



Mr V. Sirkari Naidoo
(B. A.,B. COM)

The late Mr Sirkari Naidoo, who was born in Frasers in the Natal North Coast in 1909, was the son of a "Passenger Indian", who hailed from the district of Arikonam near Madras in South India. After receiving his early education in Tongaat he matriculated at the Marine College, a private institution run by Rev. A. Lamont, a former Mayor of Durban.

He taught at the Carlise Street Government Indian School for two years and thereafter from 1932 to 1944 at Sastri College. He was also for many years a part-time lecturer in Accounting and Mercantile Law at the Indian Technical Institute (now the M. L. Sultan Technical College). In 1944 he had the distinction of being the first Indian to be appointed to the academic staff of a South African university when he became a lecturer and research fellow under Professor Raymond Burrows in the Department of Economics at the Natal University College. Such was the esteem in which he was held at the University that Professor Burrows travelled specially from Johannesburg to Durban to deliver a well-merited funeral oration at Mr Naidoo's graveside in 1948.

There were many firsts in the brilliant career of Mr Naidoo. He was the first Indian in the country to acquire a Bachelor of Commerce Degree and the first Indian to obtain a degree by part-time study as an external student. He was the first Indian to lecture at the Rhodes University College Summer School and also the first Indian to address the Durban Rotary Club and the Economic Society.

Among the organisations which he served, the most important were the Natal Indian Teachers' Society of which he was President for two terms; Executive Member of the South African Institute of Race Relations; Member the Non European advisory Board and Finance Committee of the Natal University College and a foundation member of the Indian Social Service Committee started by Hon. Srinivasa Sastri.

As a close friend and adviser of the late Hajee M. L. Sultan he was mainly responsible for influencing the latter to make a munificent donation towards the cost of building the M. L. Sultan Technical College. He made an intensive study of the economic position of Indians in South Africa and contributed a number of articles in leading journals. At the time of his untimely death he was engaged in important research on the role of the Indian in South Africa in the economic field.

Sirkari Naidoo, who was imbued with a deep love of English Literature, was a shining example of an industrious painstaking, student who reached great heights through sheer dint of perseverance and determination. His tragic death in a motor accident at the early age of thirty-nine robbed the Indian community in particular and Africa in general of an intellectual who could have contributed so much more for the progress of this country.

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