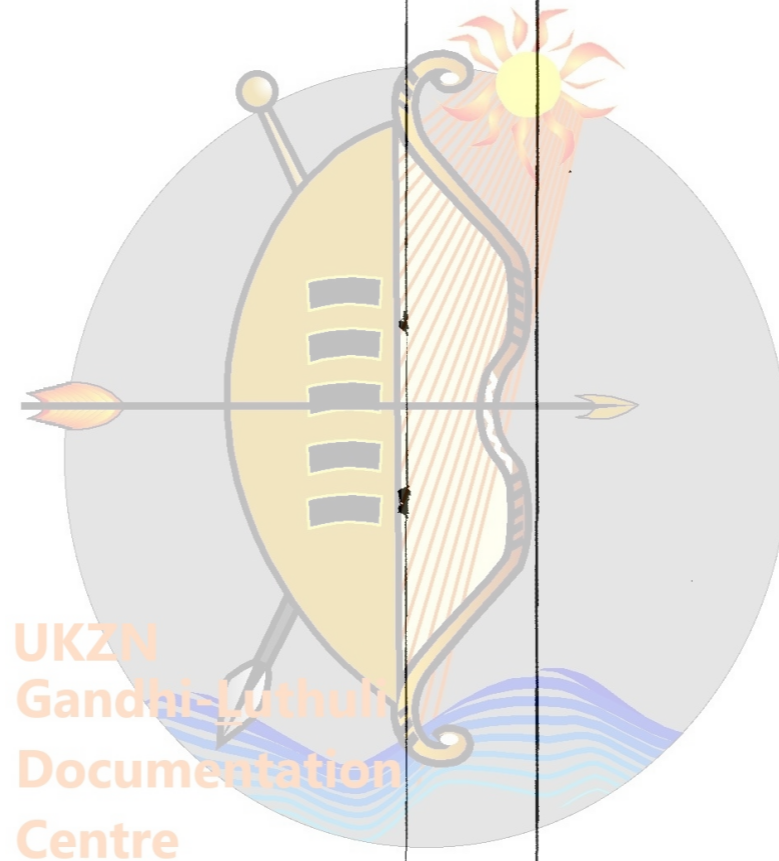


DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

University of Durban-Westville

ACCESSION NO. 1/442

Printed by
UNIVERSAL PRINTING WORKS
53 Beatrice Street, Durban



UKZN
Gandhi-Luthuli
Documentation
Centre

The
Hindu Heritage
in
South Africa

Edited by
RANJI S. NOWBATH
SOOKRAJ CHOTAI
B. D. LALLA



Published by
THE SOUTH AFRICAN HINDU MAHA SABHA
49 Lorne Street, Durban
November 1960

Andhra Maha Sabha

of South Africa

THE Indians who migrated from India and settled in South Africa in the early days consisted of people who spoke various Indian languages. Amongst them was also a large community of Telugu-speaking people, known as the Andhras. The majority of these Andhras hailed from the villages of India. There were amongst these early settlers not many persons who possessed a good and advanced knowledge of the Telugu language; neither were they versed in the Vedas or the other religious scriptures. This lack of learned men hindered the Telugus from producing Telugu teachers and preachers required to propagate the Telugu language among themselves. Consequently, the language became sadly neglected.

As years went by, illiteracy in the Telugu language continued to increase, in spite of the Telugu patasalas and classes which were conducted here and there by interested individuals or groups of people. The people participated in bhajans and natakams occasionally, but these were not sufficient to quench the literary thirst of so vast a community which at present numbers about 50,000. Such was the state of affairs as from the 17th November, 1860, when Indians first landed on the shores of South Africa from the S.S. Truro up to the time of the arrival of the second Agent-General for the Government of India in South Africa, the late Sir Kurma Vengetta Reddi in the year 1929.

As Sir Kurma Reddi was an Andhra he made some of his public utterances in Telugu. This inspired the local Andhras to take stock of themselves. They realised that they had grossly neglected their mother-tongue. Some enthusiasts took the initiative to organise the community, with the presence of Sir Kurma acting as a stimulant. Mr. V. M. Naidu, the veteran librarian of the M. K. Gandhi Library, took the lead in making such efforts. He was ably assisted by Mr. A. J. Naidoo who was kind enough to place his business premises in

Bond Street at the disposal of the conveners to hold their informal meetings.

