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THE INDIAN POPULATION OF NATAL - GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

Prof. E. Stander.

Natal, although the smallest province in the Republic, prides itself on having the densest population. At the time of the 1960 Official Census, the average density in Natal was 88.7 persons per square mile as against 33.8 per square mile for the country as a whole. Transvaal came second with 57.2, followed by the Free State with 27.8. The Cape Province, with its large tracts of Karoo and Karoid areas, was the most sparsely populated province with only 19.2 persons per square mile. Comparative figures for a few other countries are:

Hong Kong	8,000
The Netherlands	677
Great Britain	550
Japan	460
India	314
U.S.A.	60
New Zealand	23
Australia	4

The fact that more people per square mile live in Natal than in any other province, must be ascribed mainly to its favourable rainfall (only a small area in the Upper Tugela has less than 30 inches of rain per year) and to its possession of the best seaport in the country.

Table I gives the population in Natal in 1960 according to race:

TABLE I.

POPULATION OF NATAL : 1960

Whites	340,235	11.4%
Coloureds	45,253	1.5%
Indians	394,854	13.3%
Bantu	<u>2,192,578</u>	<u>73.8%</u>
Total	<u>2,979,920</u>	<u>100 %</u>

It is remarkable that, since the beginning of the 20th century the Indian and the white populations have been numerically more or less ^{on a} ~~=~~ par, each forming about 10% of the total population. In a publication by the Natal Regional Survey in 1952, Alsop commented on the remarkable stability in the relative strengths of the four ethnic groups over the period 1904 to 1946.¹⁾ The latest census figures, however, reveal a new trend, viz. that the Indian population has become ~~numerically~~ ^{numerically} substantially stronger than the whites. In 1960 there were 55,000 more persons of Indian origin than whites and they formed 13.3% of the total population of Natal, whereas the whites formed only 11.4%

Considering the White-Indian population ratio from the historical angle, it is significant that after 1915 very few Indian immigrants arrived in South Africa, and after 1930 emigration to India virtually came to an end. Interstate migration has therefore been concluded for more than a quarter of a century during which period the increase of the Indian population has been a natural one. The net rate of increase (i.e. the excess of births over deaths) is one of the highest in the world, so that, at the present rate, the Indian population will double itself in less than 30 years time. During the inter-census period (1951 - 1960) Natal Indians have increased in number by 32%, compared to an increase of 27.5% for whites. During the last few years, a substantial number of white immigrants especially from other parts of Africa, settled in Natal. This migration of people may last for ~~some~~ ^{quite} a number of years depending/

1) Alsop, M.H. : The **P**opulation of Natal. Natal Regional Survey, 1952, p. 10.

of years, depending on the political situation in Africa. Natal is presumably also gaining white people from some of the other provinces in the Republic, so that a demographic projection of the white population of Natal is a rather hazardous task.

In population studies, the main contribution of the geographer could well be a study of the distribution and settlement patterns, as has been so admirably done by Fair for the population of Natal according to the 1946 and 1951 censuses.¹⁾

In the present study the 45 magisterial districts of Natal have been grouped into six regions, very much on the same basis as was done by Alsop and Fair in their population studies of 1952 and 1953, respectively. In these studies, the coastal belt was taken as one geographic region, whereas in the present study the coastal belt has been divided into the Durban-Pinetown area, the North Coast and the South Coast, mainly because the economic and demographic development trends seem to differ rather significantly in these three parts of the coastal belt. Other regions are the Midlands of Natal, the Interior Uplands and Zululand. By means of proportional circles, Figure 1 shows the increase of the Indian population during the intercensal periods 1946 - 1951 and 1951 - 1960. The graph shows the composition and growth for all the ethnic groups between 1904 and 1960.

The Durban-Pinetown Area:

The 1960 census reveals the extreme concentration at Durban, and the urban/

1.) Fair, T.J.D.: The Geographical Distribution of the Population of Natal.

Durban, and the urban growth since 1951.

