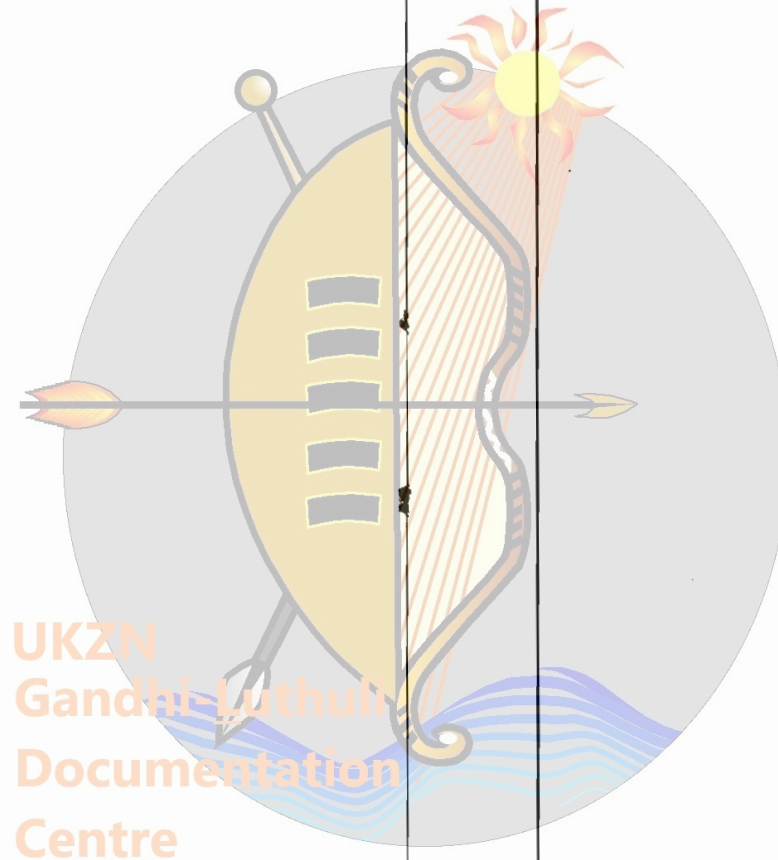


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Natal Tamil Vedic Society

THE Natal Tamil Vedic Society was formed on the 26th September, 1951, when two of the most outstanding Tamil organisations, the Hindu Tamil Institute and the Young Men's Vedic Society, amalgamated under the name, The Natal Tamil Vedic Society. The Young Men's Vedic Society, the older of the two organisations, had been founded in 1912 and the Hindu Tamil Institute on the 27th February, 1914.

The Young Men's Vedic Society was founded in answer to the call of His Holiness Swami Shankerand, who spent some years in South Africa preaching, particularly in Durban, the gospel of Hinduism and consolidating the forces of the Hindus.

Consistent with its objects the Society conducted weekly meetings at which lectures and discourses on Hinduism, with emphasis on Saiva Sithandham, were held. The Society also conducted a library and for some time adult classes in Tamil. It played an important role in fostering Tamil culture and was instrumental in convening the first Natal Tamil Conference in 1926. The Society has over the years produced several historical and classical dramas in Tamil and among its members have been some of the best musicians and singers in the Tamil community. It has been the training ground for many people who have attained the highest positions in public life. Mr. T. M. Naicker, Mr. T. S. Pillay, and the late Mr. G. B. Chetty, have been its Presidents while the position of the Secretary of the Society was occupied at different times by Mr. G. B. Chetty, Mr. P. R. Pather and Mr. C. G. Chetty. Some of those who served the Society and have now passed on were Mr. A. M. Padayachee, Mr. R. A. Padayachee, Mr. S. S. Pather, Mr. V. K. Pillay, Mr. R. Egambarem Moodley and Mr. V. R. S. Padayachee. With a view to creating a communal centre for the Tamil community the Society acquired certain five sites in Carlisle Street. It retained the site at the corner of Carlisle and Albert Streets and disposed of the other four.

The Hindu Tamil Institute was established to promote Tamil education and culture by opening Tamil schools. For this purpose it acquired the site at the corner of Prince Edward and Cross Streets. The then Trustees, the late Mr. V. S. C. Pather and Mr. R. K. Naidoo set about immediately to erect a building on the site—a building that would serve a dual purpose—a hall and a school. At this time two private Tamil schools were being conducted and on the completion of the building both these schools were absorbed by the Hindu Tamil Institute. In the organisation of the Tamil school the late Mr. M. Sooboo Naidoo, Mr. T. P. Pather, Mr. P. T. Pillay and Mr. V. G. Padayachee have rendered years of yeoman service. The hall, being the only one of its kind in Durban, was used by all sections of the Indian people.

