis into the issue, including the history of such transport in Durban.

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[1] Between November 1997 and January 1998 two Indian omnibus owners from two prominent families who had a long history of transport services were shot and killed by Africans thought to be linked to the taxi

The history of public transport in Durban was as racially based as any other public service in South Africa. Archival documents have placed on record the nature of public transport for disadvantaged citizens who lived away from the city centre in the early 1900s. Singh (1977)[2] for instance reported that up to 1919 there were no attempts to provide this facility for non-whites living in areas remote from railway or municipal tramway routes. During this period the municipality of Durban did not incorporate areas such as Clare Estate, Reservoir Hills and Overport, among a number of other suburbs, within its Borough, since they were under the jurisdiction of Local Administration and Health Boards. Phoenix at the time was not even conceptualised. Those who lived outside what was then Durban had to rely on the horse-drawn spring cart as their principal means of transport. Until the 1940s, it was not unusual for people from outside the Borough of Durban to do their shopping late in the evenings, sleep over in the premises of known people and other well meaning members of the Indian community and return home the next day[3]. It is not surprising that under these conditions Indians had to respond independently of the local authority public services in order to provide more convenient modes of transport for those who lived in the peri-urban areas. The idea was initially conceptualised by an Indian named Siddhoo. After seeing a Dodge truck displayed in a local garage, Siddhoo conceived the idea that if two benches were placed lengthwise in the back of the truck it would serve as a suitable mechanically powered vehicle to transport Indian and other non-white[4] passengers from outside the borough of Durban. After borrowing money from a few friends and relatives the Dodge truck was purchased and the first Indian owned omnibus was in operation in 1919, carrying mainly passengers from Riverside, north of the Umgeni River, into the city centre. Whites were provided with public transport by the Municipality and preferred to patronise this service, especially since it operated only in their residential areas. Siddhoo's venture did not prove to be an immediate financial success, but the rapid increase of support over the months did pave the way for more people of Indian origin to enter the business. For instance, a man by the name of Marimuthu purchased an old army truck, adapted it to carry passengers and provided a service from Clairwood to the centre of Durban. Likewise, others of Indian origin began to invest in engine powered vehicles that were converted for public utility (Singh 1977).

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industry.

[2] Fiat Lux, August 1997-a magazine that was produced especially for the Indian population. It was often considered to be propaganda instrument by coopted members of the Apartheid regime. It no longer exists.

[3] Moray Camrie (985) – "Interview with Sam Chetty"

[4] The word is used as a convenient reference, in accordance with the literature, to people who were then not classified as "White" or "European".

It is from these humble beginnings that Indian owned omnibus services emerged and pioneered transport services under generally unsuitable conditions. The roads during this period were usually untarred or not serviced and went into areas that were inhabited only by non-White people. The risks and the perseverance that was shown by the bus operators had a significant spin-off for the development and extension of the Borough of Durban. Their routes serviced both the residents in the outlying areas and the businesses that fell within the Borough of Durban. In this way Indian transport operators opened up these areas for the housing of Durban's industrial workers of all races and relieved the Borough from the congestion that characterised its early development. This gradually led to plans for the Borough to extend its jurisdiction to incorporate these areas as part of its suburban residential boundaries. It also led to a policy that was aimed at giving recognition to African residential areas where African workers could live with their families and commute to work on a daily basis through public transport.

There were two factors that led to the success and entrenchment of the Indian omnibus service providers. The buses were owner-driven and serviced by themselves, and there were no garage facilities for their vehicles, leaving the owners with no option but to park them either in their properties or on the side of the road. These were significant cost saving factors that permitted the owners to structure their fares in a way that was considerably lower than the transport that was provided, especially for Whites, by the Durban Municipality. The fares were directed at the working class population, especially Indians, and were therefore constantly aimed at keeping them at affordable rates.

The success of these initiatives eventually led, with effect from 1 August 1932, to the dissolution of the Local Administration and Health Boards in at least seven areas, incorporating them into the Borough of Durban. They included the following suburbs: Greenwood Park, Red Hill, Durban North, Sydenham, and a large portion of Mayville, Umhlatuzana and South Coast Junction (now Rossburgh). The Borough offered several other services to these populations soon after the incorporation took place.

Unlike the reliability and consistency of the buses that belonged to the Municipality, Indian owned buses, which carried between eight and twelve passengers, varied widely in the quality of their services. In the 1930s a Commission of Inquiry into Road Motor Transportation made the following observation (Singh 1977: 5):

Some of the buses in operation are sound structurally and mechanically and are reasonably comfortable; but at the other end of the scale are many vehicles in a state of such decrepitude that their arrival at their destination must cause no less surprise to their drivers than relief to their passengers. But they do manage to get through even if only by good luck and with the occasional aid of a yard of wire from the farmer's fence!"

Their routes up to 1930 were unregulated and without interference from the any public body or the City Council. Their freedom to change routes at any time they pleased gave rise to signs such as: *"Durban to elsewhere!"* The real effect of this was that the route of the bus for any particular trip was dependent upon where the majority of the passengers were going at a particular time. But all of this had come to an end through the introduction of the Motor Carrier Transportation Act in 1930, which imposed a requirement of Motor Carrier Certificates that dictated and restricted the route that each bus could take. This Act also ushered in increasing discriminatory practices from the all White City Council against the Indian omnibus owners. It filtered into the apartheid era when even more profound discriminatory practices were applied. The competition they provided to the Municipality led to sporadic outcries from the consumers of transport, both White and non-White. White outrage emerged through comparison of the fares they were being charged by the Municipality, as opposed to the fares that the Indian bus owners were charging for similar trips. This painted a picture of incompetence of the White City Councillors, whose management of public transport was increasingly brought into question by White consumers themselves. Apart from the comparatively higher fares they were being charged, the service was also allegedly running at huge losses. Indian commuters on the other hand were opposing the enforcement of segregation in public transport and their inability to use Municipal buses that operated in White suburbs. In a propaganda campaign that aimed to counter Indians objections to the policy of segregation, the Durban City Council and the Joint Wards Committee issued a pamphlet in 1946 that contained a picture of an Indian bus terminal calling it the *"Durban Indian Traffic Centre"*[5]. Immediately below was a bold caption followed by six points: **"Transport...European and Non-European:**

- **The Durban Transport Fleet comprises 203 vehicles.**
- **Included in this Fleet are 8 trolley buses and ten single deck motor buses set aside entirely for non-European use.**
- **Out of the total fleet of 203 vehicles, 8,522 seats are apportioned to Europeans and 3,110 to non-Europeans.**

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[5] The pamphlet was part of a collection of archival documents from the Durban City Council, available for reference to researchers using the University of Durban-Westville's Documentation Centre.

- In addition there are 211 privately owned passenger vehicles operating (under a Government licence or concession) on non-European Services. The total seating capacity of these vehicles – an Indian monopoly entirely – is 8230.
- From this it will be seen that the total seats provided for Europeans is 8,522, and for non-Europeans 11,340.

Has the Indian any complaint in this direction?

Both the City Council and the Joint Wards Committee were clearly conflating the categories of Indians and non-Europeans as a single group. The latter was made up of Africans and Coloureds as well, who jointly outnumbered the Indian population in Durban. It was the strategy of these bodies to defend their segregationist policies and subtly deflect attention away from the ailing services they were providing in transport. Over time they tried to take over the routes that were covered by the Indian omnibus owners. At their Tenth Annual Provincial Conference held in Durban on 22nd, 23rd and 24th November 1957, the Natal Indian Congress (Founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1894), alleged in its Report (page 23) that

> The Council's plan to oust non-whites out of transport business is cowardly in as much as it is vicious. This move is calculated to eradicate totally any form of competition in transport services. The Council is using its arbitrary power to cover its losses in the transport section. It is well known that through the colour bar policy in transport the Council has been showing continuous losses and it is common cause that it wishes to balance the losses by removing private competition which has been and is proving gainful through administrative efficiency and perseverance. Once the Council takes over, the efficiency in non-European transport will be wanting, especially in the distant routes, and it is especially unthinkable that the Council will continue services in corrugated roads now being served.
> We cannot help urging the non-European bus owners to organise themselves into a strong utility Corporation to ward off Council threats.

Numerous case histories have brought out the issue of discrimination and attempts to take over the bus services by the Council. But these efforts were not restricted to Durban only. In the neighbouring town of Pietermaritzburg and other smaller towns where Indians were providing transport for the public, similar attempts were made by White dominated Councils to take over their services. Comrie's (1985) *"Interview with Sam Chetty"* was a revealing account of how a family affected by the Group Areas Act of 1950 diverted their interests from operating a laundry to running a successful passenger transport business[6]. From experimental beginnings in the latter venture they built up a fleet of fifty buses that serviced Indian and African dominated suburbs. The business was administered only by family members who took pride in ensuring a cordial relationship with their African patrons. One

sister took the role of cashier and six brothers worked as mechanics and road administrators – to minimise theft of cash from drivers and check on the quality of the roads since the Municipality did not attend to the areas that the private bus operators serviced. However, the service was ruthlessly stopped by the Pietermaritzburg Council and was sold off to a European company from outside South Africa.

In most of KwaZulu-Natal such stories of racial discrimination abound where Whites enjoyed hegemony over resources and decision making. The quest to impose Council run passenger transport services in Indian dominated areas only abated around the latter part of the 1980s when the turmoil of anti-apartheid demonstrations forced local and national authorities to focus their attention on more volatile political issues. To date, the threat to take-over Indian omnibus services in the region did not resurface. But a totally different scenario has emerged in the post-apartheid era, with the taxi industry dominated by Africans, posing a new threat to Indian omnibus services and adding to the racially loaded dimensions of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

The rise of the African taxi industry: 1977-1998

There is a need to understand the rise of the African taxi industry if the role of the Indian passenger transport provider has to be understood in the context of transformation in South Africa. Both racial segments have a history of humble beginnings and have demonstrated tremendous perseverance and positive inclinations towards market incentives. Passenger transport services have always proved to be a lucrative business, especially when they were individually or family owned. The information above has briefly illustrated how this activity has empowered a number of people of Indian origin once they became involved in it. Likewise it has been construed as a viable option for nascent African entrepreneurs. At a public seminar for African taxi operators in Durban on 2 April 1999[7], the regional Minister for Transport in KwaZulu-Natal, Sbu Ndebele, stressed that one of the quicker routes for African economic empowerment in post-apartheid South Africa is in the passenger transport industry. It was time, he stated, that African entrepreneurs captured a sizeable slice of the market, especially since this opportunity did not exist previously.

The passenger transport industry certainly proved to become a lucrative niche for Africans wanting to take advantage over the market opportunities that the unfolding post-apartheid

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[6] Moray Comrie (1985) Natalia, volume 15, p10-17.
[7] South African Television News Broadcast, 2 April 1999.

era had brought with it. But its roots predate this era, going back to the 1960s when the most convenient mode of public transport for Africans, especially in the rural areas was the privately owned sedan taxis, especially Valiants and Chevrolets. These cars were big and spacious and were normally packed with loads that exceeded the standard six-carrier for which they were built. The service that they provided to the African population in the rural areas was reminiscent of the situation that existed in the earlier part of this century when Indian omnibus owners first began their services. While the roads in the Indian suburban areas have been upgraded and are qualitatively different from the period when they first served the population, the roads going into most of the African villages in the rural areas are still in very poor condition. Only the main arterial roads have been carefully reconstructed and provide a service for most rural people only up to a point. Often, many still have to walk long distances for up to two hours from the drop-off point before they reach their villages.

Since Africans were not allowed permanent citizenship in South Africa during apartheid they were also not permitted to engage in licensed business activity. Hence, any public transport that they offered was not deemed legal during this period. Their motor cars provided a service in much the same way that the earliest Indian omnibuses had done. However, this almost personalised form of service changed radically when Africans entered into the transport business in greater numbers. It goes back to 1977 when the Toyota Hi-Ace, produced as a mini-bus, was ushered into the market. As the fight against apartheid intensified, the restrictive laws against Africans, especially the Influx Control Laws that forbid Africans from becoming permanently urban, were being relaxed. The allowances that accompanied the relaxation of these laws encouraged Africans to enter into the transport industry. The Toyota mini-bus grew immensely in popularity and has become the hallmark of African public transport. Africans were previously considered a risk by the banks and were not given access to credit because of this. Many who first entered the market had done so through the capital they amassed through the use of their sedans in the taxi industry. Their ownership of new vehicles was only made possible either through self-initiative or through money that was raised through private loans from relatives and friends. It was only in the latter part of the 1980s that Africans qualified for loans from the banks, but subject to the provision of acceptable collateral. Statements were made by taxi owners and traffic officials that Toyota actually facilitated the loan scheme for Africans through negotiations with the government of the 1980s because they considered South Africa to be one of the most lucrative markets in the world for their minibus. This allegedly was a

condition upon which Toyota, a major employer and supplier of vehicles, would remain in South Africa. But, in an interview with the regional general manager of the company, there was an absolute denial of these claims[8].

In the course of fieldwork an interesting discussion took place with a White traffic official on the rise of the African taxi industry. His view was that

"The majority of taxis that operate in KwaZulu-Natal actually belong to Indian taxi owners. The Indians have been the first to run taxis in Durban, and now they have got into the Black market. Most of them use Africans as fronts for their businesses and make them sleeping partners. They buy the vehicle on the African partner's name and then pay them a pittance. That's why you see them driving so badly on the roads and overloading so much. The more they overload the more money they make for themselves. And the faster they drive on the roads the more loads they do for the day. So all the extra loads they do are for them. The owner of the vehicle just tell them to do "x" number of loads for the day and they want so much of money for the day. But they can't stop them from doing the extra loads because they can't control this. So the taxi driver makes more money at the end of the day. That's why I think that the state should control the taxi services. In this way we will be able to keep a proper check on who's running the taxis and make sure that everybody has licences for their taxis. Too many people just buy a combi and run a service anywhere they please. Because the Indians got more money so they buy better taxis and steal away the customers from the Africans with not so nice taxis! This is what causes the violence among the taxi people."

The above quotation is an interesting example of a racially based depiction of South Africa's Indian population. The respective traffic official was a former member of the notorious South African Police Force (now South African Police Services). Their training was based rigidly along racial lines and was aimed to ensure the perpetuation of White minority rule. Intrinsic to such an ideology was an indoctrination process that made law and order officials believe in condescending generalisations of other racial categories. This was an important factor in sustaining White hegemony during apartheid. Hence the generalisations with which the traffic official spoke was not surprising, although it spurred on further investigation into the nature of the taxi industry.

There is an element of truth in the allegation that Indians are capitalising on the African transport routes. For instance, in at least three instances information did unfold to the effect that Indians were heavily involved in transporting Africans from the townships into central Durban and elsewhere. A major question that was raised in this situation was: *How do people with such deep historical mistrusts invest such huge amounts of money in an industry that could easily fail?* The Indian taxi owners allegedly have an innovative way of dealing with the situation. In all three cases, where information could only possibly be

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[8] Interview, 9 April 1999.

gained from secondary sources, Indian investors signed a formal agreement with African individuals to let them own the taxis outright after five years if they could do the following:

- bring in for instance one thousand rands per week,
- service the taxi regularly at their own expense, and
- print their own names on the driver's door to create the impression that it is the taxi drivers's vehicle.

This scheme has apparently paid substantial dividends to such owners, who persistently refused to be interviewed.

But Indian taxi owners disputed the allegation that Indians are the majority stakeholders in the taxi industry and various taxi associations, which had a membership that was either predominantly Indian or African. For instance, the statistics from two taxi associations, one Indian and one African revealed its membership as predominantly one race group or the other. Ownership of vehicles was not always a disputed factor either. The African dominated association emphatically denied that Indians were purchasing taxis for operation in African dominated routes. One official responded: *"I assure you, if this happens we will make sure that that taxi is kicked out from our association. He will never be able to run on our route because we Africans have the means to do so. We don't need Indians and Whites to come and steal our business".* The Indian taxi association on the other hand felt likewise about the routes in which they operated. But the difference was that they were unable to block the African owned taxis from participation in their areas, although a measure of control (as discussed below) has been effective.

Within all the research areas there were minibuses and the larger regular buses providing public transport. There was also a diversity of drivers from the various racial groups, predominantly Africans, Coloureds and Indians. There was no White a driver. However, their daily operations were only a semblance of coexistence. The situation was more accurately one of perennial squabbles and physical fights over rights to the municipality designated pick up and drop off points. It developed into a scenario of almost total submission by the Indian bus drivers to the African taxi operators. A number of significant changes have occurred as a result of this situation, which has shed more light on ethnic relations and perceptions of transformation.

Indian buses and African taxis

Tension among both sectors became apparent especially at bus stops, where taxi drivers felt an equal right to either pick up or drop off passengers. It had also become a frequent practice for taxi drivers to take over bus stops and bus terminals within the suburbs, exacerbating the tensions between bus owners and themselves. In busier routes and intersections the practice of taxi drivers has been to spend long periods in one spot in order to maximise their loads. This practise has been a source of tremendous annoyance to flowing traffic and a major reason for the altercations between bus and taxi drivers. Traffic either had to navigate its way very carefully through the meagre space left by poorly parked taxis or was often brought to a total halt. The public generally submissively permitted right of way to the taxis in order to avoid verbal abuse and possible physical attacks. The lawful rights of motorists were generally ignored and often the humblest of attempts to claim these rights have led to serious assaults and verbal abuse. Within the African taxi industry there has been numerous reports of rivalry between competing associations that has led to fatal attacks on one another. It had reached such an uncontrollable situation in 1998, that it led the KwaZulu-Natal Minister of Transport to a state of frustration, forcing him to publicly declare that *"If they do not want to co-operate and if they want to keep killing themselves then there is nothing the state can do about it!"*

Indian taxi and bus owners did not escape the wrath of the violence that has plagued the African taxi industry. A number of them fell victim to the greed and control that certain individuals and associations acquired after their rapid successes in the passenger transport industry. In several suburbs across Durban the experiences of the Indian taxi and bus operators revealed a situation of a virtual siege mentality. Their years of monopoly in the transport industry was being challenged, particularly by the African taxis which brought in people from the African townships into the middle and upper class Indian and White suburbs. The entry of the African taxis into the Indian areas still meant a clear racial demarcation of the passengers they served i.e. African owned taxis transported African passengers while Indian owned buses served mainly Indian passengers and to a lesser extent Africans. But the taxi service gradually extended into the Indian market, when passengers were being "pinched" from bus stops, although most Indian passengers avoided the taxis. Herein lied the seeds of a racial division between the two sectors, although the buses did not substantially lose their clientele.