There is general agreement with Griffith Taylor that "Perhaps the chief characteristic of our modern type of civilization is the unmistakable shift from the rural to the urban way of life".⁽¹⁾

This is, however, also true of the Oriental way of life, because exactly half of the twenty largest cities in the world are now situated outside the United States and Europe. It is a moot point whether the Indian community of Natal is still maintaining an Oriental type of civilisation or whether it is assuming a Western way of life. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Indian population is becoming urbanised at a rapid rate, and the concentration is mainly at one focal point, Durban. According to the Official Census, 61% of the Indians were urbanized in 1921, whereas today 83% live in towns or cities. The degree of concentration at Durban is reflected by the fact that 60% of the almost 4000,000 Indians in Natal live in the Durban-Pinetown magisterial districts. Also, 60% of the Indians and 57% of the whites in Natal were living in the Durban metropolitan area in 1960. This process of urban growth is evident in all the bigger cities of the Republic, but not to the same extent as in Durban, e.g. during the intercensal period 1951 - 1960 the population of Durban increased by 37%. Corresponding increases for Cape Town was 26%, for Johannesburg 21%. The Provincial metropolis of Natal is virtually becoming an exploding metropolis. This preference for Durban and the coastal belt, by whites and Indians alike, is nothing new in the history of Natal.

The pioneers/

1) Griffith Taylor: Geography in the 20th Century.

The ~~first~~ pioneers, Lieutenants Farewell and King, in 1824 tried to establish a permanent settlement at Port Natal. They were the forerunners of British immigrants - representatives of a seafaring and colonizing nation - that preferred the coastal areas for purposes of trade. The Voortrekkers also had their eyes on the port because this would have given them the much cherished freedom and economic independence. Indeed throughout the history of Natal Durban was the focal point of trade and commerce.

For the Indian community, Durban has also become the city of opportunity that can provide employment, especially in industry and commerce for the surplus and landless further afield. Industry especially has made great strides during the last few decades. Referring to the Durban-Pinetown industrial area, Davies, in a recent study remarked that "Secondary industry is today the major economic function employing over 90,000 workers of all races and producing a net output of R124 per year."⁽¹⁾

During the last decade employment opportunities at the Durban port have also increased with the growth of the harbour. The tonnages handled in the port have increased from 6.3 million in 1951 to 9.4 million in 1960.

It is interesting that the Indian, in contrast to the Bantu, is seldom a migrant labourer. The family is a closely knit unit and when the husband assumes employment ^{in another} ~~somewhere~~ ^{locality} else, the family accompanies him. From a town planning point of view, this is significant because large housing schemes for Indians have become a necessity in Durban. Chatsworth, that will eventually house more than 150,000 Indians, is one of the most ambitious housing schemes for non-whites in the Republic, undertaken by a local authority.

The aim is not to try and/

(1) of which 2 out of every 9 are Indians.

The aim is not to try and analyse all the implications and effects of this explosion of the Indian population of Durban. For the sociologist, the economist and the town-planner alike, however, it must be a most significant fact that in a little more than nine years this ethnic group has increased by 38.4%. The question may well be asked to what extent these newcomers were equipped and conditioned for the demands of city life. The fact that in 1963 there were 10,000 unemployed Indians in Durban, points to the opinion that they could not be absorbed by the economy of the metropolis. The town-planner and urban-geographer, are also perturbed about urban sprawl, the planning of new industrial sites and the problem of air pollution, all of which may no longer be ignored. Local authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to supply the necessary services and amenities and to balance the budget. Has not the time arrived for a bold concept of planning for the Indian community - a concept based on the principle of decentralisation rather than centralisation whereby the Indian would get more opportunity to show ^{of making a contribution} ~~his worth~~ in the field of agriculture and industry?

The North Coast Region:

The North Coast, (i.e. the magisterial districts of Inanda and Lower Tugela) is the traditional home of the Indians who adopted South Africa as their fatherland more than 100 years ago. It was here that Edmund Morewood planted the first sugar cane on his farm Compensation, some 30 miles north of Durban. At the turn of the century, there were still about 30,000 Indians employed as farm-hands and semi-skilled workers on the sugar plantations in Natal. In spite of the fact that the acreage under

sugar has steadily/

sugar has steadily increased to 550,000 acres and has virtually become a monoculture in the North Coast, the number of Indian workers on the sugar farms have steadily decreased to about 7,000 at the present time. ~~In addition to these field workers,~~ ^{also} There are about 1,600 independent sugar producers.

