

A 'Public Health Nuisance': The Victoria Street Early Morning Squatters Market, 1910-1934

by

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The focus of this paper is the "Indian Market", a famous tourist landmark in Durban. While local and foreign tourists have flocked in large numbers to the Market for most of this century, few realise that the Market has historically been an arena of struggle between Indians and whites concerned about public health in Durban, between Indians and the local state, and amongst Indians themselves. This struggle over the Market encapsulated the class and caste differences that existed amongst Indians, as well as the racial and class prejudice of Durban's planners and citizens.

There were four markets in Durban during the period under review. These were the City Market in Warwick Avenue where all selling was done by whites, a Native Meat Market in Victoria Street for African traders, an enclosed Indian Market in Victoria Street comprising of stalls where groceries, cakes, baskets, flowers, curios, and other items could be bought in addition to fruits and vegetables and finally, a street market in Victoria Street which was known as the "Early Morning" or "Squatters" Market which specialised in the sale of fruits and vegetables. It is the latter that this paper will focus on.

Arrival of Indians

A total of 152,641 indentured Indians arrived between 1860 and 1911 to work on Natal's sugar plantations. Indentured immigrants were followed to Natal by entrepreneurs from Gujarat on the west coast of India who arrived from the mid-1870s at their own expense. While the majority of indentured Indians were Hindus of the lower caste, the majority of traders were Muslims. Indentured Indians came on five-year contracts with options to renew them, return to India, or stay in Natal. 58% chose to remain in the colony after indenture. Very few Indians reindentured. In 1884, for example, there were 8,951 indentured Indians in Natal but 20,877 free Indians. From the very beginning free Indians sought land in the vicinity of a market to grow fruits and vegetables such as potatoes, cabbages, garlic, paddy rice, melons, beans, chillies, and tobacco for the local market on land rented or purchased from absentee landlords and Land Companies. There were 2,000 market gardeners in and around Durban by 1885. According to the Wragg Commission:

Indians do remarkably well as cultivators of small parcels of land rented on short leases. Those settled in the vicinity of Durban have succeeded in winning for themselves, almost

entirely, the supplying of the local markets with vegetables. It must be conceded that this competition by free Indians has worked to the prejudice of those white colonists who once had the monopoly of the trade. In fairness to the free Indians we must observe that the competition is legitimate in its nature.

In 1908, Ramsamy, a farmer from Cato Manor, explained why he and others like him, took to farming: "Speaking to himself he says: I have no capital, nor have I a trade, the hoe and I have been friends for the last five years, I have strength; if I put thrift on my side I will make one strong effort and see if I cannot succeed." Indian farmers usually obtained land from whites who were "ever willing to receive the Indian with open hands." With the assistance of his wife and family, the beachwood and grass was cut, a wattle and daub house was constructed, and a life of "endless work" began during which the farmer paid his taxes, obeyed the laws, made his white landlord rich, and became a "useful citizen." By 1910 Indians owned about 10,000 acres of land in Natal, while the acreage held by Indian tenant farmers and landowners increased from 11,722 acres in 1896 to 42,000 acres in 1909.

STREET MARKET

Prior to 1890 Indian market gardeners had difficulty selling their produce because of the problems that they encountered at the fresh produce market held by the Durban Town Council (DTC). These included the high fee, the selling of the produce of Indians after that of whites had been sold, and the payment of lower prices to Indians than those paid to whites. From 1890 the trustees of the Grey Street Mosque allowed farmers to sell their produce on mosque premises. Farmers were initially granted free use of the facilities but the trustees later requested a gratuity which, according to a Mosque official, was used to keep the compound clean and in good order.