A large number of Telugus attended a very important meeting held at the Hindu Tamil Institute, Cross Street, Durban, on the 14th May, 1931. Prominent amongst the conveners were Mr. B. A. Naidoo, the late A. Bungar Naidoo, the late V. G. R. Naidoo, the late S. P. Applesamy Naidoo, the late S. M. Naidoo, and Messrs. V. C. Nayana Rajh, M. R. Naidoo, C. Dalliah Naidoo, P. Abboy Naidoo, T. Moonsamy Reddy, V. M. Naidoo, A. J. Naidoo, and L. Krishnaya Naidoo. At this meeting The Andhra Maha Sabha was formally established. The first officials and General Council Members were :—

Patrons, Sir Kurma Vengetta Reddi, Kt., B.A., B.L., Venketarathnum Rajoo, Boomreddy Akku Naidoo; *president*, Mr. V. M. Naidu; *vice-presidents*, Messrs. A. Bungar Naidoo, M. Sooboo Naidoo, V. G. R. Naidoo, G. Venkatesamy Naidoo and Ragavaloo Naidoo; *General Secretaries*, Mr. A. J. Naidoo and D. V. Naidoo; *hon. treasurer*, Mr. C. Dalliah Naidoo; *hon. auditor*, Mr. L. Kris Naidoo.

General Council: Messrs. V. C. Nyanah Rajh, M. R. Naidoo, S. P. Applesamy Naidoo, Parthasarathie Naidoo, E. V. Naidoo, Y. M. Lazarus, L. Krishnaya Naidoo, T. Moonsamy Reddy, A. Jaganatha Naidoo, Balle Soobramoney Naidoo, R. E. Naidoo, M. Govindsamy Naidoo, P. Abboy Naidoo, V. Kalliah Naidoo and G. S. Ramamoorthie Naidoo.

The main objects and purposes of the Sabha are to bring the Telugus into closer unity, with the Sabha as the parent organisation; to aspire towards the ideals of an Andhra Brotherhood; to propagate the Telugu language; to spread the teachings of the Hindu Religion; to establish branch sabhas; to open Telugu patasalas; to assist in such educational pursuits as are necessary in this country; to build schools or halls for these purposes, to encourage Andhras

to live in peace and harmony with all sections of the Indian community, and to be good citizens of the Union of South Africa.

The presence of a religious preacher from India about this time also gave added inspiration to those who were at the helm of affairs to make a success of the newly-formed organisation. He was Shri Paramahansa Sachidananda Yogweswarar who was welcomed by the Sabha on the 20th November, 1931. At this function he spoke in Telugu.

When Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Professor of Religion, Ethics and Philosophy and Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra, University Vizagapatnam, India, who is an Andhra, visited this country, he was accorded a reception by the Sabha on Friday, 7th April, 1939, at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Naidoo, Stella Hill, Durban. Dr. Radhakrishnan was made an honorary member of the Sabha and presented with a suitably inscribed gold medal. Dr. Radhakrishnan is at present the Vice-President of the Republic of India.

The Telugu community is so vast and so widely scattered throughout the country that it was an impossibility for the parent organisation to serve adequately the Andhras from its headquarters. It, therefore, set about forming branches in various districts. These, in turn, opened patasalas and conducted Telugu classes. The first of these was formed at Stella Hill, which was opened by Sir Kurma Vengetta Reddi on the 11th October, 1931. Then followed one at Springfield on the 6th March, 1932.

Gradually the number of branches increased either through the perseverance of the parent organisation or through the initiative of the local residents of the different districts. The following is a list of the branches of the Sabha:—

Stella Hill Andhra Sabha; Springfield Andhra Sabha; Pathmajuranni Andhra Sabha, Clairwood; Andhra Vidya Sabha, Puntan's Hill; Clare Estate Andhra Vishnu Sabha; Sea View Andhra Sabha; Tongaat Andhra Sabha; Stanger Andhra Sabha; Melville Andhra Sabha; Mt. Edgecombe Andhra Sabha; Greenwood Park Andhra Sabha; Malvern Sarasvathie Andhra Sabha; Durban North Andhra Sabha; Merebank Andhra Sabha; Durban Central Patasala; Pietermaritzburg Andhra Sabha; Illovo Andhra Sabha; Umlaas Andhra Sabha; Sydenham Andhra Sabha; Mayville Andhra Sabha; Maidstone Andhra Sabha;

Port Shepstone Andhra Sabha; Selborne Andhra Patasala; Darnall Andhra Sabha; Chatsworth Andhra Sabha.