A survey of Indian passengers standing at several stops produced some of the following statements about their choice of transport:

"Do you think I'm mad? I would never take one of those African taxis. In no time my watch and bag will be taken away from me! And do you know how they drive? I'm not going to be killed by those morons! They don't have any courtesy on the road."

"I'll never take those taxis. It's like a death wish! They just switch over from one lane to another on the freeway, don't ever indicate when they want to stop or when they take off. They think the road is just theirs."

"No thanks. The Indian buses are cheaper and safer, although they do tend to take a little long to reach town. We would have a perfect service if only the Indian buses would keep to time."

"I only take the taxi when I'm late for work or have to get into town faster. Otherwise I just avoid them. Even Africans avoid them, most of them prefer taking the buses. You must see the buses in the evenings – they are full with Africans."

"I have taken the taxi a few times, but they drive like maniacs! You don't feel safe the way they drive. If you complain they just tell you to get off! And you won't get any refund. That's why I rather take the bus."

While African taxis made a rapid thrust into the Indian suburbs by providing transport for mainly the African squatters and township labourers, they have also tried to usurp the market in a totally unorganised and ruthless fashion. Initially no procedures were followed to enter into a particular suburb. To many, if they had a vehicle it was license enough to enter the transport sector. Application for a license to operate in a particular area was not made by most of the operators. Numerous reports in the media attest to this situation. On 25 October 1995, the Post, a weekly newspaper targeting mainly the Indian population, titled a report in the following words: "SA's Indian driving force". An interesting description followed thereafter:

> The small but tight-knit bus industry started by Indians in the 1930s has survived apartheid, white monopolies and ferried people who were uprooted by the Group Areas Act. Now the minibus taxis, gun toting highway men and the rising price of diesel is threatening the culture of Indian owned buses.... The Indian bus, like sugar cane, curry and rice and temples, is a legacy of the 1860-indentured sugar cane labourer from India.... Mr. Pillai, also chairman of the Clairwood-Merebank Bus Owners Association, a suburban organisation representing 28 bus owners owning 66 buses, said the tradition of Indian owned buses would not die easily. 'We have inherited the culture of serving the community from our fathers and grandfathers. Operating buses is in our blood....'

On 20 March 1997, the Daily News carried the following report:

> Effingham Heights sole bus operator, Mr. Amichand Ramkissoon, has hired a security company to safeguard him in his battle against 10 pirate taxi operators. Mr. Ramkissoon, who operates four buses on the Durban-Effingham route, said

he had been the only provider of public transport until March 17 when 10 mini-bus taxis moved on to his route. "I have been threatened with violence and this is why I have hired armed security guards to protect my buses and keep these pirate operators from working my route."

A further report on 21 April 1997 sated that Mr. Ramkissoon had reduced his fare from R2.00 to R1.50 in order to lure passengers back to his service. But this had not worked either, despite the fact that the taxis were charging a fare of R2.20. His lack of success was not because commuters did not want his service, but because they were afraid of being attacked by the taxi drivers. Disappointingly, the Durban City Council was unable to provide him with any protection, in spite of the fact that he was the only licensed operator in the area. On several occasions, despite the security company, Mr. Ramkissoon's buses were forcibly stopped and offloaded at gunpoint by several taxis on several occasions to expropriate his load. This scare tactic broke his monopoly in the area but it did not scare him from his livelihood. However, in December 1997 one of Mr. Ramkissoon's buses was forcibly stopped by a car with three Africans, believed to be members of the pirate taxi association, and the driver, who was his son, was shot and killed instantly. Numerous other such episodes were related in the field, but with each one bringing in a specifically personal experience, highlighting the complexity of the problems between African taxi and Indian bus owners. Ethnographic data produced at least three similar stories in different routes, notwithstanding a range of other lesser-known cases. But the case study above serves to epitomise the situation of violent encounters that Indian bus owners have confronted in the passenger transport industry.

Several other Indian omnibus operators believed that they were still alive because they extricated themselves soon enough from the rapidly deteriorating routes they once serviced. The case study below for instance is an indication of how one omnibus owner survived possible attack against him.

Z.R., a fifty-three old omnibus operator ran a service with his late father from La Lucia into the centre of Durban for more than fifty years. The family had a monopoly for passenger transport in the suburb, which after the 1950 Group Areas Act, was declared for White residents only. But his passengers were mainly Africans who worked as domestic employees and as unskilled labourers in La Lucia's business centres. During the apartheid era Whites were not allowed to use his buses because of segregation policies. He inherited the business from his father and built upon it during the 1970s when business was thriving. From two buses he expanded to a fleet of six. Each bus began work at 04h00 and finished at 20h00 from Monday to Saturday, doing at least twelve round trips per day. At the height of their business each bus brought in between R500.00 and R800.00 per day. This lucrative route supported an extended family of at least fifteen people. Two of the buses were given to two of his brothers, both of who were married with children. All three brothers were knowledgeable about repairs and did all

their maintenance work by themselves. Up to 1993 the drivers they employed were of Indian origin. However the situation changed when circumstances demanded that they employ African drivers, but only as a tactic than out of necessity. The events that led to this situation were typical up to the time that research for this project was stopped. From August 1993, African taxis started ferrying workers into La Lucia. Several others joined in and eventually formed an association, although they were not licensed to operate in the area. From this point onwards the taxis adopted an offensive attitude towards his buses. Their modus operandi was to race in front of the buses, deliberately cut them off at the bus stops and demand that the passengers get into the taxis and not the buses. On numerous occasions accidents took place, and the reaction was to gang up and assault the Indian bus drivers and abuse them with racial slurs. This eventually led to the employment of the African bus drivers. But the same pattern of intimidation followed. At each occasion the drivers were threatened with assault and asked to warn their owner to keep out of the route. The climax to this persistent intimidation occurred when one of Z.R.'s buses was burnt and totally destroyed. He was also personally approached and threatened with violence by the taxi operators. Thereafter he decided to negotiate with the taxi association and sell all his licences to them, thereby offering to totally withdraw his services. To his surprise they agreed to negotiate and finally paid him R60 000.00 in cash for his licenses. Thereafter Z.R. and his brothers sold off their buses individually. He then purchased a luxury forty five seater luxury coach costing approximately one million rands and entered into a contract with Durban's international airport. He started a service for the tourist industry, which he claims "is less burdensome and away from the jungle behaviour of the African taxis. I am so much more comfortable now and earning enough to meet my commitments."

A similar situation prevailed in numerous other suburbs where African workers and general consumers were ferried. Another omnibus operator made a series of bizarre claims that were nonetheless confirmed by other bus owners. For instance in routes that connect to large pockets of commuters the following incidents occurred during fieldwork:

- If a fleet owner had only more than one bus, but ran only one in a particular route, then during a breakdown he was not allowed to replace the immobile bus with another from his fleet. If he did so, taxi drivers would stop the bus, unload the passengers into their taxis and issue a stern warning to the driver not to return. This happened despite the fact that the replacement of one bus by another was legal.
- Buses in the Newlands West route were being continuously harassed by taxis from neighbouring routes that were deliberately forcing buses off the road and off-loading them into their taxis when their routes were not paying off.
- Taxi drivers were forcing Indian bus owners to increase their fares because they provided "unfair competition." The limited number of passengers that minibuses carried did not make their trips feasible at the costs of bus fares. Hence the bus fares had to be adjusted in favour of the taxi fares.
- Buses in most suburbs no longer have the sole claim to bus stops. In fact, the taxis had usurped priority over such stops when the two met simultaneously at one spot.
- The taxi industry, through the use of minibuses, had increased the national fuel import bill by thirty three per cent, according to statistics released by the national Department of Transport. The Department's recommendation was to replace the minibus taxis which have a seating limit of ten, but which are overloaded to sixteen or more, with an expanded diesel powered vehicle that can seat up to twenty two passengers. But there has been opposition from the taxis because these are apparently slower, significantly more expensive to purchase than the Toyota minibus, more expensive to maintain and

will not yield the same returns because they would not do as many loads for the day. The Department's recommendation was based on figures that will save the country enormous sums of money that are lost through import bills as well as to create a safer environment for motorists.

In responding to this situation an omnibus operator retorted: *"Why do you think the Minister of Transport Mac Maharaj is resigning from his government position. The man is not even bothered to be relocated to another position in government. He knows he can't work with the African mentality that is ruling this country. He might not make a public statement about why he is resigning but this is the only conclusion I can come to. These taxis are messing up this country's roads. And if the new minister of transport is going to be an African, what is happening to education and to health in this country is going to happen to transport! There'll be no more bloody new roads after this."* The respondent in this case belonged to family with more than a sixty-year history in the transport industry. His twenty-three year old nephew was another victim of the violence against Indian bus drivers on Friday 23 January 1998. The story that is unfolded below brings out a number of issues that have laid latent since the entrenchment of the squatter camps and the spate of house burglaries, car-jackings, assaults, and murders that have taken place in the research and neighbouring areas.

On Friday 23 January 1998, at about 17h00, Sudheer Debba was completing his last load for the day and was less than half a kilometre away from his home. Three African youth attempted to board his bus to go into Central Durban, but were refused entry because it was his last load. They apparently read this as a racist gesture and found it an ideal excuse to attack him. The youth then sprinted to the next bus stop and shot him several times, killing him instantly. It was alleged that a passenger, described as "an African police reservist", took out his gun and shot at the youth to try and defend the driver. He successfully aimed at one, fatally wounding him. The other two, realising that if their injured colleague remained on the road much longer, he could capitulate and reveal their identities. They therefore dragged him to the nearby squatter camp and abandoned him in a shack, but against the occupant's will, and fled. Realising the legal problems of housing a fugitive, it placed the respective squatter in a difficult position, especially since she was allegedly warned by the two youth that submission to the police would endanger her life. In the meanwhile the abandoned fugitive was bleeding profusely and did not receive any medical attention for more than three hours. By that time the Indian residents had gathered around the bus and the body of the driver, trying to reconstruct the events that led to the shooting. Tempers began to flare when the passengers recollected the events of that afternoon to the family, friends and district people. The ambulance from the roadside only at 19h35 i.e. removed the body of the driver more than two and half-hours later. This long wait built up a level of reaction and solidarity from the Indian residents that brought them into a state of virtual readiness to engage in an ethnic war. Many came armed with guns, and a range of other lethal weapons, ready to extricate the alleged bleeding culprit from the respective shack, because by then they had all learnt about his whereabouts. But it was the army that controlled the situation, after the police had failed to do so. A number of altercations took place during those highly charged moments. First, it occurred between Indian policemen and the Indian residents who, as

one stated, "wanted to impose the death penalty on the bastard because the courts are likely to set him free soon after he is jailed." Second, it occurred between the African and Indian policemen, when the latter was charged by the former for being too soft on the mood of the Indians. The army was therefore forced to intervene. At the point that the army sought to remove the alleged culprit to an awaiting ambulance, the Indian residents tried to fight their way through their cordon that surrounded it. They managed to break through and apparently almost toppled the vehicle over. When the threat of teargas and more stern action from the army became apparent, the situation calmed down swiftly and the ambulance sped off. From this point onwards for at least another week, there was a conspicuous reduction of African squatters walking the streets of Clare Road, especially at night.

The solidarity that this event generated among the Indian residents was visibly binding and showed an urge as one resident stated: *"...to fight back in a way that will teach the squatters a lesson. They think we are afraid of them because they are in the majority. But this time we are going fight, because we are tired of passively sitting back and letting them rob and murder us like this."* For at least three weeks there was a vigilante group that operated on an informal basis until midnight. Letters were also written to the state president and the minister of police about the incident, the rampant crime and the links it had to the squatter camps within and in the neighbouring suburbs. The victim's family to discuss the above issues called a special public meeting, but it was poorly attended. However, these were no better than knee-jerk responses to a much wider and more endemic problem. At least a month after the incident an important symbolic event was carried out by Sudheer Debba's family. It was an occasion that provided an opportunity to note down symbolic gestures from the Indian neighbourhood, the content of their conversations and its implied meanings. The event was particularly useful to observe Indian-African relations in a solemn but tense atmosphere, and to engage in an analysis of what was done and spoken in that time.

On Sunday 22 February 1998, the parents of Sudheer Debba held a special memorial in a very unique way. They applied to the traffic department for permission to cordon off the road on two sides of the place where their son was shot, between 17h00 and 18h15, thereby stopping the traffic from both sides. The purpose was to have a hawaan (fire ritual) on the spot where the shooting occurred, in order to redeem his soul from his untimely death and to give his parents peace of mind that the appropriate rituals were carried out for him. The extended family, friends and the entire neighbourhood attended the event. At least three officially marked police vehicles, attended by Indian policemen only, were present. It was a noticeably solemn occasion marked by sporadic racial remarks of the senseless killing, and despite a light persistent rainfall people stood by in solidarity with the family until the end of the prayer. Africans from the neighbouring squatter camp also stood by and watched with curiosity. After the prayer all the bystanders, including Africans, were offered prasadam (ritual edible offerings). Many among the latter refused to accept it, while others asked questions about meaning of the event and the offerings and openly showed their remorse at the murder. While the prayer was in progress, a regular Sunday meeting was taking place within the squatter camp,

from where snippets of the discussion was carried over to the prayer gathering through its public address system. In response to the meeting a bystander, standing with a small group, remarked: "They are saying to the people in the meeting that because of criminals in the camp, all are being branded in the same way. They are going to try and sort out all the criminals they know and kick them out of the area." Another replied: "Ya, but these bastards got no mercy on us. They'll say they are going to do it, but nothing will happen. The stealing and everything else will continue as before. You know on that Friday night how I nearly fuck the cops up! If we only got hold of that bastard who shot that 'lightie' we should have killed him straightaway, and the Africans should dare to do a fuckin' thing about it! We were ready. They were lucky to have the army there. Let me tell you something, we can finish this place up in one night. Some of us should just get together and start burning down all the shacks from one side and take our revenge! We can do it!" This racially loaded remark was met by a sobering response from the victim's forty three-year unmarried uncle: "No, that kind of behaviour will just make things worse. You'll never enjoy killing people and destroying their things. But my spirit is broken now. I got fuck all else to live for in this country. We bought the bus for Sudheer because work was so difficult to get and we wanted to carry on our family tradition. Every weekend I used to work on his bus with him and teach him the things he didn't know. But now what's the use? I got nothing else to live for in this country – I think I'm gonna leave. My sister in Texas is calling us. My other sister's papers are already processed. But she is worried about missing her daughter and grandchildren – so she's not sure if she wants to leave this horrible country. Can you think about what pain my sister in the U.S.A. is going through right now, since she can't be with us?" Another of the bystanders contributed by saying: "I had to sell my house in Newlands, because only Africans are buying there now. Everyday clothes are being stolen from the line and every night somebody's car is either broken into or stolen. We couldn't take it anymore. I'm lucky to get my price for my house."

The situation depicted above demonstrated a sense of helplessness among the Indian bystanders. While one was affected by continuous cases of theft in his previous area of residence, others such as the bus owners felt stifled by continuous attacks against them. But not all cases of public transport providers among Indians had fell victim to African chauvinism. Some had worked quite ingeniously to protect their routes. The difference however was not to continue their services with buses, but instead with taxis. A ploy for their survival has been to form a taxi association and to include a few African owners for good purpose, as the case study below illustrates.

R.R., chairman of a predominantly Indian taxi association servicing a predominantly Indian suburb, once owned three buses that worked very profitably for him. By the end of 1994 he was forced to sell them off because of continuous harassment by African taxi drivers. Towards mid-1995, in his desperation to think of alternative means of self-employment, he decided to join several other Indians who were already in the taxi business and to whom he was known. He believed at this stage that big buses are intimidating to smaller vehicles such as minibus taxis because of their bigger capacities to load. At the age of 48 years, he did not deem himself employable by any type of organisation, and neither was he inclined to because he was self-employed throughout his life. However, African taxis once again began interference in their routes, and it only stopped after a shoot-out which left one African driver dead. A truce was called and was facilitated and monitored by the local police. However, they immediately formed an

association and limited the number of taxis in the area to those who were already operating in it. An exception was made for tactical reasons and they embarked on recruitment of two African taxi owners, who were well respected in the business, especially for the respect they commanded among other African drivers. The condition under which they were allowed to operate in their route was to act as spokespersons and negotiators during times of disagreements with other African taxi associations, while he and other Indian colleagues undertook to deal with other Indian associations during times of dispute. It also helped to create a semblance of multi-racialism within their association. In this way they were able to minimise the racial overtones of disagreements and succeeded in dealing with conflict resolutions in a positive manner. R.R. was happy that their approach was a workable and a safe and sensitive method of surviving in a hostile environment – judged especially by the success with which disputes were handled.