Swami Shankeranand, a learned Hindu priest who had been brought to Durban by local Hindus, formed the Indian Farmer's Association (IFA) shortly after his arrival in Durban in 1908. The IFA organised a meeting on 30 May 1909 to discuss how to set up a market that would be controlled by Hindus. As soon as their meeting was over, these members of the IFA attacked a meeting of Indian banana growers which had been organised by Mr. M. L. Sultan, a Muslim, to discuss the problems facing banana growers, with "sticks, schambocks and a few rounds of revolvers". On the following day a meeting was held at the Swami's house at which an Indian Market Committee was formed and Hindu farmers embarked on a boycott of the mosque market. The Market Committee, which comprised of 18 persons, was also mandated to meet with the Durban Town Council (DTC) to request a separate market for Hindus. The editor of the **African Chronicle**, P.S. Aiyar, criticised the boycott. He pointed out that it had taken "Mr Gandhi twenty years of solid, strenuous work to place the Indian community on the basis it now stands.... This movement is a messenger of death that has hailed here to put an end to the political existence of the Indian.... "

While superficially it seems that religious differences between Hindus and Muslims generated this crisis, the conflict had much deeper roots. It can be argued that class differences triggered the conflict. Sultan and other members of his gathering were part of the tiny percentage of large capitalist Indian farmers

who were thriving on the coastal areas of Natal. The membership of the IFA, on the other hand, was made up of small-scale market gardeners who largely lived in deep poverty. Similarly, the mosque was controlled by the Muslim traders. The message of the Swami resonated with poor, ex-indentured Indian farmers who were trapped in an inequitable relationship of clientage and credit with traders. They were dependent on rich Indians and saw in the movement of the Swami a means to break free of this bondage and begin to engage in independent economic activity. Until now, ethnic factors such as strong kinship ties, as well as class factors such as the availability of capital and skills placed Gujarati Indians at an advantage and they came to dominate established formal trade the "Indian" economy with the result that there were few opportunities for ex-indentured Indians Whereas in 1875 10 free and 1 Gujarati Indian held trading licences, by 1885 the figures were 26 and 40 respectively. The position of ex-indentured Indians deteriorated even further in subsequent years, something that they were very aware of, and wanted to remedy. In a letter to the Town Clerk in 1924, for example, municipal employees remarked that "our people (Madrases and Calcuttia) carried on business all over Durban prior to 1890 such as General Dealers, Bottle and Sack dealers and several other businesses of like nature. Our people since 1890 have been gradually ousted from all the above mentioned businesses by our so-called Indian brothers, the Red Caps and Banyans ." Poor Indians saw Indian traders, both Hindu and Muslim, as standing in the way of their economic progress.

In evidence to the DTC the IFA objected to the market being run by Muslims because they felt that the mosque was accruing profits which were used to benefit Muslims, while money was also sent to Gandhi to "help him carry on his political propaganda." Mr Rooknoodeen, a trustee of the mosque, stated that this allegation was false because the market was run on a non-profit basis. While the DTC was investigating the dispute, the IFA initiated an alternative market at a building rented in from a certain Mr. Acutt in Victoria Street. The Swami had hoped that profits from a Hindu run and controlled market would be used to propagate Hinduism and build a college for Indians. The DTC met with "representatives of the various classes" of Indians on 31 August 1909 to discuss the dispute and explain its own proposals on this issue. Hindu, Muslim, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians sent their own representatives. In a written submission to the meeting the IFA stated that it represented Hindu farmers and hoped that "in everything the Town Council did they would seek the aid of the great Swami Shankeranand who is highly respected by Indians in the colony." This was disputed by Mr V. Lawrence, representing the Roman Catholic community, who told the committee that "Mr Gandhi was a far more highly respected gentleman, not only in Natal but the whole of South Africa and the British Indian Empire, than the so-called Swami." Rather being a "saviour" the Swami was actually the "cause of the troubles as Indians had lived amicably before his arrival."

At the conclusion of the meeting Mayor Walter Greenacre informed Indians that the DTC would take over the market at a new site in Victoria Street, with revenue going to municipal coffers. Although Hindu farmers protested that the new site was too small, too close to the Roman Catholic Church and the "Native" Market, the Mayor maintained that this decision was final. The new market opened on 1 August 1910. The **African Chronicle** lamented that as a result of the Hindu boycott "the mosque authorities lost, and the Hindu farmers did not get it, and, in the bargain, the Corporation has become the sole possessor of this precious source of wealth. Where are those imposters and hypocrites who harangued the mob, and instigated them to make a division between the Hindus and Mahommedans?"