The following institutions belong to the women:—

Pathmajuranni Andhra Mahila Manula Sabha, Clairwood; Sydenham Andhra Stree Sungam; Puntan's Hill Andhra Stree Sungam; Sea View Andhra Stree Sungam; Stella Hill Andhra Stree Sungam; Durban Central Andhra Stree Sungam; Port Shepstone Andhra Stree Sungam.

In 1939, the Andhra Maha Sabha instituted the Andhra Eisteddfod to enable children, attending the various patasalas, to compete for a number of floating trophies in various subjects. In addition to the trophies, certificates of merit are also awarded. The eisteddfod syllabus includes items for competition by men and women. An interesting feature of the Festival is the Telugu Folk Dancing, *Gobbi*. The eisteddfod has become a regular annual event and is generally held on the second Sunday in August. It has become a gala day for the Andhras and no hall seems to be large enough to accommodate all those participating and attending. The anniversary of the foundation of the Sabha is celebrated at the same time. The first eisteddfod was held at the Gandhi Library Hall, Queen Street, Durban, under the distinguished patronage of Mrs. Rama Rao, wife of the then Agent-General of the Government of India in South Africa. She presented the trophies and certificates to the successful candidates. The second eisteddfod was attended by Mrs. Mary Barr, a European lady who had arrived direct from Gandhi's Ashram, India. Before presenting the prizes she addressed the large gathering in Telugu.

To bring about uniformity in the curriculum of the various patasalas, a committee, called the Andhra Education and Eisteddfod Committee, was set up by the Sabha. The function of the Committee is to draw up time tables, hold examinations, correct examination papers and award certificates of merit. On Andhra New Year's Day (Ugaadi) it holds a public Prayer Recital Festival in which the various Patasalas compete. The holding of the Annual Andhra Eisteddfod is also the responsibility of the Committee. It, furthermore, assists in the Prayer Services held weekly.

In 1941, acting under the special instructions of the General Council, Mr. L. Kris Naidoo made representations on behalf of the Sabha to the educational authorities to include Telugu as a language subject for the Junior Certificate and Matriculation Examination. A lengthy correspondence followed. The names of Mr. S. N. C. Varadacharyulu, U.B.P., and Mr. J. Jeevaruthnum, B.A.; both graduates of the Andhra University, India, were submitted as examiner and moderator respectively. After persistent efforts the representations bore fruit in 1948 when Mr. Bungaree A. Naidoo, a graduate of the University of Natal, was permitted to offer Telugu as a language subject for his Social Science Degree. This was the first time in the history of South Africa that an Indian language was recognised and accepted for a University Examination.

The need for an Andhra Social Centre to further the various activities of the Sabha, its branches and members, became a very pressing one. The then president, Mr. V. M. Naidu, left no stone unturned to influence the General Council to purchase a property for the Sabha. Eventually in 1937 the Sabha bought a property at 43 Leopold Street, Durban, for approximately £2,000. The General Council, with the able assistance of Messrs. B. A. Naidoo, A. Bungar Naidoo and R. Ramsamy Alfred Chetty, was able to raise the required amount by various ways and means and acquired the title deeds of the property.

Then began the long struggle of the Sabha to erect a four-storey building comprising a hall, shops, and flats. The outbreak of the Second World War and the refusal of the Union Government to issue a Building Permit held up progress as did the subsequent adverse conditions after the termination of the War. But the determination to have the *Andhra Bavanamu* was not killed. Eventually on Sunday, the 23rd of March, 1947, Sarvajithu Nama Samvathasramu, Mrs. Mariamma Chetty, a trustee, laid the foundation stone amidst a representative gathering, after the performance of the Havan.

At a goodwill lunch given by Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Nydoo at Clairwood in honour of the officials of the Sabha and other interested Andhras on Sunday, the 19th December, 1954, the proposition of an *Andhra House* was mooted, and an appeal made for donations. Members present responded generously and a sum of £5,000 was promised then and there.