The responses demonstrated by The Indian taxi owners in the illustration above reflects a unique approach in dealing with a situation that requires racial sensitivity. There was a marked reduction in taxi pirating by other taxi operators when the association acquired legal status and were allowed to limit the number of operators in their route. The inclusion of the two African taxi owners played a significant role in reducing the existence of perpetual racial mistrust between Indian and African taxi operators. However expedient it might have been by the Indian drivers, the co-option of the African taxi owners was nevertheless an important stabilising mechanism in an area that could have threatened public transport provision, especially for Indians, if African taxi operators monopolised it. The views of Indian commuters, as illustrated above, are generally conservative and are based on perceptions that have been shaped by the predominance of bad driving, immoral behaviour and violence, particularly in the African taxi industry. Most Indian taxi owners are known to the suburban residents and therefore have a different measure of faith in their service. It has also been a tendency of the Indian taxi drivers to either drive the taxis themselves, employ family members or hire Indian drivers, especially for the sake of appealing to Indian commuters.

Residents, buses and taxis

The impact of the taxi service in the Indian suburban areas, particularly in Clare Estate and to a lesser extent in Reservoir Hills, not only affected the commuter at the bus stop but also numerous residents at their homes. When the African taxis first made their entry into these suburbs at about mid-1993, residents and bus operators were already making their discomfort about them known, but only informally. The early days of this service were restricted to the African squatters and were not frequent. By mid-1994, after the April 27 general election, their frequency into these areas increased rapidly. Their appearances in the areas started from humble beginnings of dignifying traffic regulations, avoiding stopping at

bus stops and loading or off-loading the squatters as close to their shacks as possible. But this pattern was radically changed when the big numbers in which they operated appeared to give them a boost in confidence and they started ignoring the normal road courtesies. Any place, including bus stops and in front of houses, were good enough for them to carry on their trade, and any time was good enough to take-off, without the requirement of indicating.

Apart from the dangers that this pattern of driving introduced into these generally quiet and placid suburbs, a number of houses with accommodating driveways, were turned into convenient drop-off and pick-up points for the taxis. The affected residents were too petrified to either legally or personally challenge this practice, for fear of being attacked by the taxi drivers or their passengers. The rise in burglaries from homes and vehicles, motor car thefts and car-jackings from within people's properties, were linked by the residents to the entry of the African taxi service into their areas. After hearing the comment several times and listening to frequent reference to a small off-road from Clare Estate's main road, in which residents claimed that they were under greater siege than other residents in neighbouring roads, an examination into these claims were subsequently made. There were twenty houses on both sides of the road, which ended as a *cul de sac*. From among these houses, within a space of five months – between April and July in 1997, four people were car-jacked in their driveways, three cars were stolen from the properties and five houses were burgled. Car-jackings occur when the owners or drivers of vehicles are confronted by armed thieves and are asked to either hand over the keys of the vehicle or are asked to drive away with them. They are later either dropped off at a "safe spot" or even murdered, although this did not happen to any of the interviewees family members. From the four car-jackings, two of the owners were driven away with the thieves. In the third case the owner was taken into his house, beaten and gagged, while in the fourth case the person was hit unconscious and left lying in the garage. He was found by his wife more than an hour later, who rushed him to hospital, where he was kept for two nights. The two who were driven away during the incidents were left in the African townships of Umlazi and Kwa-Mashu respectively, but were unharmed. All three cars that were stolen occurred at night when the residents were asleep. Two of them who had dogs claimed that the thieves had ingenious ways of dealing with them. For instance, in one case a bitch was allegedly brought to quieten their dog while the car was being stolen, while in the other case large chunks of meat were found in the yard, containing substances that put their two dogs off to sleep. Of the five houses that were burgled, two occurred during the evening between 19h00 and

20h30. One house belonged to a panel beater and the other belonged to an affluent business family. In the former case, an ailing eighty six-year old bed ridden woman was taunted and abused by the thieves by pulling her hair, as well as that of the children of the house. The thieves threatened to do worse if they did not get cash and a gun. The owner of the house did not own a gun, but had six hundred rands, which he gave to them. Only after pleading to the thieves for about twenty minutes, were they left alone. In the second incident the house was attacked by four armed men, one with an AK 47 Rifle. The most senior person of the house was beaten with the gun and actually led to his safe. The thieves instructed him to open and empty it. As a businessman he was ready for such an eventuality. He therefore loaded the safe with imitation jewellery, one thousand rands in cash and several thousand fake U.S. dollars. The hold-up lasted for a maximum of seven minutes. The family strongly suspected a maid employed by them who recently left work.

All of the victims were Indians, and in all the cases besides the car thefts and burglaries that occurred late at night and where those responsible were not seen, the residents identified the culprits as Africans. Hence the responses from the interviewees was produced as a "them and us syndrome." Their articulation of crime in the area was embedded in racial terms because it was the only way they could see it. The trauma that two women and four children suffered in three separate incidents was still visible at the time of interviews. All of them were sedated after the incidents and had taken medication for several days before they were able to calm down. None of the cars and other property that were stolen was recovered and no arrests were made for any of these incidents. In every interview, major blame was apportioned to the taxis and the kind of people they carried. One response, in a sense, covers the variations of what was said about taxis and crime in eleven interviews that were done in the small road: *"The taxis are the cause of all the problems we have been experiencing recently. The people from the squatter camp line up here in the mornings and to a lesser extent during the day. Since there are such large numbers that stand there, when the taxis come their assistants have enough time to view our houses. They stop and U-turn on the blind-rise and just don't care about the risks. I've seen one once eyeing my house, he didn't see me noticing him. He then spoke to his friend standing outside the taxi while it was loading and pointed to my house. A couple of days later I was held up in my driveway and dropped off in Umlazi. Another taxi guy gave me a lift from there. Worse could have happened to me there. This was a quiet peaceful road and I am one of the oldest residents here. Even when there were only a few houses in this road these things*

never happened. Since the taxis started loading here these problems started. When they stop coming here we'll be in peace again."

The statement above was made by an interviewee whose house was one door away from the corner house that was situated at the intersection of the two roads. The spot was a dangerous blind-rise where numerous accidents occurred. There was no officially marked bus stop at this point because of the potential for accidents. In each of the responses, there was an expressed feeling of no confidence in post-apartheid South Africa. Apart from the crime levels and associated insecurity, the respondents generally felt that the country was seriously lacking in leadership and economic direction. All of the respondents felt a level of violation of their rights that engendered a high degree of rage amongst them and a feeling of resignation to lawlessness in a situation where the police force is deemed ineffective. One respondent claimed: *"The cop had the bloody nerve to tell me that 'You are just another statistic now! To find your car would be impossible'."* The frustration, helplessness, a quest for vengeance and the thoughts of any place away from South Africa where there is peace and security, is what characterised most cases.

Conclusion

Public transport that was provided by individual entrepreneurs in Durban's "non-white" suburbs, has been historically associated with Indians. Many who have been in the industry for decades have grown to view passenger transport provision in racial terms. The information above shows that since the earliest days of entering the market, the only competitor and obstacle to Indian bus services was the Durban City Council and the unprofitable bus service it ran for many years in White designated suburbs. The City Council's persistent attempts to oust Indian bus operators from the city's roads were also emulated by other Councils in the province. Their failure to achieve this lay in the route that they chose i.e. through court action. The bus owners' support from its commuters and the strong arguments that they evinced in their legal defences to remain as service providers generally won their battles against White chauvinism since 1919, filtering into the decade of the 1980s.

But the situation was radically altered by the emergence of the African taxi industry. Since the early 1990s Indian bus owners were facing a totally different kind of threat to their services, in the rising taxi industry. Unlike their White counterparts, African taxi owners forcibly claimed a stake in the transport industry. Their strength lied in their numbers and

the ruthless way in which they usurped numerous routes, which were once dominated by Indian omnibus owners. They appeared to be capitalising on the undeclared motto of it being an age of African empowerment and entitlement. But to conclude that the forced entry of African taxis into Indian dominated bus routes was based on racism alone would be too simplistic. It would be equally problematic to suggest that this process was solely economic in that the transport sector of the region's economy provided the easiest route to facilitate African financial empowerment. The reasons are complex and would certainly include both racial and economic factors. A major factor in the transport industry is the continuous demarcation of routes along racial lines. Although there is an historical basis to this, mixed associations like the illustration given above where two African taxi owners were included in an Indian dominated association, could help to regulate, if not obliterate racially skewed perceptions of transport provision in South Africa. Such experiments, which aim to mix executive committees on racial terms and aim to protect certain sectors without room for monopolies and regulate the transport industry in more disciplined ways, could produce different perceptions of and responses to transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

The residents exposure to crime not only came from the taxis that ran in their areas, but it also emanated from the neighbouring squatter camp, as well as unemployed individuals who idly walked through the areas with the intention of stealing. The role that transport has played shaping the perceptions of and responses to transformation in South Africa, is an enormous one and would require substantively more research to address the issue.

CHAPTER NINE

Finding a new school in post-apartheid South Africa

Introduction

In response to the questions on positive and negative issues that interviewees felt were prominent after the general election in April 1994, the state of education was one of the most frequently cited problems in post-apartheid South Africa. Even on the question of positive changes respondents often diverted their answers to the negative issues such as health, the virtual paralysis of the law and order apparatus and most frequently on the issue of education. This chapter will deal with one of these issues i.e. education. Most respondents were despondent about the nature and rapid pace of transformation that was occurring in education. Their views were generally highly critical of both the national and regional ministries of education. Several of the central concerns were

- The premature retirement of teachers, especially from previously Indian schools, that the departments were imposing. The main objection to this was that the most qualified and experienced teachers were opting for the attractive packages that the state was offering. Its purpose, as many believed, was to replace Indian teaching staff with Africans in a situation of forced integration. The costs of these packages were also phenomenal and a major mistake, which both departments eventually acknowledged.
- Admission of African pupils into Indian schools from the neighboring squatter camps and African townships. The problem with this was that they were not fluent in English, thereby stifling progress in the classroom of better prepared Indian children. Many were also travelling long distances in arriving at school after it began.
- Lack of decisiveness from the regional and national ministries of education – especially in provision of adequate numbers of teachers, lack of funds for proper maintenance of the schools, and undercutting overall budgets for school facilities.
- Accusations of corruption within official circles and the lack of a proper conceptual focus on educational policies.
- A general breakdown in morale and commitment within the educational fraternity, both regionally and nationally.
- Lack of discipline among school pupils and the inability of teachers to effect meaningful disciplinary measures against unruly pupils because of the abolishment of corporal punishment.

On numerous occasions the issue of the educational system during apartheid was recalled with nostalgia. In one instance the spouse of a leading teacher activist who died in 1996, recalled her husband's warning to many to the future generations of Indians in South Africa. She stated: "Just before his death, my husband started taking a different view of education in the future South Africa. From what he saw was happening in education, I have heard him say to many friends who visited him or whom spoke to him over the telephone, that while they fought hard against apartheid education, it is unfortunately going to be worse in the new South Africa. He acknowledged that what we used to have under the Department of Indian Affairs is going to outshine what the ANC has to offer."

Likewise, there was continuous reference to the history of Indian education and the trials and tribulations that it underwent since its formative years in South Africa. Older, retired teachers, whose contribution to primary and secondary education was offered under different political, economic and social conditions, painfully remembered the issue. In numerous instances interviewees expressed a strong desire to have their histories in education recognized by the state, in order to be party to the pace of transition in education.

The history of Indian education

There has been a strong tendency by the interviewees to see Indian education in South Africa as being started Indian pioneers alone. There was a passion with which many tended to argue about achievements among Indian students and the humble backgrounds from which many came. Words to the effect: "We Indians started our own education ourselves" and "We built our own schools....", was often expressed in anger about their perceptions of the contemporary state of education and past accomplishments, especially in view of the high premium that Indians placed on education. Palmer (1957: 165) reported that the government was very slow in erecting schools for Indians. In 1954-5 90% of Indian schools were government aided, with major expenses borne by the Indian community. In 1951, the Natal Indian Teachers Society undertook to raise 150 000 pounds, with 25 000 pounds contributed by themselves. Out of 1500 teachers, 1000 Indian teachers agreed to a levy of 6% of their salary for one year, with the option of contributing it over two or three years.

But this called into question the actual origins of the provision of Indian schools in the colony of Natal. There are various reports of how this actually began, although the real situation is one that has been initiated and sustained by Whites, not too long after the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers in 1860. The first attempt to set up a school was made by Father Sabou, from the Church of South Africa in 1863. But his first application for funds from the colonial authorities was turned down. Father Sabou persisted in his efforts to provide education for Indian children and subsequently opened a private school in 1867 with thirty pupils. In the same year this was followed by Reverend Ralph Stott from the Wesleyan Mission, who established two schools, one a day school and the other an evening school. Their efforts were eventually rewarded when the colonial government demonstrated their recognition for the schools by granting each of them twenty-five pounds to support their efforts. Soon after, schools were established by other missionaries and well-meaning colonists in Umkomanzi, Sea Cow Lake, and Umzinto[1].

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[1] Dr. R. Rambiritch, "A Brief Review of Indian Education: 1860-1960".

Although the efforts to provide schooling facilities had spread, it was only out of goodwill among individuals and in some cases it was a subtle attempt in order to get them to read the Bible and to convert Indians to Christianity. There was no official attempt to provide schooling for Indian children. At that time the primary aim was to provide labour for the sugar estates and in other areas where it was required, such as in the railways and coal mines. In 1877, the Protector of Indian Immigrants declared:

> No systematic effort has even yet been made for the education of the children of the Indian immigrants of the colony.... And I am inclined to think that more satisfactory results will be achieved by this means than would be likely to attend any missionary effort in the same field, and that the whole resources at the disposal of the government for this purpose should be directed to the support of its own student schools[2].

This well-intentioned statement did not have the impact that the Protector intended it to have. There was an increased rise in anti-Indianism by Whites during this period and the special provisions set out by Law 20 of 1878 to cater for the suggestions of the Protector, turned out to be inferior and minimum provisions. It perpetuated the disparity in education with what was then provided for the European community. However, a degree of expansion did take place soon after. The two schools that were started by the colonial authorities in 1879 increased to twenty-six in 1894[3]. But education, up to that stage, was only offered up to standard four (six years of primary schooling). In the same year the Indian Immigrant School Board was abolished and replaced by the then Department of Education. Through this structure there was more consistent and organised efforts to address the issue of schooling for Indian children. The first time secondary education was offered to Indian children was in 1899. Thereafter, a number of other schools were set up to meet the needs of the offsprings of the growing indentured population. In 1909 the Natal Government appointed an Education Commission which recommended that "in districts in which this class of our population is most congested Government primary schools should be established."[4] After much agitation by South African Indians and the Government of India against anti-Indian behaviour, the famous 1927 Cape Town Agreement that was concluded between the Union Government and the Government of India. They agreed in principal, *inter alia*, that ".... In the provision of education and other facilities, the considerable number of Indians who will remain part of the permanent population, would not be allowed to lag behind other sections of the community."[5] Numerous historical reports, including those referenced below, have illustrated generally positive responses from Indian

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[2] The Natal Mercury, Indian Educational Supplement, Tuesday, September 28, 1965.
[3] Somarsundaram Cooppan (1948) "A summary of the Education of the Indian in Natal, 1860-1947".
[4] The Natal Mercury Indian Education Supplement, Tuesday, September 28, 1965.

parents in the advantage they took of the opportunities in schooling for their children. Although statistics show that girls attended schools in smaller numbers in the formative years of Indian schooling, contemporary data reveals that the present situation has reached gender equality, and in numerous other cases the situation with the female component is much higher than the male component.

From these humble beginnings and the successes and achievements that were witnessed in the history of Indian education, there has been numerous tributes paid to the Indian population for them. For instance, an inspector by the name of Mr. C.T. Loram felt compelled to place on public record his observations:

> **Whatever view may be held as to the desirability of educating these people, it is impossible not to admire the efforts of the Indian teachers towards self-improvement, both in general and professional knowledge.** *(ibid – Natal Mercury Supplement).*

Writing for the same edition, the Administrator of Natal, Mr. T.J.A. Gerdener, said in the opening of his tribute:

> **There is no gainsaying the fact that the most important single reason for the progress made by Indian South Africans over the past decade should be sought in the tremendous importance which they as a group attach to the education of their children.**

It was in comments such as the above that many respondents appeared to have forgotten the role and accomplishments of the missionaries and the colonial authorities in Indian education. Their focus was essentially on two issues. First, they paid more attention to schools that were started in the earlier part of the twentieth century by affluent community spirited Indians. These schools were later assisted by the state and referred to as "state-aided" schools. Second, influenced by the concept of state-aided schools, they paid selective attention to what was achieved under trying circumstances and with minimal domestic resources among many Indian families. It was from this early period of perseverance and fortitude among poorly equipped children and grandchildren of indentured labourers that a formidable educated Indian middle class emerged in the decades that followed. As the years went by there was an equal amount of progress with the educational levels towards which Indian children were aspiring. Teaching was widely considered as a high status job in the Indian population until the early 1980s. Any person aspiring towards becoming a teacher was often instantaneously bestowed with respect and admiration within the community. It was well a protected job offered by the state, with attractive benefits and

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[5] *Ibid.*

all those who qualified with teaching degrees or diplomas were guaranteed employment – but in Indian schools only. This privilege has come to a virtual halt as transformation in education begins to tackle the mammoth task of undoing the four decades of prejudice during the apartheid era. The initial attempts after the general election in April 1994 has set the government out on a road of continuous confrontations with the educational fraternity at large and consistent outcries of no confidence from the public in their strategies to restructure education.