The Hindu farmers were dissatisfied and boycotted the new market "with violence." The boycott was so "perfectly organized that the Borough was left without supply of vegetable for some days. In order not to lose money the DTC sub-divided its building into stalls and let these out to traders, who sold groceries, sweetmeats, birds, curios and ice-cream in addition to vegetables. At the same time the DTC shut down the Hindu-run market in Victoria Street. Hindu farmers resisted the DTC but were forced to shut down after the DTC obtained an interdict from the Supreme Court which forced the farmers to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the DTC over a Municipal Market. The problem was that the Hindu farmers no longer had an outlet for their products. To resolve this problem, the DTC organised a street market in Victoria Street, running from Grey Street to the corner of Cemetery Lane, and in portions of Cross Street and Brook Street Extension.

Both farmers and non-farmers operated at the market. Farmers comprised of both males and females who brought their produce in carts, baskets, boxes and sacks. Non-farmers comprised of about 80 women who bought vegetables and bananas from farmers and sold these from a basket or by placing them on a cloth of sheet; about 60 males and females who dealt specifically in potatoes, onions and a few other vegetables which were bought from white and Indian farmers; 28 male tobacco leaf sellers, 12 betel leaf sellers, 14 male cake and boiled food sellers, ice cream vendors and fish vendors. Farmers lined both sides of the street with approximately 150 carts and animals. Those who did not own carts brought their produce in baskets, boxes and sacks. Towards the centre of the road "under wheels of and surrounding the vehicles - were women and children vendors of vegetables - who practically blocked the thoroughfare - rendering it impossible to all through traffic." Non-farmers sold "from a basket, or by placing goods in small lots upon a sack" while they squatted cross-legged on the street, hence the name "Squatters Market". There were almost 2,000 squatters and farmers on the street each day. There were thus three distinct interest groups operating in the nexus of the Victoria Street markets. Traders, mainly but not exclusively descendants of "passenger" Indians, monopolised the enclosed Market. Descendants of indentured Indians predominated on the street. However, they too were split into two groups viz. farmers and non-farmers.

Since places were not reserved on the street, farmers arrived between 6 P.M. and 2 A.M. from areas like Merebank, Springfield, Clairwood, Sea Cow Lake, Clare Estate, Malvern and Cato Manor where market gardening predominated. Most of the produce was from within the borough boundary because of the absence of cheap transport. The main form of transportation was horse-drawn springcarts. Once a suitable spot was found, farmers and their families spent the night on the street, sleeping in or under the cart. Trading began at 4:00 AM each morning. Before 6 A.M trading was mainly with stallholders, retailers, hawkers, pedlars, wholesalers and hotel and restaurant owners. Thereafter, householders patronised the market. Trading ceased at 9 A.M. on weekdays and 10.30 A.M. Saturdays. To close the market, a bell was rung at 9:00 A.M. At 9.30 AM the police sent a water cart up and down the street spraying water on farmers to expedite their removal. In February 1920 a deputation of the Indian Agricultural Association, which had been formed in December 1919 to "safeguard and promote the well-being of the agricultural section of the Indian community," met with the DTC to request an extension in trading hours to 12 noon and the ringing of the bell earlier. The DTC refused to extend trading hours but agreed to give farmers advance warning by ringing the bell earlier. Virtually every type of vegetable was available at the street market. The monthly Market Report for September 1918, for example, noted that

the products for sale included oranges, radishes, celery, chickens, eggs, chillies, yam, marrow, and a variety of other fruits and vegetables. "The Market was plentifully supplied... they realised satisfactory prices."