The arrival of the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, P.C., as the first Agent-General of the Government of India in South Africa, following upon the First Round Table Conference in 1926-1927, marked the opening of a new chapter in the education of Indian children. As an educationist of outstanding ability, Mr. Sastri looked into the system of Indian education and found it wanting in many respects. He lost no time in sounding a clarion call to the Indian people to provide school buildings to accommodate about 30,000 children of school-going age who were growing in enforced illiteracy. The Hindu Tamil Institute was one of the first to answer that call and thus began the second stage of its life. The original building which had served its purpose for 14 years was demolished and a two-storeyed school to accommodate 250 Indian children was erected at a cost of £2,500. The Hindu Tamil Government-Aided Indian School was officially opened by Mr. Sastri on the 27th January, 1928. In 1935 the late Mr. Koopie Murrie, whose munificence is well known, gave a donation of £1,600, which enabled the Institute to pay off its mortgage on the school.

In 1928 Prince Edward and Cross Streets were purely residential areas. Ten years later they became predominantly commercial in character and the school inspectors reported that the Hindu Tamil Government-Aided Indian School premises were unsuitable for the purposes of a school.

This adverse report was a blessing in disguise for it prompted the Institute to acquire from the Durban City Council the present site at the corner of Cross and Carlisle Streets. With a building grant from the Natal Education Department the Institute erected a three-storeyed school with 10 classrooms. The foundation stone of this school was laid on the 12th April, 1939, by Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, at present the Vice-President of India, who was then in South Africa on a cultural tour. The school was officially opened by the war-time Mayor of Durban, Councillor Rupert Ellis Brown, on the 27th January, 1940. The old school building which had served as a school for mother-tongue and English education for 24 years was converted into four shops and three flats. During the 32 years of its existence the school has had only two principals, Mr. N. N. Perumal, who occupied the post until the time of his death in 1948, and Mr. V. K. Naidoo, the present incumbent.

In its early formative years the Institute had the benefit of the signal services of the late Messrs. V. S. C. Pather, R. K. Naidoo, M. Sooboo Naidoo, T. P. Pather, R. S. G. Pather, R. K. Pather, S. B. Pather, V. G. Pather, M. P. Pather, A. M. Padayachee, V. G. Padayachee, P. T. Pillay, C. S. Huri, R. K. Reddy and Mr. R. B. Chetty. Mr. P. R. Pather held the post of Secretary of the Institute from May, 1918, to 26th September, 1951, when it was incorporated into the Natal Tamil Vedic Society. Except for the original single-storeyed building erected in 1914, Mr. P. R. Pather has been instrumental in establishing all the buildings of the Hindu Tamil Institute.

Messrs. A. M. Padayachee, G. B. Chetty, C. G. Chetty, M. Y. Nainaar were appointed as the President, Chairman of the Council, Hon. General Secretary and Hon. Treasurer respectively of the Natal Tamil Vedic Society when it was formed in 1951. Mr. P. R. Pather was appointed as the Chairman of the Council in 1952 and held that office until he relinquished it in 1960. Mr. T. S. Pillay, the

President of the Society, was first elected in 1955.

As soon as it was formed, the Society concerned itself with the erection of a hall on its site at the corner of Carlisle and Albert Streets. It aimed at providing three halls to serve all sections of the Indian people. The foundation stone was laid on the 22nd April, 1956, and the building was officially opened by Mr. P. R. Pather before a representative assembly of 3,000 people on the 16th December, 1957. The hall on the ground floor and its gallery has a seating capacity of 1,100 and bears the name of Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the Vice-President of India. It has a modern stage for the equipment of which Mrs. T. T. Padayachee, of Pietermaritzburg, donated £750. The hall on the first floor is called the Kalaimagall Hall. It is named after the Goddess of Learning. Towards the cost of this, the women's section of the Society has undertaken to provide £5,000. Of this £1,000 has already been paid. The hall on the second floor is called the Indian Settlers' (1860) Hall, in memory of the early Indian Settlers. Towards the cost of this hall Mr. and Mrs. V. Sivaram Pather, of Johannesburg, made the munificent donation of £2,500.

The Natal Tamil Vedic Society Building has cost £43,000. A further £7,000 has been spent in the provision of 2,000 chairs and other equipment.

Early in 1959 the Society extended the Hindu Tamil Government-Aided Indian School by erecting an additional six classrooms and caretakers' quarters at a cost of £1,000. Towards these additions the Society received a Building Grant from the Education Department of £5,000 and from the Natal Indian Teachers' School Building Trust a grant of £2,000. The school has now a roll of 600 children.

The Society is spending another £3,000 in additions to the Hindu Tamil Mansions, which will bring in an additional rent of £30 per month.