The present state of schools in three areas

To understand the contemporary situation in the once Indian dominated schools in predominantly Indian suburbs, first requires an insight into some of the contemporary problems that have affected education throughout South Africa since the 1994 general election. The bumpy road of educational transformation in the country led to several significant decisions by the Ministry of Education that has paved the way for radical changes to take place. In order to level the fields among the four designated racial groups viz. White, Indian, Coloured and African, the state has been forced into a situation of extreme difficulty in reworking the budget for this important aspect. In simple terms, those population categories that were previously privileged with better funding and facilities, especially Whites, and to a lesser extent Coloureds and Indians, were no longer going to enjoy the same. Priority, and rightly so, had to be redirected to the most disadvantaged segment in the country i.e. towards Africans. South Africa's expenditure on the education budget is deemed to be one of the highest in Africa, comprising a significant proportion of the country's total annual budget. Despite this, the task of repairing past damages, incurred during apartheid, have proved to be more difficult than initially anticipated. This is because of a wide range of problems, especially, as identified by the interviewees,

- the ANC's inexperience in government and their forced reliance upon administrators who still had solidarity with the previous apartheid government,
- pilfering and mismanagement of funds and resources by ANC inclined and other African government officials,
- a widespread lack of accountability, as seen for instance, in the construction of a new school in Ulundi which cost thirty three million rands and which was commissioned by the Inkhata Freedom Party appointed Minister of Education in KwaZulu-Natal, and
- ill-conceived policies such as retrenchments, redeployments and affirmative action that have had a major negative impact on education throughout the country.

These aspects are the major points of concern to education upliftment and stabilisation in the entire educational fraternity in the country.

Ill-conceived policies have been identified by many of the respondents, critics of education policies and the media, offering severance packages to the most experienced and productive teachers in KwaZulu-Natal, forced redeployment of teachers to rural areas and African townships, and forced integration of schools. Each of these issues has contributed to a situation of uncertainty, insecurity and unhappiness in the education fraternity at large. Several hundred teachers, especially Indians with proven experience, had accepted the severance packages because it was so attractive. But the idea backfired, although the state could not rescind it decision because of the legalities that were involved. It was common to hear teachers who were interviewed express dissatisfaction with almost every aspect that they chose to discuss about the confusion in education and how they are linked with the perceptions of deteriorating conditions in the country. Integration was proving to be a particularly difficult issue to handle. One teacher once exclaimed, when asked what she thought of the new changes in education:

> *Asking me about school is like asking me about the conditions in the country. We try so hard to teach the children in this school and it is simply not appreciated. Now we have 80% African pupils in our school, which was once an all-Indian school. We were looking forward to teaching African pupils in the '80s when we tried to defy apartheid and had this utopian idea that integration is the best way to solve apartheid's discriminatory policies. But the reality now is different. Most of the African students in the classes are way over age. So the Indian pupils who have kept up their education over the years and passed are just snowed under and bullied by the bigger African pupils...One day in one of my lessons two Black boys went to the back of the class, sat on the trestle and kept kicking the students in front of them. After telling them several times to stop it, I just got fed up and walked out of the class. This is just a mild incident in comparison with other incidents that have taken place in the school.*

Another teacher from the same school stated:

> *You know yesterday I gave a test to one of my classes. One girl wanted the answers to the questions from the boy sitting next to her because she didn't learn. When he kept refusing, she got up and punched him in the nose, then kicked and slapped him! She was so big size the poor boy couldn't do anything, and I was too frightened to get in between! There is such a lack of discipline in this school that you may never believe the problems we go through. I have taught Indian pupils for more than twenty years and I have never come across something like this. The problem is that these students come from broken homes and the townships where they live there is only violence. So the kind of dedication that Indian students have to their work is different from the Africans. If it carries on like this I will have to give it up.*

In another school where the demography had changed from being entirely Indian to 40% African, a teacher remarked:

Indian and African students just do not get along in this school. They form gangs and we know they are armed and ready to fight with each other. The biggest problems we experienced since this school was integrated was the interference of Indian girls by African boys, and in between lectures they just take their own time to walk from one class to another. At least ten minutes are lost in each period, because it is fun for them to taunt the teachers by walking slowly and taking their own time. Now we can't discipline the Indian students anymore because they just ask us "What about them?". They know we are powerless now because we can't punish them anymore.

The problems expressed in these statements are rooted in the rapid pace of integration that has taken place in South African schools. In the Greater Durban Region Indian schools were flooded by an influx of African pupils from the neighbouring townships and squatter settlements. Many African pupils have been reported travelling up to thirty kilometers by bus in the mornings, leaving home at a 06h00 to reach their schools by 07h30. But very often they do not make it in time. Other children from the squatter settlements often attend school poorly fed, without lunches and not in the cleanest condition, because of the lack of water in their places of residence. But it was evident that most African children were trying to appear neatly attired when they went to school, although their performances showed out glaring class differences between themselves and their Indian counterparts. Within a period of two years, most schools in the suburbs of Clare Estate, Overport, Reservoir Hills and Asherville have transformed from being entirely Indian. The table below indicates the number of pupils by race in eleven schools in April 1999. The odd school in the table is Rippon Primary, which was during apartheid an all-Coloured school. The purpose of including it was to illustrate the meager shift of Indian children to such a school as opposed to the major shift to formerly all-White schools.

Table 9.1, illustrating pupil population by race category in 11 schools in three suburbs viz. Clare Estate, Reservoir Hills and Asherville, 1999. The first and second figures in each column represent boys and girls respectively.

School	Indians	Africans	Coloreds	Whites	Fees
Palmiet Primary	75;73	224;198	8;3	0;0	R275.00
Clareville	19; 12;	131;112	O;1	0;0	R100.00
Resmount Primary	98;127	160;170	2;4	0;0	R300.00
Hillview Primary	45;29	88;137;10	0;2	0;0	R300.00
Clayton Primary	195;194	182;153	5;9 (14)	0;0	R300.00
S.M. Jhavary Primary	211;207	69;55	16;4	0;0	R300.00
*Rippon Primary	4;7; 31	279;331	176;162	0;0	R200.00
Centenary Secondary	469;371	45;70	9;4	0;0	R400.0
Reservoir Hills High	393;358;	68;82	9;9	0;0	R685.00
**A.D. Lazarus Secondary	800	300	0	0;0	R300.00
Burnwood High	318;305	266;210	25;22	1;0	R476.00

It is clear from the table above that radical changes have taken place in schools that were once forbidden to enroll children who were not officially classified as Indian/Asiatic. Only one of the Indian schools i.e. Palmiet Primary, had an African teacher. The others were still entirely staffed by Indians. In all of the schools the African pupil enrollment increased significantly. Most of them were either from the squatter camps that were situated within the respective suburbs or not resident in the suburb at all. The statistics above provide a stark contrast with the figures that were produced from the earlier records in education that was available to the Indian population. In 1894, the estimated number of school going children in the Greater Durban Region was approximately 10 000. But the total attendance at schools was recorded at 1 581, attending at least 24 schools. This provided an average of 66 pupils per school. If each of the schools in the table above have been designed for more than 500 pupils, an important question arises: *Where are all the Indian children gone to if the former all-Indian schools now have so many African pupils?* The answer to this question can be easily found in the previously all-White schools that were in the suburbs neighbouring the research areas, and even further away. Westville, designated for White residents only during apartheid, was one of the closest suburbs to the research areas, while suburbs such as La Lucia and Umhlanga Rocks were much further away.

Before the issue of a shift away to the White schools by Indians is discussed further, there is a need to first identify at least two groups here. One is the group of parents who still patronise Indian schools and the other that has shifted patronage to White schools. Those parents who kept their children in Indian schools had done so for at least one of the following reasons:

1. The school fees in the White schools were too high.
2. Difficulties in transporting children to far away White schools, which added to the cost of travelling.
3. The Indian schools close by were convenient and offered a reliable education.
4. Trust in the Indian teachers to enforce discipline and teach with the passion of the past when Indian schools were noted for the control they enforced on student behaviour.
5. Did not really know the difference between White and Indian schools, and were relatively unaffected by it.

6. The need for their children to have exposure to African children, since this will be the future with which Indians will have to adapt.

Individuals who were in the minority among the interviewees made the last two points. Eight parents, all of who were renting either in outhouses or in part of a larger house, were of humble backgrounds with little education themselves. Their occupations were mainly in low-paid employment such as in factories, the municipality, and casual labour in places like shops and service stations. They were neither politically alert nor articulate in the changes that were taking place around them, although they appeared to be generally antagonistic and afraid of the reality of having an African dominated government. It was also apparent that the children were not receiving the guidance and stimulation in their education that their better-off counterparts were receiving. While parents hoped for better performances from their school going children, the effect of their poor means and limited aspirations – conditioned by their own lack of education - appeared unlikely to urge them on into academic or professional careers. Their own lack of self-confidence in a sense contributes towards the reproduction of a lower educated under-class segment.

To seven of the eight, the future was frightening and the prospects for their improvement appeared to be nil because of this reason. Their perceptions were based on sources of information that were derived mainly from what they were hearing from their employers and others with whom they spoke or overheard. Only one of the eight was positive in the sense that he had a light hearted attitude and had no inhibitions about who he or his family associated with. To him *"We are all one, we are all human. We must live together."* On the other hand, the protagonists of the last numbered reason noted above were on the opposite end of the group. They were twenty-three among the total number of interviewees who were within the range of middle-class households, from professions such as teaching, lecturing, working in banks and the police force and other white collar jobs. All of them had given confident and optimistic answers about the schools to which they sent their children. Their responses were articulate and reflective of a segment that was prepared to accept the country and its government for what it was. To them the problems were easy to understand and accept and ought to be seen in the light of a painful period of transition from a race based society to a fully democratic and non-racial one. They firmly believed that the schools that their children were attending were preparing them for the unfolding democracy and equal opportunities that will eventually dawn upon the entire country. Their optimism was in sharp contrast to the majority of interviewees, especially those who sent their children to White schools.

The table alludes to an earlier point that there has been a tremendous shift in school enrolments by the various population groups, with Indian parents enrolling their children in more expensive previously all-White schools, while African parents have focussed largely on the lower fee-paying previously dominated all-Indian schools. At least 60% of all the teachers who were interviewed were sending their school going children to what used to be referred to as "Model C" schools. This phenomenon was started in the early 1990s by White schools in order to protect themselves from an influx of children from other population groups before apartheid could be dismantled. Their method of controlling this influx was to substantially increase the school fees, administer special tests to children of other race groups before entry and to restrict pupils to the suburbs in which the school was located. The second phenomenon was a particularly humiliating practice for Indian children and parents to go through, although many resigned to accepting it. The common reason for this transference of Indian children was that parents perceived former Indian schools as becoming too untenable through the increased enrolment of African children. One major problem was the slow pace at which teachers felt compelled to teach – in order to keep pace with the African children whose first language was not English. Among the Indian children, English was the spoken language, which gave them an advantage over their African counterparts. Another problem emanated from the racially based perceptions that many Indian parents harboured. In this instance the issues of lack of discipline, possible violence against their children and sexual harassment of girls by African boys, were major concerns to at least thirty-seven of the interviewees who expressed concern about allowing their children to remain in Indian schools.

The problems with indiscipline in general in Indian schools have become a source of major concern to many parents. This sentiment was derived from personal experiences that were reinforced by the media that frequently reported on the extensive lack of discipline and progress by both teachers and pupils in African schools. None of the interviewees had ever been to African township schools, but had relied upon such reports alone. Others among the total number of interviewees were not as emphatic about the indiscipline and sexual harassment as the thirty-seven who are noted above. But many did allude to these problems in more indirect ways. To such interviewees it was the responsibility as parents or family to ensure that the children got a decent education, and for them that was best located in the domain of previously all-White schools.

The issue of cultural and racial diversity brought about fear and anxiety in the quality of education in their neighbouring schools and prompted parents to search for alternative institutions. Although many respondents saw their major problems as an "Indian-African dilemma", the problem was much wider than this. Intolerance and non-acceptance across the spectrum of schools have become a major problem. The inability to deal with cultural norms of different religious and ethnic groups and the insensitivity with which they were handled have led to serious misunderstandings that were construed by many as acts of racism. The media carried several reports on this problem. For instance, in two separate editions across a period of two years, two striking headings appeared in one of KwaZulu-Natal's most widely read weekend tabloids: **"Culture shock: Teachers say they are ill-equipped to cope with mixed classes"** and **"Integration at schools need greater study"**[6]. In the first report some of the things that were reported showed consistency with what interviewees were saying:

> **Teachers at former Indian schools say they are having difficulties which stem from their failure to communicate with pupils, the breakdown of discipline in classrooms and an inability to bridge the gap between teaching Indian and African pupils. Interviewed this week, school principals and teachers from Chatsworth, Isipingo, Reservoir Hills, Effingham and Phoenix, said they did not object to having mixed classes, but they felt they were ill-equipped to cope with the demands of African pupils....Parents, pupils and teachers from homogeneous groups were suddenly expected to interact with other groups....In the past there were departments with qualified counselors and guidance teachers trained to provide such services. Owing to rationalisation, the infrastructure for such services had collapsed.**

In the second report, the broader issues of cultural intolerance and problems of integration in schools that did not have large numbers of African students were covered. It focussed on the complexity of integration and the need for an infrastructure that will address the requirements as they arise. It recognised three issues that would require careful sensitive attention viz. multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious pupils, in order to deal with the ingrained racism that is so prevalent in South African schools. In 1998 a number of incidents occurred that raised public awareness and the need for these measures. At least four incidents have been recorded (Sunday Tribune 16 June 1996) where it did not have anything to do with indiscipline of African pupils, as it had to do with perceptions from people of different racial backgrounds:

- In November 1998 an Indian pupil from the famous Northwood Boys High School, previously all-White, shot and killed himself. A note that he left behind inferred that his unhappiness at school led him to do this. His father blamed it on racial

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[6] Sunday Tribune, 16 June 1996 and 6 December 1998 respectively.

intolerance at the school, although the pupil's record was not, according to the school, entirely clean.

- In October 1998 a Sotho pupil from Westville Boys High School, previously all-White, was stopped from attending school after he had shaved his head in a symbolic mourning of his grandfather's death. The school later rescinded their decision against the boy and apologised to his family.

- In September 1998 a group of Muslim pupils allegedly stabbed an Indian Christian pupil at Newcastle High School while he was practicing on the piano in the school's music room.

- Also in Newcastle in September 1998, a seventeen year old Indian pupil allegedly stabbed another Coloured colleague to death after school hours and outside the school premises. The fight was apparently started on racial grounds.

Although these issues are clearly outside the sphere of African influences, the perceptions by many respondents was these incidents still fall within the ambit of the ANC/African dominated government in South Africa since April 1994. There was a mixed set of reactions in how people expressed their disappointments since this period. While some saw the breakdown in discipline as a result of the new approaches to education, most others associated this with the new government. More intimate discussion on the issue often gave rise to more crude forms of description of the inabilities of "African governments", often by referring to the breakdown of civil societies in other parts of the African continent. Countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Mozambique were often cited as justifications for their beliefs and lack of confidence in the future of education in South Africa. Apart from these, Uganda was a particularly frequent reference in this case in that the delivery of public services virtually seized when Idi Amin took over the country and expelled all the Indians in the 1970s.

The interviewee, who drew attention to the four instances of violence above, was an ex-teacher and an activist against apartheid and within the teachers union who studied to become a lawyer. At the time that he had planned to resign from teaching, the state offered severance packages to teachers, which he immediately grasped at because it was financially more rewarding for him to resign in this manner. He had a mature understanding of political developments in South Africa and how the formulation and implementation of policies affected a minority such as Indians, especially in education. He summed up the situation in the following words:

You see for years we Indians were protected under apartheid and the Department of Indian Affairs. Throughout this period they only saw education in terms of segregated facilities and only Indian teachers teaching in Indian schools. Now the state is trying to make room for more Africans to enter into schools all over the country and for more African teachers everywhere. The policy is to integrate the staff at schools as well, which is inevitable if we want change. This is what we've been fighting for all these years. But I understand the problems of many Indians. So many children come from squatter camps who can't speak English, the best of Indian teachers and administrators have opted for the severance package, teachers are not adequately trained to effect the Education department's new policy of '2005', and say what you will, but the African teachers don't have the commitment that Indian teachers have in teaching the children. The lack of commitment in the township schools is ample demonstration of this. So there will be a lot of problems in transformation and ongoing cultural conflicts that are going to take unpleasant racial turns from time to time. We must expect this. So for those who want to remain in this country, they must start thinking positively and contribute to change. It will work.

This statement only ended in a positive note, but it tacitly acknowledges the confusion, frustration and anxiety that are so prevalent under the present system of education in South Africa. Despite the widespread drop in moral and dissipating confidence in the Education ministries, the state has refused to acknowledge these factors as emanating from their style of leadership. The responses that this project collated were significantly consistent with a survey that was conducted and published in April 1999 by an industrial psychologist, Dr. Louise Holman[7]. Her data showed that more than half of the teachers and principals who did not accept the severance packages previously offered by the state, would leave the profession if they could. She deducted from her information that levels of motivation plummeted by a staggering 37%, after establishing the five motivational factors for teachers i.e. children's behaviour, extra curricular activities, effectiveness of school leadership, no red tape and team work coupled with communication. Assessments of these factors also detected a sharp increase in violence between pupils, and disobedience coupled with decrease in honesty. The state's response was to deny validity of this report by questioning its methodology and threatened Dr. Holman with legal action if she published the report. These factors harp upon the reasons that so many parents of Indian origin are sending their children to schools outside their suburban areas, despite having schools nearby.