Between the years 1951 and 1960, the Indian population of these two districts increased from 55,600 to 69,200, i.e. an increase of 24.3%. It is interesting to note that during the same period, the Bantu population in this area increased by 47%. Most of the Bantu are however, migrant labourers working on the sugar estates and having their permanent home in the reserves farther to the west. The whites in this area are only about one-tenth of the Indian population, but play an important part as landowners and entrepreneurs. It can safely be assumed that today more than one third of the Indian population of the North Coast ~~is~~ is dependent on the sugar industry, either as field or mill workers or independent producers. The rest are occupied mostly in commerce, industry, market gardening, etc. To a great extent, Verulam, ^{one of} the biggest centres, has become a dormitory suburb to Durban.

It is the view of the writer that pilot schemes for the economic advancement of the Indian community in the field of agriculture and industry, sponsored by the Central Government, should be undertaken in the North Coast area, not only because this is the traditional home of the Indian in South Africa, but also because the percentage of Indians to the total population is higher there than in any other of the natural regions, and natural resources favour agricultural and industrial development.

The South Coast:

In the coastal districts, south of Durban, the Indian population during the period 1951 - 1960 has increased from 21,600 to about 23,300, i.e. by only 7.1%. During the same period, the whites have increased by about 10%, which is also relatively low according to South African standards. No doubt, the excess Indian population of the South Coast gravitated to Durban, attracted mainly by the greater employment opportunities. Owing to climatic and topographical reasons, sugar cultivation on the South Coast is not quite as important as on the North Coast. A substantial number of Indians on the South Coast, however, are bona fide farmers owning their own land, others rent smallholdings. An active Indian farming community is found in the Port Shepstone and Umsinto districts where sugar and banana cultivation is of considerable importance. The 700 Indian farmers on the South Coast occupy about 10,000 morgen of land. These Indian rural areas are grossly overpopulated with the result that young people have to go elsewhere for a livelihood.

The Midlands:

In the Midland area, as shown in Figure 1, the Indian population has grown from almost 29,700 in 1951 to about 38,500 in 1960. This represents an increase of 29.8% in nine years, which must be considered as very high. Pietermaritzburg, the legislative capital of the Province, is a secondary nodal point in Natal with expanding commerce and industry. It is remarkable that 85.5% of the Indians

in the Midlands are/

in the Midlands are urban and only 14.5% ~~are~~ rural. As a group, the Indians therefore play a very minor part in the farming activities, e.g. wattle growing and field and animal husbandry for which the Midlands are well known. More than 70% of the Indians in the Midlands live in Pietermaritzburg where they are mostly engaged in commerce and industry.

The Interior Uplands:

This important farming and coal mining part of the Province has a total population of about 655,000 persons of whom only 7% are Europeans, ^{4%} ~~3%~~ Indians and less than 1% Coloureds, and about 88% Bantu.

Much of the Upper Tugela basin, of which a considerable part is traditional Bantu area, is included in the Interior Uplands.

During the intercensal period 1951 - 1963, the Indian population of this area increased by 24%, while the whites increased by 13%. The same trends seem to be apparent in this area as has been noticed elsewhere, namely, that the Indian community is increasing at a more rapid rate than the European and that it is becoming more and more urbanised. During the last decade, there were no new points of growth, but at the established centres, of Newcastle, Dundee and Estcourt, the Indian population increased at a rapid rate.

The number of Indians employed on the coalfields has actually diminished from a few thousand to about 500 during the last three decades.

Zululandi:

In 1960 there were only about ^{5 200}~~6,500~~ Indians in Zululandi and twice as many whites. Indians lived mostly in the towns like Eshowe and Empangeni. On the sugarlands most of the fieldworkers were Bantu. A few hundred Indians are at present employed by the South African Paper and Pulp mills just across the Tugela River and also at the Empangeni Sugar Mill.