Exclusive of the amounts which is received from the Natal Education Department and from the Natal Indian Teachers' Society, the Natal Tamil Vedic Society has collected about £48,000 from members of the South Indian Hindu community. This is, indeed, a highly creditable achievement. The Natal Tamil Vedic Society Building has now become the

centre of all Indian activities and serves a very useful purpose.

The officials of the Society are:—

Trustees: Mr. M. K. Murrie (Life), Messrs. P. R. Pather, M. Y. Nainaar, K. R. Pillay, D. K. Naidu.

Hon. Life-Presidents: Messrs. T. M. Naicker, R. B. Chetty and P. R. Pather.

President: Mr. T. S. Pillay.

Hon. Life Vice-Presidents: Messrs. M. Y. Nainaar, S. R. Pather, C. G. Chetty, T. S. Pillay and C. J. Pather.

Vice-Presidents: Messrs. A. S. Pather, M. M. Naidoo, C. N. Chetty, A. R. Naidoo, M. R. Mistry, V. M. Govender and Danpal Naidoo.

Chairman of Council: Mr. R. S. Pather.

Hon. General Secretary: Mr. C. G. Chetty.

Assistant Secretary: Mr. S. A. Pather.

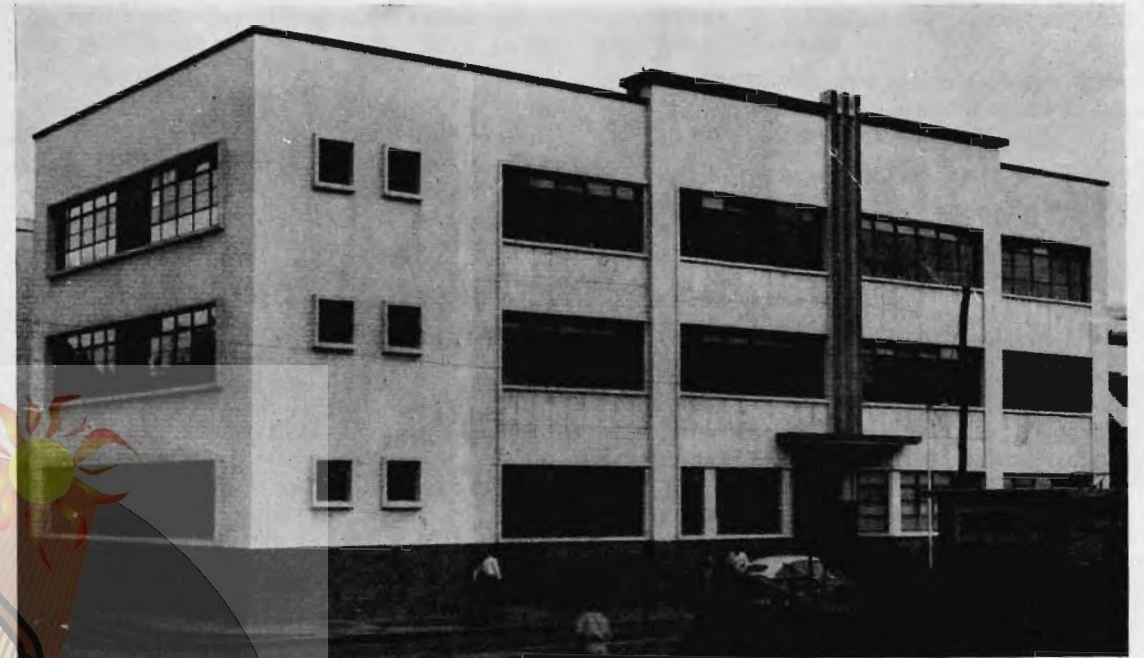
Treasurer: Mr. M. Y. Nainaar.

Assistant Treasurer: Mr. M. K. Padayachee.

Council Members: Messrs. V. G. Naidoo, P. C. Pillay, A. Gopaul Naidoo, R. P. Moodley, Dr. M. B. Naidoo, Mr. P. S. Kander, Dr. M. P. Pather, Messrs. R. R. Naidoo, C. M. Moodley, S. Ruthra Pather, S. T. Nadas Odayar, A. K. Pillay, S. K. Naidoo, Pavaday R. Pather, R. K. Chetty, P. T. Govinder, R. Kisten Chetty, P. M. R. Moodley, S. R. Moodley, V. K. Naidu and G. N. Pather.



Natal Tamil Vedic Society, Durban — Radhakrishnan Hall, Kallaimagal Hall and Indian Settlers' Hall



Hindu Tamil Institute Govt. Aided Indian School, Durban



Natal Tamil Vedic Society Building — Shops and Flats