Looking out – White institutions as a solution for the best education

Making a choice for the schools or tertiary institutions which parents made for their children was a careful, time-consuming and often costly exercise. It was a decision that was made with a strong passion and a determination to facilitate children into fields that is not only

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[7] Independent on Saturday, 17 April 1999

secure but also which has an important element of comfort and status in it. While in retrospect, the statement in the Natal Mercury Education Supplement (September 28 1965) by the former Administrator of Natal, Mr. T.J.A. Gerdener, that Indians as a group attach tremendous importance to the education of their children, could reliably be read as a justification for segregated education, the ethnographic information certainly alluded to this factor. But the decision was not derived out of sheer racism. Recent media accounts as well have demonstrated this factor. For instance, a prominent medical doctor who wrote for the Independent on Saturday (24 April 1999) reiterated the importance that Indian parents attach to the education of their children. The article was in response to the huge bribes that Indian parents were paying to officials of the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA), for enrolment of their children. The amounts ranged from R45 000.00 to R90 000.00 per year. In response to this situation, a general practitioner was quoted as saying: "Status in the Indian community is a big issue. There is always pressure from the immediate family and relatives for the offsprings to follow in the same path as their parents, especially in the case of doctors or lawyers. Only professionals like doctors, lawyers, teachers and chartered accountants were considered to be socially acceptable in the Indian community. If you chose one of those careers, only then would you get more respect and automatically, more attention." Another doctor added: "Indian students, unfortunately, previously didn't have many successful engineers, architects, musicians or sportsmen to look up to as role models. All the successful and well-respected professionals in the community happened to be medical doctors." Most of the middle-class to more affluent households lacked the confidence of schools run by Indian staff and attended by mainly African pupils. Their confidence was not lost in the Indian teachers and principals as much as it was lost in the forced and swift integration of the schools and in the regional and national ministries of education. Their major concern, as reflected in a number of responses, was, apart from the issues noted above on indiscipline, the fear of their children lagging behind in general academic progress. This arose out of the perception that African children were not ready to cope with the standard and discipline that Indian children are used to. Formerly Indian schools, being still entirely subsidised by the state, also had larger numbers of pupils, and were seen as lacking in discipline. Formerly White schools were seen as being more disciplined and were able to keep the classes in smaller numbers, thereby affording the children better attention.

In at least 106 households of the 255 interviewees, there were children attending once all-white institutions – primary, secondary and tertiary. Schools were a particularly difficult

arena to enter into if the incumbent was from outside the suburb. A number of parents were adamant about their children not attending the district schools because they had too many African pupils. Their reasons ranged from a mixture of outright ethnocentrism to shifting their children to predominantly Indian-pupil populated schools – but which were in White areas and complimented by almost all-White staff. From the minimal information that the broader questionnaires produced on families making a choice for their children's education, an arbitrary figure of twenty households were selected to gather more information on how, why and when the decisions to send their children to the formerly all-White institutions were made. The table below illustrates some of the factors that were pertinent in collating the information to address these three questions.

Table 9.2 illustrating household number (1), number of school going children (2), distance between home and district school (3), approximate distance between home and the school/institution attended (4), the fees per child in the nearest district school/tertiary institution and average cost per child in the formerly all-White school respectively/tertiary institution (5)

1		2		3		4		5
1		3		200m		15km		R300;R3900
2		1		500m		21km		R300;R2600
3		3		700m		12km		R300;R3200
4		2		300		16		R275;R2800
5		2		1km		6km		R300;R2800
6		2		400m		9km		R300;R3600
7		1		50m		15km		R100;R4200
8		2		600m		17		R100;R2800
9		2		1km		13km		R275;R3200
10		2		400m		15km		R275;R3000
11		3		100m		15km		R300;R2900
12		2		300m		12km		R275;R2800
13		2		300m		5km		R300;R2800
14		2		700m		10km		R200;R2600
15		1		3km		17km		R8500;R9350
16		1		5km		15km		R9000;R10210
17		2		2km		15km		R9000;R11200
18		1		7km		16km		R9000;R11200
19		2		7km		Pretoria		R9000;R21000
20		1		4km		C.T.		R9000;R23000

Numbers 1 to 15 reflect the houses which sent their children to previously all-White schools, while numbers 15 to 20 reflect those houses where children were attending formerly all-White universities. With respect to the school going children it is apparent from the table that every one of them had access to schools that were walking distances from their homes and which required school fee payments that were significantly lower than what the former all-White schools required. There is between 1000 and 1500 percent difference in school fees in all of the cases cited in the table above. In addition to the

enormity of the school fees, there is an added cost of transporting the children to and from school. This amounts to an average of an additional R1800.00 per annum per child in each household that relied upon a paid service. In cases where transport was not arranged through a service provider, there was an additional responsibility of parents and other family members having to interrupt their daily duties in order to drop-off and pick-up school children. Only individuals whose children were fetched by retired parents or housewives expressed any measure of comfort and convenience in this situation.

In the last five cases the choice of the tertiary institutions were equally important in how parents and children made their choices. In all of these cases the courses that the students chose to do at the universities in which they were studying i.e. at the Universities of Natal (Durban), Pretoria and Cape Town, were also offered in the university that was closest to them, i.e. at the University of Durban-Westville. Yet they chose to register in universities that were previously all-White and where the costs were consideraby higher than the University of Durban-Westville. In the cases that reflect Pretoria and Cape Town, the costs increased by an additional R10 000.00 and R12 000.00 per annum respectively in order to cover living expenses. The justification for these choices was made in responses such as: *"They are getting a better education at Natal University..."; "There's too many boycotts and too much violence at Durban-Westville"; "The Blacks have messed up the place at Durban-Westville. It's too dangerous for my children to study there."* These statements were made with spontaneity and the antagonism against the University of Durban-Westville only partially subsided when the interviewees realised that they were responding to a member of staff from the institution. There was a visible sign of pride in most parents who spoke about the university that their children were attending. Their financial and domestic obligations in this regard were only secondary to them. It was the joy of seeing their children being educated and in so doing keeping up the family name and dignity. Whether their assumptions of student misbehaviour and standards being lower in the University of Durban-Westville were correct or not, was hardly a matter of concern to such households. They held on to the prestige and reliability that the former White universities appeared to bestow upon them.

Networking – kinship, neighbourhood and friendship as resources

In the search for schools and tertiary institutions parents often sought advise and assistance from their kin, neighbours and friends in choosing a school for their children. The requirement that children wanting to attend previously all-White schools be resident in the

respective suburbs, posed a problem for most parents who wanted to send their children to these schools. In order to seek admission Indian parents were asked to produce proof of their property tax receipts, telephone and electricity bills, together with their and their children's identity documents. In addition, the children were subjected to performance and psychological assessment tests that were actually not an official requirement. But parents who resided outside the suburbs chose not to challenge the situation for fear of being found out and possibly victimised for taking a stand. For those parents who resided in areas outside previously all-White districts, innovative schemes had to be thought of in order to beat the system. In Reservoir Hills, Clare Estate, Asherville and Overport parents had to rely upon others to find their children places in areas such as Westville, La Lucia, Umhlanga Rocks and Morningside. Unlike the Indian dominated suburbs, there were no squatter camps in these areas and no rapid influx of Africans coming in as residents who were buying off properties that were being sold by Whites. In crude terms, Indians considered such areas as "safe areas" and ideal to send their children for an education.

The will to find out about schools was dependent upon several issues within the households of school going children. They included issues such as awareness of how to go about finding another school that is considered "more suitable", the financial situation of the household, the trust in previously all-Indian schools and the ideological leaning of the children's parents. Those parents who chose to send their children to previously all-White schools went about negotiating with someone they knew in order to gain entry for their children. Their tasks were relatively easy if they had paternal kin residing in the area they chose to school their children. In the cases where there were two brothers, the required documentation of property tax receipts, electricity and telephone bills did not pose a problem because the surnames were the same. But where married sisters, maternal kin or friends were involved the documentation was accompanied by a covering letter from a person resident in the area, vouching for such persons as being resident with them either as family or as tenants on their properties.

At least two of the households in Clare Estate, that are depicted in table 9.2 above had the resources to send their junior and senior primary school children to schools outside their suburbs. But they lacked the knowledge of how to go about enrolling them. The process that one of the interviewees followed was an interesting one, since inquiries began with neighbours, then friends and later kin. It started in October 1997 when they first heard about some neighbours sending their children to schools in Westville. Not realising that

applications ought to have been made by July of that year, they briefly discussed it and only dismissively thought about the prospect of enrolling their children in Westville. They made their first inquiry through a neighbour who was already sending his children to the school in Westville, and were informed then that it was too late to enroll. In January 1998 they approached a friend who agreed to approach the principal to consider the children's enrolment. But the response was negative because all the classes were allegedly filled even before the year began. They later approached relatives for advice because they were raising their children's hopes and expectations of a new and "better school". He advised them that a school in La Lucia, which was twice the distance to that in Westville and had a fee requirement that was substantially higher, was the only option left. The relative approached the principal of the La Lucia school, who agreed to admit the children.

There was a very important ambiguity that emerged in the course of the conversations that took place with the interviewees. One of them, a teacher once remarked: *"I am sending both my children to White schools in Westville. But let me be honest, I don't think these schools are up to much. They can't match the standards in Indian schools. We do a much better job with our children. Their mathematics used to be far too low for our schools. And now, with all the changes taking place the syllabi are now the same. But the White teachers are not doing their jobs like us. I see it in the way my children are being taught."* This statement was made in the presence of her spouse, who agreed with her and who was also a teacher. Both taught in the Phoenix township for Indians and they had a high regard for the ex-House of Delegates schools. Their statement prompted the soliciting of more views on the differences between former Indian and White schools. Twelve out of the fifteen teachers, who were asked their opinion on the quality of education between these two schools, felt that the Indian schools and their Indian teachers were doing a better and harder job than their White counterparts. They believed that the former Indian schools performed better in the science subjects than the former White schools. From the 106 households that were sending their children to former White schools, 27 of them belonged to teachers who were still employed in the profession. The indicators that they used, rather than specific criteria, was the general overall performance in the former White schools, where Indian pupils were the bigger takers of scholarly awards. Most Indian pupils, it has been alleged, came from former Indian schools where they had a sound grounding. Their entry into White schools did not pose as severe problems to them as did the entry of African pupils into Indian schools. White pupils were seen to be competing against formidably taught Indian pupils, thereby raising the standard within White schools itself. The exit of

such large numbers of pupils in turn created a perception of lower standards in Indian schools, brought about mainly through the attempts to teach African pupils through a second language medium i.e. English. But the teachers denied that standards have been lowered, rather the pace of work had been slowed down to enable African students to think and work in English. To most teachers, their pride in their professions was being questioned and they felt a need to defend it. Although Indian schools in most areas had already acquired a reputation for becoming Africanised, the issue of standards was still defended by most that remained in their schools as teachers.

Conclusion

In view of the information that has been presented above, certain fundamental questions ought to be raised about the ideological and racial leanings of people of Indian origin in South Africa. For instance, a decisive question that ought to be asked is: "Have the Indians acted purely out of racist sentiments in choosing to send their children to the former all-White schools instead of leaving them in the former Indian schools that were walking distances from their homes and which were not so financially taxing?" To attempt to answer this question in just one way or the other would be tantamount to oversimplification of an issue that is much more complex than otherwise. Those who have been identified as "Indians" for this project are also quite disparate in their linguistic backgrounds, religious practices, eating habits and other patterns of normative behaviour. Despite being lumped together as "Indians" issues such as religion, home language, food and associated taboos, caste and class backgrounds have much to do in the way pupils thinking is shaped both at home and in school. Their only commonality is their geographical origin.

In trying to answer the question that is posed above, the issue of the couple, noted above, who were teachers in the Indian township of Phoenix ought to be raised as well. Why is it that those two people who had such a high degree of pride in their profession and in the competence of Indian teachers in general, not enroll their children in either of the schools that they taught, especially since these were Indian dominated schools? In this instance, as in the case of other teachers who sent their children to former White schools, surely class should take precedence over race. The teachers, by virtue of their professions, salaries and the areas in which they lived, fell squarely within the sphere of a middle-class status. Yet on the one hand they shifted their children away from their suburban schools because it was increasingly enrolling African pupils, while on the other hand they could not see it fit to take their children to the under-class Indian township in which they taught. The former issue

sounds like a genuinely race inspired motive, while the latter issue sounds like a genuinely class inspired motive. Should it be one or the other, or can it be a mixture of both?

What parents were doing in these instances was actually communicating their class and ethnic differences. The inter-group contacts that they faced between African children in previously all-Indian schools and later with Whites in previously all-white schools induced a reorientation of their ethnic position. Many previously all-White schools have introduced the teaching of Indian languages, religious education and religious societies through parent requests. To this extent they articulated their differences with Whites. But what was clear in these situations was that they identified with the White population because of their history of literacy and a history of commitment to education of their offsprings. They failed to identify with the African population because they lacked the history of the extent of educational achievements that have been witnessed in the White or Indian communities over the past century. Although almost fifty years ago, there is a semblance of what this study reveals to work of Park (1950) and the Chicago School. Park, together with his associates in the 1920s and 1930s, was interested in the way in which ethnic groups remained distinctive in American cities, despite the 'melting pot' theory and the predictions of dissipation of ethnic exclusivity. They saw the city as a kind of ecological system, which had its own internal dynamic that allowed individuals, and groups to take advantage over certain opportunities and exercise constraints over others. This was because the city contained several distinct "social worlds" based on class and race or ethnicity. The social worlds in which each group lived, such as the tax paying residents and the squatters researched for this study, had its own distinctive physical neighbourhoods divided by their own historical experiences, access to resources and ethnic or racial differences. Indians pride themselves in having their origins entrenched in a literate civilisation and believe they have much to be proud about in South Africa for the ways in which they continued with the tradition of literacy and exploited the opportunities made available to them in education. Their association with White schools is therefore seen as an attempt to sustain this tradition, which was not as well developed in the African population.

CHAPTER TEN

Emigration: A solution to some and a dream to most

Introduction

The experiences of Indians since the 1994 election have created a situation in which they appear to be highly distressed and split between their loyalties to their children and their country of birth – South Africa. A new mood of emigration has set itself into motion and has gained momentum in a manner that has suggested more confusion than otherwise about emigration. For Indians, living a settled life and building upon the property that one acquires is generally a hallmark of stability, discipline and success. In chapter three, the quotation from the 1944 NIC Memorandum needs rehearsal for the sake of what is to follow below: "Due regard must be had to the character of the Indian which differs vastly from that of the European or the Native. The Indian, regardless of the size of his income will hardly ever fail to meet the instalments due on a property he is buying. He has an inborn urge to own his own home however humble, and he will endure amazing personal sacrifices to achieve this end" (Annexure B, P46). Much earlier, Sannyasi and Chaturvedi (1931: 28), writing on the experiences of repatriated indentured Indians, quoted a British colonial officer who was experiencing difficulty in acquiring Indian recruits for their colonies: "The first thing to which I would draw very careful attention is this: that Indians are a home loving people. They have not got the migratory instinct strong in their blood, like the British or the Irish. It would perhaps be true to say that Indians have less of the migratory habit taken as a whole, than the people of any other country as a whole." In support of this observation, Jain (1993: 4) has stated that the large scale emigration of Indians in modern times and their permanent settlement in other parts of the world is in a sense a surprising phenomenon. Historically, Indians were averse to crossing the 'black waters' *(kala pani)* because it was traditionally regarded as full of peril to the Hindu's soul. Apart from small trading communities, there was no large-scale settlement in new countries until the nineteenth century. According to Sharma (n.d) Indians were conned, coerced and cajoled into working as indentured labourers for the British. They were hardly willing to migrate to unknown lands.

But the situation on migration with South African Indians has changed drastically, though not wilfully. Many have considered their continued existence in the country to be a risk to their personal and family safety. At least five countries have become popular destinations for South Africa's professionals and business people from the White, Coloured and Indian populations viz. Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada and United States of

America. A few odd responses from interviewees touched on India, Singapore and the Middle East, but not with the same conviction as those who were already in a state of preparedness to leave for any of the first group of countries. Their reference to the latter three countries was largely out of frustration with the level of violence in South Africa and the relative peace and methods of justice in them. India was an important comparison with South Africa because of the extent of poverty in both countries but the comparatively high level of crime in the latter country. It was in these areas of references that strong cultural comparison, ethnocentric and racially based statements were made, in addition to the nostalgia with which relative peace, and law and order were remembered under White minority rule in South Africa. The first world Western countries were especially favourable because they were English speaking and were of first world status. Their attraction lay in their political and economic stability and the opportunities they offered them in employment and for further development of children who were still studying.

Understanding the motivation for emigration

In order to understand the issue of emigration, there ought to be some analysis of the responses that were derived from two important questions that were linked to the issue. They were:

- *"What are your views on the state of the nation before 1991 when the African dominated political organisations were unbanned, and after the 1994 general elections?*

- *For which political party did you vote in 1994 and for which one would you vote in 1999?*

The initial stages of this project did not focus on emigration at all. At least sixty of the interviews were carried out before this aspect was included in the interview schedule. By this stage it became apparent that the question ought to be asked. The negative responses that the last five preceding chapters have revealed are testimony to the lack of confidence that interviewees have shown in South Africa's first stage of its post-apartheid history. At least forty-five from the first sixty interviews that were done had expressed the desire to emigrate, or who knew of others who were already in the process of doing so, thereby encouraging them to think along those lines. Their reasons were common: high crime, poor police enforcement, rising costs of household security, deteriorating educational standards, a weak and overworked judiciary supported by a constitution that gave criminals equal rights to victims, rising unemployment, affirmative action in favour of Africans, the country's devaluing currency, and a shrinking economy. But the interviewees' views on wanting to leave South Africa were not consistently documented up to this stage.