Conditions were extremely unpleasant on the street, the most serious problem being the lack of shelter. A request to the Municipality in 1928 to provide shelter and accommodation for farmers, "who sat in the street with no protection from rain and sunshine", was refused. The Markets and Abattoir Committee "felt that the accommodation required should be provided by the Indian community itself in the interests of the Indian farmers." What this shows is that the local state had a racial conception of politics and community. It ignored the differences that existed amongst Indians and treated them as a 'community' based on race. This was part of a broader attempt by the state to promote a pattern of stratification based on race and ethnicity to shape individual and communal life. Other problems on the street included inadequate lighting. The little light that was available was extinguished at midnight "with the unhappy result of the gardeners and others having to do business in darkness... Reasonable facilities may be expected by farmers in return for the fees charged." As late as 1919 only part of Victoria Street was lit resulting in many "accidents as a result of the collision of carts in the dark hours of the morning." Squatters also complained to the Market Master, L Donnelly, that toilets and water taps were placed inside the Stallholders Market which opened at 5:00 AM, while farmers were on the street for most of the night, and thus without access to a toilet or running water. When toilets were finally built in 1919 there were no doors; they were "open so that persons using the latrine will always be exposed to others coming in, thus affording no privacy."

In February 1920 the Indian Agricultural Association met with the Mayor and made a number of demands. These included the demand for water troughs for animals, the use of Indian constables on the street instead of Africans, an extension of the trading time to noon, the elimination of vehicular traffic on the street during the trading hours and, most controversial, a request that those non-farmers who buy produce from the market to sell on the street be separated from farmers. The mayor did not accede to any of these requests. Another request by the Association in April 1921 for stalls in the enclosed Market was also refused, the DTC feeling that "while sympathising with the position as affecting the farmers, this Committee regrets that it is impossible to grant any stalls to the Association seeing that none of the farmers hitherto occupied stalls." Farmers were trying to get access to the more lucrative trade of the enclosed Market but were unable to do so; that remained the domain of traders.

Whites considered the street market a 'health hazard', as antithetical to a clean and 'beautiful' city, it was against white notions of order, and it aroused their hostility towards overcrowding and congestion and desire for smooth traffic flows. Thos Watson typified the attitude of many whites when he wrote to the mayor in 1915:

Indians pack fish all the length and width of the pavement on Cemetery Road. The way coolies have accomandeed this thoroughfare one would believe they had assumed

military control, the road being completely blocked with carts and boxes. At night no lights are about and the men make camp fires and sleep there. There are ten of the filthiest benches in Durban, which have never felt a bucket of hot water since they were made; when not used for fish other fish (coolie specie) use them for an after dinner snooze or an all night doss. These benches display a sickening spectacle, sheep plucks and offal covered with flies.... There are about six ice-cream carts, everyone breaking bye-laws. In a few years time if you wish to remove them the coolies will write to the papers: "For thirty years we have bought ice-cream when we went to purchase our fish, the pleasure of going to buy fish is gone if you take our ice-cream away." The question is: Where will it all end? To complete the scene we have a miniature coolie temple, with its tom-toms, the halt, the lame, the blind, and, during last season, there was a band of coolie musicians. Getting through the footpath is an utter impossibility. We have to take to the road, and what a road!

Many letters of like nature were sent to the DTC. They mark an attempt by whites to dehumanize Indians so that it became easier and more acceptable to act against them. The Inspector of Nuisances was also unhappy with the manner in which fish were sold at one end of the Market, in Cemetery Road. In September 1914 he reported that he had seen 11 lots of shad fish being deposited on the public footpath in contravention of Public Health bye-laws: "I have more than once taken exception to the practice... I now beg to ask that instructions be issued that no more fish shall be deposited in the manner mentioned and that the laws relating to Public Health and sanitation shall be respected and complied with." The Superintendent of the Indian Market explained that he overlooked this unhygienic practice for economic reasons. The capture of large quantities of shad only took place in September and October each year. During this period a day's catch averaged 90,000lbs to 120,000 lbs. It was "impractical from a financial point of view" to build a proper market for the fish "as the revenue would not justify the erecting of a special building to meet these spasmodic captures of fish." The Superintendent added that stopping this practice would result in "hardship": "This Market is visited daily by thousands of poor Indians, coloured people generally, and also by many Europeans of the poorer class. And there is no question that the supply of this Fish at the low prices at which it is retailed is a veritable boom to the people who purchase this Fish. " Although the Inspector of Nuisances again requested in June 1915 that the Town Clerk give "immediate instructions to the Market Superintendent to stop the dirty and unlawful practice" the DTC resolved that "no action be taken." However ice-cream vendors were removed from the streets and moved into the Market building.