With the able lead given by Mr. M. A. Nydoo, the General Council continued with its drive for funds, adding many other generous donors to the list. On Sunday, the 11th of April, 1955, a Havan Prayer Service was publicly held on the site before building operations were begun.

The building, consisting of the main hall, gallery and offices, with provisions for the completion of the originally planned four storeys, was erected at a cost of approximately £15,000. To consecrate it, a Prayer Service and Havan Ceremony were performed on Sunday, 9th June, 1957, at 10.30 a.m., by the General Council and the branches under the direction of Mr. V. C. Nayana Rajh and Mr. S. N. C. Varadacharyulu.

On Sunday, the 23rd June, 1957, at 2.30 p.m., *Andhra House* was officially opened amidst a large gathering by a senior trustee of the Sabha, Mr. Boomreddy Akku Naidoo of Stella Hill, Durban, and thereafter the foundation stone was unveiled by a patron of the Sabha, Mrs. Athielutchmee Chetty, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Ramsamy Chetty, of Avoca, Natal. The function was presided over by Mr. Bala Naidoo, B.A., now Dr. M. B. Naidoo, Vice-Principal of Sastri College.

The Sabha sent a memorandum to the All-India Radio, New Delhi, asking it to include Telugu broadcasts for overseas listeners, and instructed their India Representative, Mr. M. Venketa Sastri, to make representations to the All-India Radio on the same subject. As a result of their endeavours Telugu can now be heard sometimes over the air.

In terms of the Deed of Trust the following were elected trustees for life:—

Messrs. B. A. Naidoo (deceased), R. R. Alfred Chetty (deceased), A. B. Naidoo (deceased), Bommi Pothnaidoo (deceased), M. G. Naidoo (deceased), T. J. Naidoo, V. Appalaraju, V. M. Naidu, T. M. Reddy, S. T. Naidoo, R. Balram Naidoo, B. Nagiah, P. K. Ramsamy Naidoo, S. V. Naidoo (deceased), A. P. Naidoo (deceased).

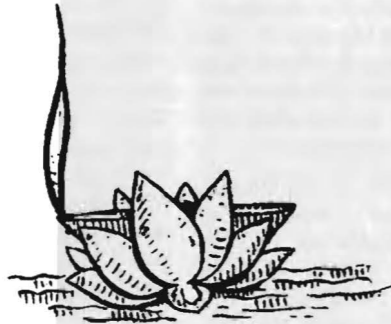
In recognition of the continuous good and meritorious services rendered to the Sabha for a number of years, Messrs. V. M. Naidu, A. J. Naidoo, L. Kris Naidoo, D. V. Naidoo, B. A. Naidoo, T. M. Reddy, V. C. Nayana Rajh, S. C. Naidoo, A. Lutchmanna Naidoo and Mr. M. J. Soobiah Naidoo were elected to the post

of Hon. Life Vice-Presidents. These men are still actively serving the Sabha.