The will to emigrate had received considerable attention soon after the 1994 general election. A survey that was started by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) early in 1998 showed that at least 74% of South Africa's skilled labour force was considering emigrating.[1] The annual cost to the economy was calculated at R250 million rands, taking into account the costs of training and replacing skilled personnel and positions that were lying vacant. Since 1993 there was a skills shortage ranging from 8% that rose to 51% in October 1998. The HSRC's investigation into their respondents' perceptions of the economy found that 57% thought the economy was going to worsen. As a result of this perception, an average of 800 highly skilled people per month have been leaving the country, totalling more than 10 000 per annum. Econometrix, a team comprising economic analysts, calculated that for every skilled person, at least 10 jobs are created for unskilled persons, translating into a loss of 100 000 unskilled jobs per annum when skilled people emigrate.

While a highly emotive debate prevails throughout the country about emigration, the test really lies in the government staving off a lapse into economic devastation, as witnessed in the performances of post-independence African countries. But the state's response to this growing crisis was interesting. The first president of post-apartheid South Africa, Nelson Mandela, fuelled the debate by accusing those who have emigrated and who are thinking of doing so, as "cowards". His words were: *"Go and good riddance.... The real South Africans are remaining in South Africa"*. His Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, reduced the growing tendency to emigrate to the "non-African" segments of the population who were opposed to the application of affirmative action policies. He stated: *"My only response (to the threats) is that it is probably better that they leave"*[2]. But in this research the interviewees' reasons for wanting to emigrate were neither cowardly nor simplistically based on affirmative action. Their responses were often related to conditions prior to and after the 1994 general elections, with accounts of how they have been affected by stress and trauma through personal experiences.

Analysis of responses to questions on emigration

At least one question was fundamental to ascertaining the feelings of respondents on emigration: "What are your views on the state of the nation before 1991 when the African

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[1] Reported in the Independent on Saturday, 1 October 1998.
[2] Sunday Tribune, 14 June 1998.

dominated political organisations were unbanned and after the 1994 General Election?" A numerical analysis of the above question provided at least four categories of respondents. They could be divided into the following: positive, negative, ambivalent and apathetic. Each category had common types of responses that allowed them to be grouped together. This question elicited information on at least four major issues viz.

- The levels of confidence and security they felt for their personal and family safety under White minority rule during apartheid and after April 1994.

- Their chances of either acquiring employment if they had to leave their current positions and of their children acquiring work when their studies are completed.

- Their opinions of the government's performance since the ANC takeover in 1994, especially in service delivery such as in education, employment, roads servicing and law and order.

- Their faith in the future of the country.

Interviewees were given an indication of these four aspects only when they prompted the specificity in their replies. Most of them had understood the question as entailing those issues and spoke freely about their feelings on them. It was often made explicit by them that they were happy to talk about the issues, especially if it could impact upon policy issues that would provide a safer and more secure future in the country. These kinds of responses came especially from those who spoke much about emigrating and who wanted to be convinced that there is a future for themselves and their children in the country – a point that will be discussed later.

The table below is an illustration of how many made up each category among the 255 interviewees.

Table 10.1, illustrating four categories of responses from 255 interviewees on the question above.

Responses	Number
Positive	51
Negative	142
Ambivalent	36
Apathetic	26
Total	255

It is clear from the table above that those who were distinctly positive about the period before and after the elections were a minority, while those who were firmly negative about transformation were in the majority. The issues that interviewees referred to as positive, constituted substantial changes that were a significant breakaway from the apartheid past. The positively minded were almost in unison in referring to the post election trials and tribulations as a situation that is likely to be found in any emerging democracy such as South Africa's. At least seven of the 51 interviewees initially responded to the question with cynicism and dismissed any negativity about the future of the country with contempt. They saw such comments as coming only from people who are pessimists and as one stated: *"Only those who are racist and not willing to give a Black government the chance to restructure will not see any hope in the future of this country."* The positive changes that they have identified include

- the repeal of the 1950 Group Areas Act as well as the 1950 Population Registration Act,
- freedom of movement – allowing people to live where they choose and associate with whom they please,
- freedom of speech,
- the country's integration into the global economy without the constraints of the past - during apartheid,
- the freedom to vote for a political party of one's choice,
- the right to send one's child to a school or tertiary institution that is nearest to one's home or any other school or tertiary institution if they can afford to do so.
- greater degree of accountability and transparency in government offices – as witnessed by the number of people who are being publicly exposed through state action against corrupt officials.

These were the issues that the positively minded spoke about as reasons for encouragement in a future South Africa. The negative issues that the other categories identified were also spoken about to an extent by this category of interviewees, but almost always in a strong defensive way about the state and its problems. Their common view was that the problems were not so insurmountable that they could not be remedied. For these reasons they saw themselves as devout South Africans who had a positive outlook for the future of the country or with no intention of emigration.

The ambivalent and the apathetic were a variety of respondents who ranged from people who were highly conscientised to others who displayed either virtual ignorance or

disinterest in the political situation. From among those who were highly conscientised, their attitudes veered more towards apathy and disappointment in transformation than in a positive outlook. There was however two kinds of apathy viz. that which was generated by a totally negative attitude towards transformation and that which was generated by sheer disinterest in politics. The difference between the two was that the former group was more aware of political transformation and the latter showed little or no interest.

There was a distinctly different level of articulation among the under class residents in Phoenix and those who rented in outhouses in the middle class suburbs, whose responses were generally, and understandably, of a simplistic nature. But their replies provided important insights into how they were responding to change. They usually replied in terms of either the immediate benefits they acquired after the 1994 elections or the problems they experienced since then. Among this group of forty-five interviewees, there was a distinct mindset that could only articulate their aspirations in terms of what South Africa had to offer them. Their class statuses, demonstrated by their low levels of education and menial low paid jobs, restricted their thinking to their immediate needs and survival. There was a clear resignation among all of them that the fate of the country lay in powers beyond their understanding. While they were aware of the issues such as high crime rates, unemployment, and deteriorating schooling conditions, their responses were to remain employed, keep away from crime ridden areas and from public or isolated places after dusk and to send their children to the nearest school. At least three responses capture the level of interests within this group. A female retrenched factory employee, who had just given birth to a child, made the first. The second statement was made by a sixty year old male who considered himself disabled and who had qualified for a disability grant in May 1995, and the third statement was made by a retrenched forty-seven old male:

- *"Before apartheid, it was difficult to get free treatment in the hospitals. Now it is different for us. I can take my baby until she is six years old and she will get free treatment."*

- *"For how long I was applying for a disability grant, but I never got it. Now with the new government after the election, I just got it – after more than three years of waiting."*

- *"Ya well, what must we do now. There's no more jobs, so we must just eat the crumbs that our families give us. All the money I had is almost finished now."*

One aspect that all of these forty-five interviewees had commonly stated was that crime was a major factor that was affecting their lives. At least eleven of this group had personally fallen victim to violent crime and gave lengthy accounts of how they were accosted and beaten. At the time of the interviews, a thirty-one old father of one child was still recovering from a severely beaten face that was a result of a mugging in Central Durban on a Friday afternoon in August 1998. He was confronted by three African youths who thought he was carrying his weekend wages with him. He claimed that nobody dared to help him despite the fact that the streets were still so busy. Another housewife claimed that two African males accosted her while she was hanging clothes to dry outside at 10h00. She was beaten, though not severely, and taunted until she gave away the R600 (rands) that her husband had kept away for the rent that was to be paid that weekend. Thereafter she was bound and gagged and left in the room until her child returned from school at 12h45. It was the fourth incident in less than three weeks that occurred in an arbitrarily demarcated cluster of twelve houses that were targeted for interviews. Further information from the neighbours about the incident suggested that the woman was raped and was too traumatised to face the neighbours for at least two months. Her long absence from the neighbourhood and information that some of her closer and more intimate neighbours had gathered from her strongly suggested rape. But no such charges were laid and no arrests were made in any of the incidents that occurred in that immediate neighbourhood.

The reaction from the people in the area was to form a vigilante group that had to be monitored by the police. The neighbourhood solidarity was shown through this formation. It had brought the residents, from more than the twelve houses that were targeted for interviews, closer together. Their targets were clearly defined – unknown Africans walking aimlessly in an area that was inhabited only by Indians and which was far away from any squatter camp and African township. Their reasons were based on their experiences that Africans were the culprits in the attacks that were witnessed. This was clearly a racially based perception that saw Indians as the victims and Africans as the perpetrators. A member of the vigilante group once remarked that they had the full backing of the police who claimed that they had their hands tied in following official procedure. The frustrations on the side of the residents and the police had led to a tacit agreement that if anyone was caught for burglary or stealing cars, then the vigilantes were at liberty to kill that person. The understanding was that criminals are easily released from prison and return into civil society only to repeat the same crimes. Nobody was apprehended during the research

period, although the crime rate was reported to have been significantly reduced after the formation of the vigilante group.

While there have been several convincing replies about the future of South Africa from the group of under-class interviewees, their most negative ideas emanated from the violence they personally experienced. It was a problem that they just had to keep away from, without much faith in the idea for instance, that mobilising against the state through some kind of unified action could at least send a symbolic message to the authorities to control violence.

To most of the middle and upper class interviewees, their mobilising and symbolic action against the problems that are rampant in South Africa, are seen through various kinds of action. A businessman's response captures the middle class's response to this: *"The vigilante groups in residential areas, the role of the press in exposing corruption in government and incompetent leaders, the slowing down of foreign investments, and the huge exodus of highly qualified people from the country, are messages enough for the government to catch a wake-up call. If they don't, what has happened in Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, is going to happen here soon. They better realise that the conditions in many sectors during apartheid were not as bad as they are today. Everything that we thought was not going to happen in this country is already happening."* The starkest contrasts in the conditions before and after the 1994 general election came especially from educationalists and business people. Each category compared the relevant periods and remembered the conditions under which they worked with nostalgia. An important assessment emerged from analysis of the data in this category of respondents. With most having a more mature sense of awareness of change than the under-class group discussed above, two periods were mostly remembered with glee. The first was the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC, as well as the other political organisations. This event was seen as a welcome culmination of the urban guerilla war that was being waged by the ANC against the apartheid regime. In this situation almost anybody could become a victim of the attacks, especially in shopping complexes. The termination of urban attacks was associated with an immediate release of stress in the minds of most citizens. The second period was the last few weeks just prior to the election in April 1994. Most of the interviewees could recall the period with a high degree of hope for political and economic stability in South Africa. The same number felt that conditions rapidly deteriorated no more than a few months after the elections. The high frequency of

car-jackings, followed by daylight burglaries and subsequently on cash-in-transit heists, among other forms of crime, were signs of rapid decay of the moral fibre of civil society.

In continuous harping upon such negative issues, the middle and upper class interviewees were also justifying their reasons for looking outside the country for peace of mind and more stable conditions under which they could survive. Most of them saw emigration as a solution to the problems that are mentioned above. Their awareness of the political and economic problems in most of the countries in the African continent had reinforced a widely held stereotype that lay latent for a period just before the election and for a few months after the event. That latent feeling is that African governments are rightly associated with the inability to govern effectively, and with mismanagement, corruption and autocratic rule that eventually gives rise to political rebellion. The turmoil in a number of countries such as Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Mozambique, among others, had fuelled this growing lack of confidence that so many of the interviewees have expressed. A sample of ten short statements made by middle-class interviewees who were negative provide an indication of how they felt:

- *"First it was the rise of political violence which tore this province apart. Now that it is on the decline, the criminal element has taken over. Where will it stop?"*

- *"Before 1991, although there was racial segregation and apartheid, there was also a degree of control, especially on violence. Now freedom means freedom to commit crime, acts of violence, bribery, corruption, etc. There's no hope."*

- *"Education and the finances of the country have gone from bad to worse. All you ever hear nowadays about the government is corruption."*

- *"Before 1991 there seemed to have been greater job security, financially most of us were better off. Education in certain areas was making greater headway. But you can't say the same anymore."*

- *"The country is just going backwards. Although we were worried that this was going to happen at first, we were sure it would recover. But now you can see that it is just drifting away without any hint of recovery."*

- *"Before 1991 we were sitting on a time bomb. After the 1994 elections we were going through the pains of building a united nation. We were all excited about it then. But up to now the government hasn't been able to get its act together."*

- *" Before 1991, life was difficult during apartheid. After the 1994 election crime has made it worse. This country's violence is a slower form of torture for its citizens, but*

just as bad as Rwanda. The difference is that in Rwanda people were killed in larger numbers at one time. Here it is only that people are getting killed more slowly."

- *"Before 1991 there were too many restrictions. After 1991, there is only a semblance of greater freedom. But the high crime rate has held back the progress we were hoping for. We've just come back from London, where people were really living their lives. The whole city is awake after dark. Over here everyone is forced to go to sleep soon after dark because of fear. Is this freedom?"*

- *"No doubt the state of the nation was better before 1991 and worse after the 1994 elections. We can't sleep with our windows open anymore in the summer, because you don't know who might just shoot at you any time. I doubt that it will get any better."*

- *"When a country's currency starts devaluing at the rate that ours is devaluing, it is clear that the country's economy is no longer in the hands of its own people. Foreign interests will just continue to knock our economy in the same way that they have done in other developing countries. The ANC has sold us out to the multinationals. And the Nats used to call them communists!"*

The atmosphere of gloom and doom had become so prevalent that it overshadowed the positive changes that had taken place in South Africa. Confidence in political leaders and their parties have reached an all time low. This situation has had a direct bearing on how people felt about the general election in 1999, which is discussed below.

Who did you vote for in 1994 and who will you vote for in 1999?

Information on this question was collected between June 1997 and February 1999. Since the political situation in South Africa is dynamic and ever changing, the information collected within this period could be inconsistent with the situation at the time of the election on 2 June 1999. For instance no information was gathered on the United Democratic Movement (UDM) that was started in 1998 by two prominent politicians who rebelled against their parties, Roelf Meyer and Bantu Holomisa, who broke away from the National Party and African National Congress respectively. The UDM is a recent political formation that only acquired political party status in 1999 in order to participate in the general election.

There are two levels at which elections occur in South Africa during a general election viz. the national and provincial levels. At the national level thirteen political parties have registered to participate, while in KwaZulu-Natal thirteen parties have registered. In order

for a party to qualify for registration the requirement is to pay an amount of R100 000 and have the capacity to mobilise funds for sustainability. At the provincial level the requirement is a registration fee of R20 000 as well as the onus of having a support base to finance its activities. In order to qualify for seats in the National Assembly a political party ought to acquire at least 5% of the national electoral votes, while 5% of the provincial votes would earn a seat or seats, pro rata, at the provincial level.

Their experiences and perceptions of transformation in South Africa have determined the responses that interviewees have provided to voting. The negative attitudes that are illustrated in table 10.1 above had a direct impact on the responses to voting in 1999. The choices of political parties and the indecision of the interviewees have illustrated how voters were thinking about the 1999 elections. The information in the table is an indication of this.

Table 10.2 illustrating the pattern of voting in 1994 and the possible choices in 1999 from 195 interviewees.

Political choice	Number – 1999	Number – 1994
ANC	37	57
New National Party	21	68
Democratic Party	6	11
Inkatha Freedom Party	1	0
Confidential	2	2
Will not/did not vote at all	5	-
An Indian party/Minority Front	3	52
A White party	5	-
Undecided	96	-
Total	195	188 *7 claimed no to have voted = 195

The figures in the table above provide an indication of the uncertainties that transformation has produced. It is important to discuss the major political parties listed on the table and the

other responses that have been noted because of South Africa's peculiar history. Of special interest here is the ANC. Only 37 (18%) of those interviewed were emphatic about supporting the party. Their history in the struggle against apartheid was not always understood nor was it frequently mentioned. In reference to it, the respondents tended to separate the personality of Nelson Mandela from the rest of the organisation. He was widely looked at as a trusted, strong and influential figure, who contributed much to the political stability of the country. For this reason people adored him and expressed a desire to see him continue in his contributions to political stability after he retired from political office. Odd cynical remarks were made against him in a few interviews – the strongest one stated in the following words: *"You can't expect a prisoner who stayed in jail for twenty-seven years to suddenly rule the country."*

But the rest of the ANC was not looked at favourably by the majority of the interviewees. They justified their views against the party's leadership by referring to what is now understood as endemic corruption and mismanagement. The state of education, health and justice were continuously referred to and blamed on the ANC. A striking note from the more conscientised and alert middle class respondents, was the expressed understanding that there would be economic instability for a period after the 1994 election, as a result of the ANC's inexperience in government. But there was a sense of deep shock and disappointment in the failure to create employment and bring about at least a semblance of a safe and secure environment in which citizens could live their lives. The economic and social instability has been directed without doubt at the doorstep of the ANC.

From the nine categories after the first in the table above, at least twenty-three interviewees made an emphatic statement that they **"will definitely not vote for the ANC"**. Six of the twenty-three had voted for the ANC in the 1994 election, of which five voted both nationally and provincially and one voted for it only nationally, but voted for the Minority Front in the province. The succession to President Nelson Mandela's office was of particular concern among many respondents. In four group interviews with a total of twenty-seven people and in forty-three interview schedules serious concern was expressed about the ability of Thabo Mbeki to sustain the racial and ethnic stability that Mandela was able to procure. Mbeki's association with controversial but high profile individuals such as Winnie Mandela and Peter Mokaba, who are on public record making racist statements especially against Whites, have cast doubt about the ability of the ANC to maintain a non-racial ideology that made them likeable during the euphoria of the 1994 election.

The situation with the other parties is that the National Party (registered as the New National Party for the 1999 election) and the Minority Front (targeting mainly the Indian population) has lost substantial support – at least from among the interviewees. This trend is consistent with national polls that have been carried out on the likely performance of the political parties. Only one person vouched for the Inkatha Freedom Party, while six stated that they would vote for the Democratic Party. While this indicates that they too have lost support, the situation during the election is likely to change for the Democratic Party. There appeared to have been a significant rise in popularity for the party among people of Indian origin. The party's aggressive campaign for the 1999 election since the beginning of the year appeared to have paid off with some minority groups. They took up minority issues, and particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, they have campaigned on Indian fears and concerns around education and affirmative action. In several gatherings during the months of April and May 1999, that were not intended to collate research data, there has been talk of supporting the party for a number of reasons. Mental notes eventually led to jotting down the following statements:

- *"The National Party is finished and they are still too racist. We'll have to vote for the DP."*

- *"The IFP will lose badly in the next election, and the ANC is sure to take over."*

- *"We must teach the ANC a lesson and vote for the DP."*

- *"ANC rule has proved that the Black man stands for chaos. The DP is our only hope now. You can't beat White rule. Under them we had order and safety."*

- *"There isn't anyone else to trust in. Maybe the DP could make a difference."*

It is significant that the biggest number among the categories listed on the table is the undecided. Within this group the question on who to vote for in the 1999 election often ignited reactions to at least one of three issues viz.

(1)   the turmoil, uncertainty, and violence in the country;

(2)   vitriolic attacks against the ANC for its poor leadership;

(3)   no trust in politicians.

On several occasions the media recorded what they viewed as apathy in the Indian population for showing a serious enough interest in registering to vote. The requirement to vote in the 1999 election was to register to vote, but only with a computerised bar-coded identity book. In most of the predominantly Indian suburbs such registration did not take place on the scale that was expected, despite the fact that the registration dates were

extended several times. It was especially from this group that the urge to emigrate was expressed. Their apathy was entrenched in a situation of almost total loss of confidence in the country's future and they could only see hope for themselves through emigration.

Emigration – not an individual choice

There were three categories of people who could be included under the caption of emigration. There were those who:

- had already qualified for residence in a foreign country and were preparing to leave,
- were seriously considering emigrating and were in the process of inquiring about foreign residency,
- wished they could emigrate but were refraining from doing so because of financial constraints and the fear of restarting their lives at the risk of failure,
- considered themselves too old to emigrate but were either encouraging or not stopping their children if they wished to do so.

The last two groups constituted the majority of the 195 interviewees.

Although the majority of those who wanted to emigrate were from amongst the group that were undecided voters, there were also those who were from the households of interviewees who strongly supported the ANC and believed in the future of the country. Such households were ideologically split about the capacity of the ANC to govern and to generate confidence within the population about the viability of the country's future. In at least two interviews the nature of the conversation about political transformation and emigration evoked inputs from other family members about the interviewees perceptions. Such family members were not inclined towards the ANC and very receptive towards talk of emigration. In both households the interviewees were strong-minded men and household heads who were avid ANC supporters. Their control over their families' decisions was evident by virtue of them remaining as South African citizens. In one case, a housewife married to a factory owner felt that Canada would be the country to emigrate, since she once lived there with family. Her preference was immediate emigration. But her spouse's reply was: *"Tell me what is in Canada that you will not find here?"* The husband's reply was also determined by his retired parents' refusal to emigrate. Their dependence on him made this an uncompromising decision with him. In the second instance, the wife, a physiotherapist, felt inclined and stated that she was comfortable to go along with her husband's (a charterred accountant) decision to remain in South Africa. It was their children's decision to consider emigrating, but who could not because their father objected. One was a tertiary

institution lecturer and the other was a graduate in business economics who was unemployed for almost a year since completion of her studies. Both differed strongly with their father on his views of the future of South Africa and firmly believed that emigration was the answer to their problem[3].

It became apparent from twenty-five cases that were closely monitored and revisited - for whom emigration was eminent - that the decision was not always a matter of personal choice. It depended on several factors the most common of which was the settlement of relatives overseas who could facilitate an easy adaptation to their new environments. Respondents often voiced their concern about how the extended family – particularly the elders - felt about emigration, especially since many were not in good health. Their anxiety tended to revolve around the impact their departure will have on family unity – especially in cases where businesses were involved. Its control, care, distribution and sharing of family wealth, were impediments to their final decisions. Where the older generation were unable to tend to family businesses, the decision to emigrate was even more problematic. But for those who had the bare minimum to take away, the resources to return to South Africa frequently enough posed a problem. The issue here was not to burden elderly folk with their concern about the health and conditions under which the incumbents live there. Hence, the costs to return and visit family frequently enough added its own burden. Contining with religious practices was also a factor in the decision to emigrate. In the process of arranging their final emigration, proximity to religious institutions i.e. especially Hindu or Muslim centres of worship was also given serious consideration. However, in cases where the mood to emigrate was positive, there appeared to be an expectation to create conditions for more family and friends to join them.

There was a distinct process that was rooted in the kinship ties of the individuals who decided to emigrate. While the decisions were made between spouses, they first had to discuss it with both sets of parents and extended families with utmost sensitivity. In most instances the elderly folk initially objected to the decisions but also showed understanding. In at least one case the death of two elderly people was attributed to the emigration children, as the case below illustrates.

> In 1997 S.T. then a thirty five-year-old building society employee, emigrated to San Diego, North America, to co-own a motel with another relative. His parents, "happy" that their youngest son emigrated, visited him in December

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[3] Three months after the second interview with the family, the son acquired a job as a lecturer in English in South Korea.

1997. Soon after they returned in February 1998, his father had a severe heart attack and suffered a stroke while in hospital. He died two weeks later. In September 1998, S.T.'s wife's parents went to visit them in San Diego. His father-in-law suffered a heart attack and died a few days later. Since the costs of transporting deceased people are enormous the funeral had to take place in San Diego, while the family in South Africa observed the rituals at their houses.

There was agreement on at least three issues that gave rise to people wanting to emigrate: the future for their children looked bleak, violence and the ongoing prospect of the ANC remaining in power for a very long time. Although a seventy two year old Gujerati businessman with all four daughters living overseas, once remarked: *"This country is going down so fast, that I have told my children not to remain here a minute longer if they could get out now. Three of them have done just that already.[4] I tell you too, get out now if you can – you should have gone yesterday. I had relatives in Uganda and Tanzania and I saw what happened to them there. But don't go to the U.S.A., they are the worst barbarians. Everyone carries guns there!"*

Four of the twenty-five interviewees who were closely monitored had left South Africa by March 1999. Two went to Australia, one to New Zealand and one to England. In all four cases there were families that encouraged them to make their choice. The convenience in this kind of arrangement was that the emigrants had immediate access to shelter, food and schooling for their children, which was pre-arranged by relatives or friends. Employment was also facilitated through other local networks of South African immigrants overseas or by the hosts themselves. Networking was an important mechanism for those have either emigrated or who were on the verge of doing so. This helped in reducing the isolation that emigrants are likely to experience in any such situation. In all four cases they were professionals, three of whom claimed to have acquired employment before leaving. News from the family of the fourth person was that both husband and wife acquired employment only weeks after landing (in New Zealand). The remainder of the twenty-five households was still in the process of finalising their emigration documents.

Most of those who were contemplating emigration but were unable to do so because of their weak financial standing, decided to encourage their children into professions that would facilitate easy access into one of the developed countries. They were one of two mind sets i.e. either emigrate with their children on the strength of their qualifications, or equip them suitably until they are ready for employment and encourage them to leave the country while

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[4] His youngest daughter, a Charterred Accountant, emigrated to Canada six months later.

they remain behind. Most of the respondents from this group of interviewees have resigned their fate to South Africa, but they did not see much hope for their children. At least three of this group was between thirty and thirty-five years old yet considered themselves too old to restart their lives in another country. Their common view was that they would be able to, as one put it *"ride the storm until the end of our lives. But our children are unlikely to be able to. That's why we must encourage them to go. Lawlessness and affirmative action is what is going to be around here for a long time to come."*

Such individuals actually fell within the range of lower middle-class and middle-middle class statuses. They had their homes with mortgage bonds that were manageable, wives and children who were also employed, and relatively good professions that could have acquired for them employment in one of the first world countries. But the discouraging factor to them was the lower return for their money if converted into one of the major international currencies. The devalued rand against currencies such as the British sterling and North American dollar has been the biggest deterrent for many whose dream it is to leave the country because of the range of problems associated with the first stage of post-apartheid transformation. It is a dream that many have hoped will materialise for the sake of their children's future. They have entrenched in their minds the thought that as an Indian minority they will not be able to compete on equal terms either with Africans or Whites in the employment sector. Despite the crime rate being exceedingly high in the African townships, many were of the impression that the high rate of crime in their suburbs is a conspiracy against Indians emanating from the African population. This they believe is evident in the number of squatter camps that are in predominantly Indian suburbs, and the crime that emanate from them – with Indians being the major victims.

In addition, the "sandwich theory", which is often used to describe the difficult circumstances that Indians believe is apt to describe their minority status, has been widely referred to. Many interviewees have continued to refer to the problems of Indians acquiring work by recalling the difficulties during apartheid and the problems in post-apartheid South Africa. The often-quoted phrase is: *"We were too Black during apartheid and not Black enough after apartheid."* The inference here is that Indians are sandwiched between a still economically powerful White elite and a numerically large politically powerful African elite. The conspiracy theory against them, as many believed, is that White employers are deliberately and selectively applying affirmative action in favour of Africans as a ploy to divide the two racial groups. But a difficulty emerged with the interviewees when their

attention was drawn to the public sector and their selective employment of Africans against more appropriately qualified Coloureds and Indians. Both the private and public sectors were acting against the spirit of the Labour Relations Act that was promulgated in 1997. This is despite the Act's explicit wording which defines "Black" as all those who were previously not classified as "White", meaning the term should be all inclusive for Africans, Coloureds and Indians. For these reasons the interviewees have grown despondent about African majority rule and are therefore inclined to either excel in their studies or do the currently popular courses such as computer science and other science based qualifications in order to avoid unemployment or make it easier for their emigration. However, it will still be a costly affair for some and a mere dream to others as Desai's (1999: 81) words reaffirms (and is worthy of being repeated): **"Those who are not part of the political class or are not wealthy do not have the luxury of temporary sojourners in foreign lands. For the middle class who wish to test the waters overseas, the only option is to accumalate capital by selling up to finance their trip. The lower classes, of course, cannot even emigrate to the next province."**

Conclusion

The widespread urge to emigrate is predicated on the perceptions of the ineffectiveness of the ANC government and concerns about further deterioration in the spheres of education, health care, employment possibilities and security. If the survey that indicated that more than 70% of the country's skilled labour force are considering emigration is correct, then the responses from the President and Deputy President were serious miscalculations that are bound to cost the country dearly within the next few years. While there is certainly a situation of negative perception about African majority, it would be naïve to reduce emigration to mere racist attitudes to those who wish to leave the country. The period leading up to the 1994 election and the very high and noble opinion that most respondents had for Nelson Mandela is an indication of the interviewees recognising and bestowing praise upon those who deserve it, irrespective of colour. The concerns that they have over the President elect, Thabo Mbeki, are legitimate to the extent that such high profile leaders should not engage in racist talk on public platforms, even if it were their honest feelings. Such individuals have a much larger role to play in a country and continent that has come close to ruin through ethnic, racial and political differences. Indications from the sample for this study are consistent with the survey's results. Although most who have past the age of thirty did not feel inclined to emigrate, they were certainly preparing their children to do so. If such a scenario does translate into reality, then the country will certainly be suffering

from more than a brain drain. Unlike the conditions prior to the dismantling of apartheid, which was actually blamed for the initial stages of the brain drain, the reasons for this perennial migration are different. This time they are rooted in the "freedom movements" inability to effectively control crime, to minimise the pain that other racial groups feel in their search for employment, and to create an environment that is congenial to stimulating political, economic and social development. The country's infrastructure is too complex and sophisticated to ignore the warning signs of the effects of massive emigration of skilled and professional labour.

CONCLUSION

It was noted earlier that South Africa's transition to democracy was greeted with a euphoria that surprised the world and perhaps even the very people who voted for democracy. Transformation was initially viewed with a sense of utopia that momentarily ignored the realities of the mammoth task ahead of the democratically elected government. Among Indians there was hope that democracy would usher in new avenues of political and economic opportunities for them, specially since they were an integral part of the 'Black disadvantaged masses' during the days of the struggle for emancipation. But their experiences of crime and its containment, rising levels of land invasion by squatters and the resultant tension, deteriorating education and transport systems, and thoughts about emigration, had influenced their perceptions in a manner that eroded the euphoria and optimism that immediately preceded and succeeded the 1994 election. This was compounded by the growing recurrence, as Filatova (1997) pointed out, about objection to too many Indians in high profile government positions and the selective treatment that Africans are now receiving for civil service positions. The ongoing tension, as discussed from chapter five onwards, between residents and squatters, bus owners and taxi operators, between pupils and teachers in schools, and the ongoing assessment the future of civil life in South Africa, has contributed towards increasing negativity. Each time a violent or anti-social incident occurred between Indians and Africans, responses were almost invariably articulated in terms of ethnic or racial differences. It raised fears of possibly incorporating the two groups in more violent confrontations at a broader level, bringing in reminders of the 1949 and 1985 Indian-African clashes. For instance, the incident raised in chapter six about Indo-African relations after the stabbing to death of an African man, produced a potential situation for a serious clash. This was being fuelled by the growing schism between Indian residents and African squatters, Indian bus owners and African taxi operators, Indian and African school pupils, among other issues. While the clashes were evidently along class lines, they were being widely articulated along racial lines, often justifying their responses by reference to violent robberies committed by Africans and the chaotic state of post-independence Africa.

At a national level there is much talk about the African Renaissance attempting to create the impression that the political and socio-economic systems are not under any strains of ethnic or racial perceptions. However, the evidence in the previous chapters highlights these realties at a micro-level. It illustrates the ethnic/racial cleavages that South Africans still

have to confront in order to create a situation, as Huntington (1968: 4-5) stated, to bring about political stability through an approach that will converge equality of political participation with the art of living together. The euphoria and optimism of the pre and post 1994 election period has almost worn out. This situation has trapped the intellectuals, in Sitas's (1998: 37) terms, "between utopian and dystopian forms of thinking." To Sitas, dystopian thinking has both an analytical and a moral core that on the one hand magnifies social trends and tendencies and, on the other, warns of anti-social outcomes. By contrast, utopian thinking willfully ignores such trends by keeping people in a false state of optimism. This comparison is a result of Sitas's (1995) earlier ominous warnings about the serious threats to the democratic and socialist vision of the liberation movement in South Africa and a marked disintegration of the movement itself.

The roots of these problems are situated in the difficulties the ANC is facing with its redistributive policies and in African empowerment. These unavoidable promises which the ANC rightfully had to make, inevitably reintroduces the dynamics of racial and ethnic discourses, as much as the ANC may wish to publicly, but unrealistically and untruthfully, pursue a line of non-racialism. Horowitz (1991: 85) has realistically stressed the need to recognise the importance of racial, ethnic and sub-ethnic identities in South Africa. He has warned that some inter-group cleavages have considerable conflict-producing potential, as witnessed in the rest of post-independence Africa's conflict and violence. He is pointedly crude about the fact that it is a fallacy of the 1950s and 1960s that an inclusive nationalism would be the universal solvent of differences. In fact, South Africa's constitution, often hailed as one of the best in the world, is actually outdated by virtue of its emphasis on human and individual rights (Singh 1999). We are now living in era that is paying increasing attention to multiculturalism and minority rights in order to minimise militancy and fragmentation of the populations. Recent trends have shown, as Filatova's (1997) paper also testifies, that South Africa's politics will not be non-racial and non-ethnic, but multi-racial and multi-ethnic. Horowitz rightfully cautions us that "Once the democratic process cracks under the strain of ethnic conflict and of parties aligned with particular ethnic groups – whether the crack comes from a military coup or the inauguration of a single party state – the way is open for much smaller minorities to rule behind the façade of an allegedly inclusive single party. That possibility cannot be excluded for South Africa unless powerful precautions are taken" (Horowitz 1991: 86). At present, the ANC has not produced any clarification, in their document on *Nation-Formation and Nation Building*, between expressions such as "the affirmation of our Africanness as a nation" and "equality among

the racial, ethnic, language, cultural and religious communities' within 'a united nation', 'multiple identities' in the melting pot of broad South Africanism" (Filatova 1997: 55).

While at this historical juncture the possibility of a coup in South Africa appears remote, the demands of the African working classes for delivery of basic amenities and employment are undoubtedly perpetuating ethnic strains and racial discord across the national spectrum. Filatova's paper shows that there is confusion about free non-racial political participation in the light of the Africanist reemergence within the ANC. Political transformation in South Africa since the unbanning of the African dominated political movements and their rapid rise into the arenas of political of power has not led to any radical form of political representation for Indians. Chapter four is a spin-off from the insecurity, identity problems and indigent conditions that have been discussed in the two preceding chapters. It demonstrates how these problems have given rise to a situation of 'internal amnesia', where Indian political leaders have chosen to culturalise their politics instead of engaging in the inverse of this. The ethnographic information in this project is a fitting tribute to Brass's (1985) description of what interest groups (ethnic minorities) have as opposed to corporate rights (ethnic majority). Almost all of the interviewees articulated their concerns about post-apartheid South Africa in terms of civil issues rather than political rights or aspirations of acquiring highest forms of political representation. They were more interested, as an interest group, in their economic and social well being. Their main concerns was the rapid decline in confidence on education, law and order, justice, affirmative action and their perceptions that they were being marginalised despite their historical disadvantages and involvement in the politics for a democratic South Africa. An anomaly in state policy on affirmative action which includes Coloureds and Indians as being previously disadvantaged and who therefore should enjoy equal access to employment as Africans, but are perceived as being continuously ignored, has added to their feelings of insecurity. This has produced more fear and anxiety than militant responses among most Indians, and has given rise to the culturalisation of politics. This is different from the politics of 'proto-nations', to which Eriksen (1993 124 -5) refers, or the 'ethnicisation' that is taking place in contemporary world politics. Proto-nations is a reference to ethnic groups that mobilises support for secession and full independence, while ethnicisation is considered to be the equivalent of the politicisation of culture. Eriksen's position in the latter concept is too restrictive when compared with the politics of interest groups such as people of Indian origin in South Africa. Ethnicisation does not have to be confined to the politicisation of culture only, if it is to be understood in Mare's (1992) terms i.e. it has the tendency to adopt violent

overtones. The concept is a much broader one and is capable of embracing the more passive approaches to ethnic politics that are demonstrated by Brass's concept of interest groups.