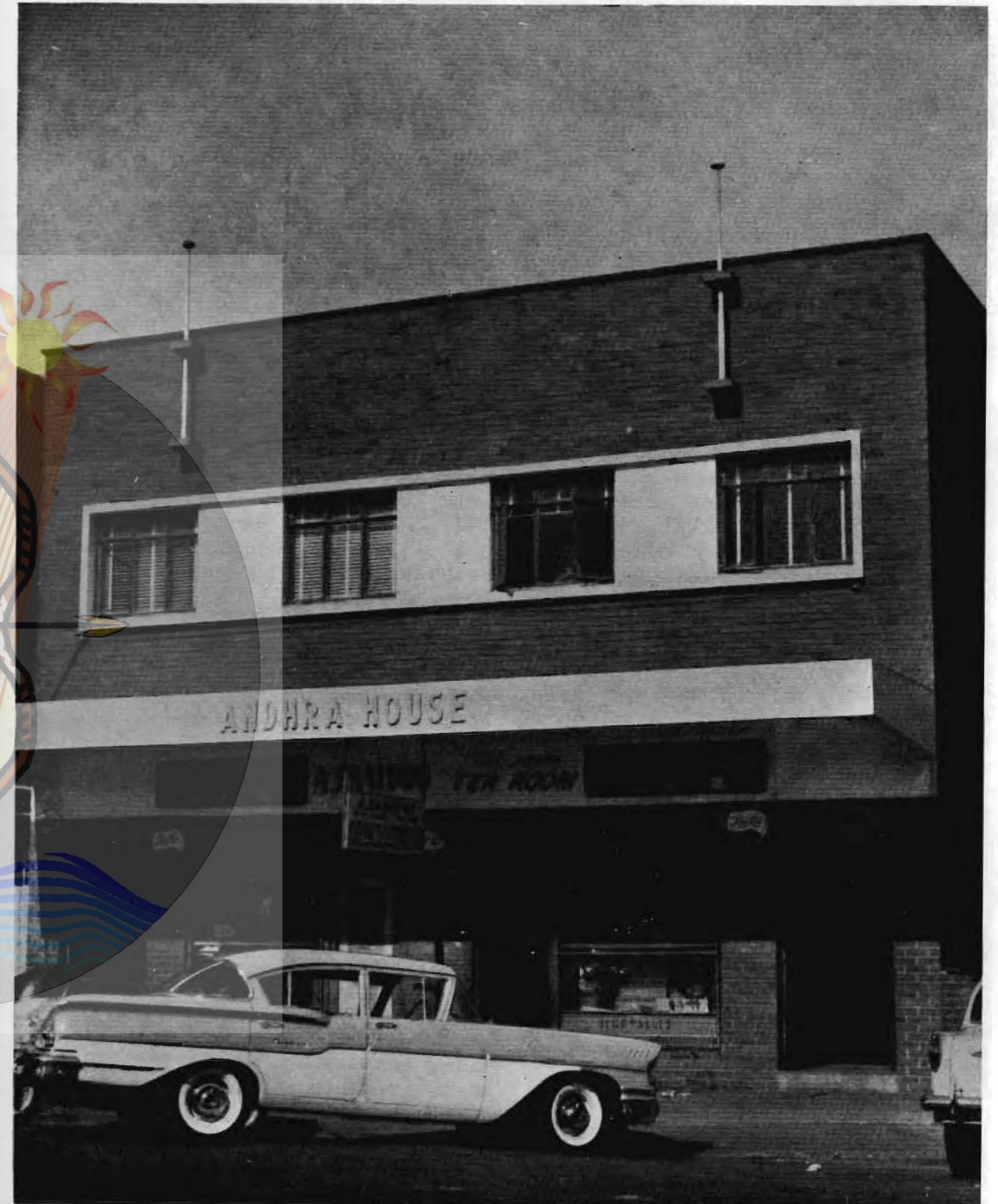
The following are the officials of the Andhra Maha Sabha of South Africa for the year 1960: *Trustees*: Messrs. B. A. Naidoo, Appalaraju, P. K. Ramsamy Naidoo, B. Nagiah, T. J. Naidoo, V. M. Naidu, T. M. Reddy, S. T. Naidoo, R. Balram Naidoo. *Patrons*: Mrs. Athieutchmee Chetty, Mr. G. V. Naidoo, Mrs. A. B. Naidoo and Dr. M. G. Naidoo; *Hon. Member*: Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (India); *Hon. Life Vice-Presidents*: Messrs. A. J. Naidoo, L. Krishnaya Naidoo, D. V. Naidoo, V. C. Nayana Rajh, S. C. Naidoo, A. Lutchmanna Naidoo,

M. J. Soobiah Naidoo; *President*: Mr. M. A. Nydoo; *Vice-Presidents*: Messrs. K. R. Naidoo, N. G. Maistry, S. Dass, P. B. A. Reddy, Y. R. Venkatasen; *General Secretaries*: Messrs. M. S. Reddy and P. B. Sanasy; *Treasurer*: Mr. P. R. Naidoo; *Auditor*: Mr. L. Kris Naidoo.

General Council: Messrs. V. S. Naidoo, N. Gengan, B. A. Ramsamy, J. Chengiah, R. S. Ramnaidoo, V. Rajendra Naidoo, R. Chirpanah, R. N. Naidoo, R. Mallaya, P. N. Dan, S. N. C. Varadacharyulu, M. C. Naidoo, S. R. Naidoo, C. G. Naidoo, S. P. Bobby Naidoo, Adiah Naidoo, M. Ganas and A. Ramoorthie.



UKZN
Gandhi Luthuli
Documentation
Centre



Andhra House, Leopold Street, Durban