The ethnographic information has also illustrated how two important areas of historical significance to Indians viz. education and transport, have become increasingly restricted since the April 1994 elections. The uncertainty in education, brought about by massive cuts in subsidies, premature retirement of the most experienced teachers and administrative staff, and redeployment at the cost of family stability, has led to an all time low in the future of education in South Africa. There is a widespread perception that they are being eliminated from the teaching fraternity on ethnic lines, to be replaced in schools by African teachers and administrative staff. In the transport industry, the information has shown how Indian service providers are being systematically attacked or removed by African taxi operators who are trying to find a niche for their entrepreneurial ventures. This has taken place at a cost of a number of lives and the loss of livelihoods that have taken decades to consolidate. Indian transport providers have become vulnerable targets in a situation where their services are often provided in areas that either enter into or pass through African dominated areas.

The post-election experiences in areas such as in education and transport has contributed towards a feeling of increasing alienation in a climate of African empowerment. Feelings of alienation have led many to emigrate, to prepare for this event, or dream about it. It is once again a response to perceptions of unacceptable forms of either ethnic majority or state domination. Hirschmann (1970) argued that minorities may respond to state domination in one of three principal ways i.e. exit, voice or loyalty. Most of the respondents in the ethnographic information here have shown a tendency to 'exit', by continuously referring to emigration. Their voices, as many believe, are marginalised and their loyalty is restricted more to their families and kinship obligations than to the state.

An interesting anomaly has emerged in the history of Indian politics in South Africa. The editor of the Sunday Tribune Herald (23 May 1999), which is a supplement to the Sunday Tribune that circulates this attachment mainly in Indian areas, accused Indians of being unpatriotic for not supporting the South African cricket team in the 1999 world cup, hosted in England. He alleged that most people of Indian origin supported one of the three other countries viz. India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka, because the South African team was mainly White, with just one player who was Coloured. On this basis, the editor also added subtle racism to his claim of lack of patriotism against Indians. Two days later, the Daily News

(25 May 1999) carried a headline about Indian attitudes towards the 2 June 1999 election: "**Indian voters reject black political parties**". The article reported that 38% of Indian voters had no faith in any political leader in the country, 33% would vote for the New National Party (NNP), 15% would vote for the Democratic Party (DP), while only 6% and 1% would vote for the ANC and IFP respectively. Clearly, the White dominated parties of the NNP and DP, according to the survey, enjoyed more political support among Indians. It quoted a prominent Indian political activist, as responding in the following words: "**Indians have aspired to 'whiteness' and still do**", but in an almost neutral manner immediately after this statement, he tried to contextualise the Indian response to the elections. He referred to the successful implementation over the decades, which resulted, he believed, in the Indian community becoming narcissistic and focusing on their own needs in isolation of the broader needs of society. Yet in 1984 when the then President of South Africa, P.W. Botha, had tried instituting a tri-cameral parliamentary system that created separate Houses for Whites, Coloureds and Indians, with each getting its support from their respective constituencies and dealing with their own affairs, the Indian population largely responded to the calls to boycott these race based elections. The respective politician then praised the Indians for ignoring the elections.

A fundamental question in such contradictory situations is: "**How do we make sense of an ethnic minority who refuses to support a Whites only team in international competition, and yet supports White dominated political parties in general elections?**" An interviewee's comment during fieldwork somewhat alludes to this question: *"Well, at least during White rule the crumbs that they threw for us was enough for us to build our lives. Now, you don't even get the crumbs...All over Africa there's starvation, coup d'etats, no proper planning, always no money, and always fighting...".* The Indian perceptions of and responses to transformation are rooted in these kinds of understandings of politics in Africa. The comments by the editor of the Sunday Tribune and the prominent political activist are too simplistic and clearly devoid of any understanding of how the personal experiences of individuals collectively gathers momentum and filters into the wider population - shaping and determining their perceptions and responses. From chapters five to ten, the ethnographic information, based largely on individual and family experiences, pointed towards a greater degree of disillusionment than a positive outlook for the future of the country. However, there is more to understanding this position among most Indians than their personal experiences.

There are three issues that ought to be brought to the fore in contextualising these largely negative attitudes viz. the history of marginalisation during White domination and its apparent continuation in the post-apartheid era, views on the successes and failures of the state, and the perceptions of politics in the continent of Africa in international perspective. The euphoria that has been described about the pre-election and immediate post-election period of April 1994 was an indication of the extent to which Indians, among the other racial categories, were looking forward to positive changes that were expected to embrace all South Africans without regard to race. But not too long after, affirmative action, applied mainly in favour of Africans, saw Indians together with Whites and Coloureds being increasing alienated from employment opportunities. The rising levels of crime, squatters and land invasion in mainly Indian areas, racial quotas restricting the number of Indian students to medical school in KwaZulu-Natal favouring lesser qualified African students over better qualified Indian students, among a range of other problems, have had a major impact on the perceptions of and responses to transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. The state has not been blameless in this situation. A number of the poor performances in areas such as education, health, housing and rising unemployment have been understood as failures on the part of the government. At least five of the Premiers in the nine provinces have been replaced within four years of the April 1994 election. In KwaZulu-Natal this most senior political office was changed three times. When these factors are added to the continuous allegations of corruption, incompetence in government offices, and ethnic and political violence, it reinforces the scenario of chaos and the erosion of the structures of civil society under African leadership. It is in this context that Indians tend to see White rule as representing stability and prosperity, and African rule representing the opposite. Because of this, Keith Richburg (1997), the African American journalist for the Washington Post, commented in his prelude to a critique on Africa:

> "Maybe I should have just written a book on Africa that would have talked broadly about the politics, the possibilities, the prospects for change. But I'm tired of lying. And I'm tired of all the ignorance and hypocrisy and the double standards I hear and read about Africa, much of it from people who've never been there, let alone spent three years walking around amid the corpses. Talk to me about Africa and my black roots and my kinship about my African brothers and I'll throw it back on your face, and then I'll rub the your nose in the images of the rotting flesh"

The quotation above begs for introspection into a fundamental question: "What are the prime causes of violence in Africa and what does this mean for us in South Africa?" Very often the problem is with manipulation of tribal and ethnic sentiments, and academic literature abounds with such lessons from the past. Horowitz (1991: 86) has pointed out that

in Nigeria, although the Hausa comprised 30% of the population, and the Ibo and Yoruba 16% and 17% each , all three were major actors in the ethnic politics of the country, which in the first republic produced a Hausa-Ibo showdown. Richburg's (1997) illustration of how tribalism in Africa often manifests itself in the most violent ways to impose boundaries between tribal factions to keep politicians in office, is a variation of how ethnic sentimentality masquerades as a uniting factor in national politics, but is in fact a divisive force. For instance, in Kenya, while the late President Jomo Kenyata ingeniously used his Kikuyu loyalists to entrench his power, his successor, Daniel arap Moi placed mainly his Kilenjin tribesmen in key government posts to consolidate his power. President Moi was ruthless towards his perceived enemies from within government circles, and slowly purged his rivals and critics from office. This process paved the way for a constitutional amendment enshrining his ruling Kenyan African National Union as the sole legal political party. Thorold's (1997) description of Sufism and Yao identity in Southern Malawi is an interesting account of how Malawi's first free democratic election in 1994 presented an opportune moment for the country's different ethnic groups to show their solidarity through their voting patterns. While Banda ruthlessly contained tribal dissension during his rule, he placed priority on the development of his Chewa tribe. This strengthened the suspicions over Banda and his Chewa tribe, leading most people from other groups to vote for their representatives from their own tribal groups. The result was that the Yao voted for Muluzi, the Chewa for Banda and the Tumbuka for Chihana, while the other tribal groups voted against Banda and for whichever of the other two was nearest in proximity to them. In another demonstration of tribal solidarity in Cameroon, Nkwi (1997) demonstrates how the middle and upper class Kom ethnic representatives met in Yaounde the capital, in 1984, to establish an organisation to assist local communities to mitigate the effects of government neglect. They established the Njinikom Area Development Association (NADA) to provide hope and leadership and the services the state and local council were unable to provide in their region. Throughout its successes and failures, the mobilising and binding factor was clearly Kom ethnic solidarity.

Ethnic strife in Europe too has presented challenges for the political leadership in the continent. The ongoing strife in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants between 1969 and 1992 led to the death of more than three thousand people and to many more being injured. The Irish Republican Army and other nationalist paramilitaries have killed more than eight hundred members of the security forces and as many civilians (Hadden 1994: 28). The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, followed by the break up of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, resulting in

a central and eastern Europe of twenty-eight states. Only six of these states are considered homogeneous - Albania, Armenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. All of the remaining twenty-two states have national minorities comprising over ten percent of the population. One of the most serious problems that have emerged thereafter was the rise of ethnic nationalism and the issue of minority rights. As Miall (1994: 1) rightly points out

> **"The appeal to ethnic nationalism, however, threatens to exclude minorities and encourages counter-nationalism...demands for self-determination may lead minorities to attempt to secede from the host state and create a state of their own."**

The recent genocide in former Yugoslavia and the internecine wars between Serbians, Croatians, Muslims and ethnic Albanians have produced a sad reminder of the power and emotionalism associated with the assertion of ethnic identities.

People's common geographical origins, shared dialects, languages and customs, subservience to a single political authority and political structures, and a single religious background, were the real issues that bound them together and produced a common identity. They were not the imagined communities of a fictitious past and mythological origin that engendered a common solidarity. To suggest otherwise, as protagonists of Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" would concur, is actually to deny such realities. There are also those who subscribe to the view that imagined communities are not invented communities. However, the two are not mutually exclusive and different in meaning from each other. To imagine a community is to create if not to invent one in "as if" terms and not necessarily always in actual terms. The murder, maiming and widespread destruction of settled lifestyles in central and eastern Europe are not imaginary by any means, but real. Neither should these atrocities be understood as subtly coerced class wars that begins by remotely placed political elites only, although such people often have vested interests in stoking the flames of such battles. Ethnic identity is a deep-seated sense of self and community identity that often begins from a common geographical origin which is the seat of a common social system and language, out of which in-group and out-group identities emerge. Such identities may have a sense of strong symbolic continuity when transferred by such people through migration.

It is on the basis of these realities that political leaders in Europe have initiated the formation of what is presently being referred to as a transnational regime for minority rights.

Although still relatively weak, the regime attempts to offer protections under international law and international conventions such as the European Convention on Political Rights, and the political commitments entered into by member states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Attempts to achieve effectiveness of these initiatives are couched in at least three terms of requirements:

1. States are encouraged to comply by making observance of CSCE commitments a condition of participation in European institutions; 2. CSCE member states have accepted a mutual right of monitoring compliance with the set standards; and 3. The CSCE is entitled to send fact finding and preventive diplomacy missions to their territories (Miall 1994: 3).

It is ironic that in a part of the world where the maturity of capitalism was enhanced by a strong culture of individualism (Western Europe), and where elitism and group identity was to be replaced by socialist cooperative behaviour (Eastern Europe), the first tangible signs of recognition of ethnic identities and group rights are now taking shape. Minority rights are defined as the rights of minorities to receive equal treatment, to practice their culture, religion and language, and to participate fully in the political and economic life of the state (Miall 1994: 2). The recent ethnic clashes around the world are in essence a denial of these rights and have therefore enticed a proactive stance from many European governments against abuse of ethnic and minority rights. This is an important advancement from the culture of human rights that in essence placed emphasis on individual rights. A transnational regime on minority rights will hopefully serve as a vehicle to conscientise entire populations, including narrowly minded fundamentalists or expedient and ruthless politicians in a way that will make ethnic differences more acceptable in this divided and turbulent world. But its effectiveness must not be overstated. While showing support for the idea, Mayall (1994) cautions that their distinctiveness from other parts of the world, in terms of capacity to protect, should not be exaggerated. He focussed on three issues that could offer minorities an assurance that their interests could be protected:

- the development of an additional layer of governance at European level, linked to stronger regions;
- a system of multilateral surveillance to monitor abuses; and
- an international capability to intervene to prevent massive abuses of human rights.

These points are like good omens when viewed against the recent intervention by NATO forces in Serbia to protect the ethnic Albanians from Serbian atrocities. At least in Europe,

a precedent has been set to warn other chauvinistic leaders who thrive on ethnic dissent not to threaten the stability of the continent and world peace through such actions.

The atrocities and genocide in Africa, central and eastern Europe brings Peter Vale's ominous warning to stark reality: "We ignore ethnicity at our peril – if our society fails to engage it, it may rise to engulf us." (quoted in Howe, 1993). South Africa's surprisingly relatively peaceful transition to democracy in April 1994 when the first general election was held, created a euphoria that understandably shocked the nation and the world. The ANC's careful strategising and containment of ethnically based political forces, such as amongst Afrikaners and Zulus, helped to steer the country into an era of peace and hope. Much had depended upon the charismatic and persuasive leadership of the country's first president, Nelson Mandela. Mandela's route of reconciliation and an admirable avoidance of building a cult of personality worship around his twenty-seven years of incarceration turned the nation's attention away from avenging wrongs of the past. Yet it would not be entirely wrong to suggest that it is in Mandela's personality and his costly sacrifices against apartheid that the greatest respect was accorded, not in the organisation from which he came. On the contrary, President Milosevec for instance, from former Yugoslavia, masqueraded as a magnanimous communist who worked closely with General Tito to manage their ethnically diverse country. But his genocidal actions against the ethnic Albanians showed no sign of a committed socialist. The breakdown of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of the Soviet Union gave rise to a rapid surge of free market principles into Yugoslavia, and caught its leadership unaware. There was no time and inadequate preparation for a reorientation in the country to meet the challenges of an overpowering new ideology that brought socialism to an abrupt halt. The political leaders in Yugoslavia, such as Milosevic, resorted to expedient tactics by exploiting the suppressed ethnic grievances that were not allowed to surface during Tito's reign, causing major ethnic clashes. Yet prior to this situation Yugoslavia was deemed to have one of the best constitutions for a country with a diverse population, in that it addressed minority and other ethnic rights in sensitive ways. The personalised role of Tito as the supreme arbiter and his methods of managing disputes through political pressure in pre-arranged meetings, projected an image of Yugoslavia as a society without conflicts. When Tito died in 1980 and the party collapsed, conflicts started developing everywhere in the country with no democratic structures, institutions or procedures to manage and end them (Pajic 1994). Although the experiences in Northern Ireland show that these are not always sufficient to quell ethnic disputes.

One common point emerges from the experiences of control over ethnically diverse populations in South Africa and Yugoslavia i.e. the preponderance of leaders with the ability to manage and control ethnic disputes. Neither the era of Mandela's statesmanship nor the human rights orientation of South Africa's constitution should be considered sufficient to steer the country away from future ethnic conflicts. Nor should the constitution be considered sufficient to create a sense of belonging to the country among its minorities when, in terms of the European definition of minority rights, it offers very little to them as segments of a population. For instance, the restoration of Indian languages and offering of more facilities such as through the electronic media through constitutional means and effective action, will constitute a strong symbolic message of their proper integration into the wider South African arena and is likely to impact upon future patterns of voting. But more importantly, a revision of the Bill of Rights and debate about the direction and implications of the CSCE on minority rights can help to produce a more appropriate constitution that is in line with important contemporary developments in other parts of the world. As it stands South Africa's present constitution is more a reflection of the demands of post World War Two conditions, based more on individual rights than on collective rights. This is not to imply that minority or ethnic rights should replace individual rights. I am of the conviction that there could be no respect and acceptance for ethnic or minority rights if there are no individual rights. It will be a realistic position to adopt since the very basis of the South African government's approach to reconstruction and development, and rightly so, is empathetically based along racial and ethnic lines as well. The fruition of racial equality is unlikely to be achieved in the near future. However, there appears to be a sort of undeclared but farcical thought that if racial equality is ever achieved, then ethnic differences are likely to dissipate. History has shown the difficulties of achieving either of these objectives. This suggestion should not be mistaken to be a tacit call for a return to the ethnic constitutionalism of the apartheid era. It is instead a call to debate these issues further in order to try and synchronise individual and minority rights in ways that would positively project the government as acting in a proactive manner on possible ethnic tensions in the future.

In order to acquire a more in-depth understanding of Indians perceptions of and responses to transformation, the issues discussed above must be viewed against their conventional cultural norms and world-views. Among Indians, subscriptions to customary norms are central to life's values and in a creation of a general consciousness. Living in one house for as long as possible, monogamy, remaining married to one person and avoiding divorce,

staying in one job for as long as possible, maintaining strong family values, among other issues, are signs of stability, orderliness and belief that such factors are the ways in which societies should function. Discipline and adherence to conventional norms is what is widely considered among Indians to produce stability and orderliness. Its effect is to produce positive perceptions and responses on an individual level and in civil society. Any deviation from this pattern is prone to be labelled as signs of instability, either in an individual's life or in society. It is for these reasons, together with the range of negative experiences since the 1994 general election, that the euphoria and optimism before and after April 1994 was so short lived.

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