The state used a variety of repressive measures to harass farmers and squatters. In fact, street traders provided ample employment regulatory opportunities for whites in the form of inspectors and police. The Market itself had 'assistants' to see that Indians did not contravene any regulations. Members of the street market were treated shabbily. M.L. Sultan who owned a farm in Escombe and was one of the richest Indian farmers in Durban, complained to the Town Clerk that on 28 March 1917, whilst he was passing Berea Road station to get to his business in Victoria Street, he was stopped by a Market Assistant, Mr. Hughes, who requested to see his ticket. When Sultan explained that he was not going to the street market but to his business premises, Hughes told him: "I do not wish to speak to Coolies" and refused him access. Sultan spoke with other farmers and was told by them that such abusive treatment

was common. Sultan opined that most Indian farmers were "poor and voiceless and one is not aware of what amount of indignity and sufferings they are subjected to. If the intelligent and respectful people as myself are subjected to such insulting treatments I do not know to what extent these market officials exercise their power towards these poor people. Such conduct will lead to unnecessary trouble."

In a memorandum to the Town Clerk, the Natal Indian Farmers Association (NIFA) pointed out that squatters living in distant places like Cavendish, Umlass, ShallCross and Mount Vernon had "great difficulty in bringing their produce" to Durban as the only train to Durban arrived at 7:00 AM, which was too late for them to take part in the major sales. From 1925, those without their own transportation arranged with bus owners to transport their produce to Durban. From September 1928 the police began prosecuting bus owners carrying produce since this was against bye-law regulations. This created great hardship for smaller producers who, having no means to bring their produce to Durban, were "compelled" to sell their produce to middlemen at very low prices. The Town Clerk replied to NIFA that the DTC was not willing to deviate from this bye-law whose object was to "prevent food from being exposed to contamination by being conveyed in vehicles used by persons of doubtful habits..." Such harassment continued. In one instance NIFA complained to the Town Clerk that on 7 April 1933 the police prevented carts from proceeding to Victoria Street to drop off produce before 9:00 PM for no reason other than "traffic congestion." NIFA considered this action "drastic". The Market Master sympathised with farmers. He wrote to the Town Clerk that "a great inconvenience and a great hardship is imposed on the farmers. Moreover, it is incomprehensible in view of the Chief Constable's own statement that the farmers would be allowed to take up positions after 6p.m."

This last remark highlights the confusion and dispute about whose task it was to monitor and control the street market. According to the Chief Constable there were many "difficulties in getting the streets cleared" and that the attitude of the Marketing Department did not help. He cited one example where the police had arrested a squatter for trading at 10:55 AM even though the Market was to have closed at 9:00 AM. When this matter came before the courts, a Municipal Market official gave evidence that "11 o' clock on a weekday, and longer on a Saturday was reasonable to cease trading." Another complaint of the Chief Constable was that farmers arrived from 4:30 PM each afternoon instead of 6:00 PM, thus adding to the traffic congestion. Further, the Marketing Department issued licences that allowed squatters to continue trading after the closing time. All of this was hampering the police. As far as the Market Department was concerned, as soon as they rang the bell at 9 AM to indicate that the market was over, their jurisdiction over the market ceased and it was the responsibility of the police to clear the street. Further, as a result of complaints by the police, the Market had stopped issuing tickets in July 1932 in order not to "embarrass the hands of the police who had unfettered jurisdiction from that date," even though it resulted in a "considerable financial loss." However, it was only in the past few weeks that the police "have put any active effort to stop trading."

It was not only whites who opposed the Street Market. There was hostility from established Indian businesses as well as Indian stallholders. In February 1921, 12 merchants of Victoria Street complained that the carts in front of their business "greatly hinder our business. The squatting of vendors on pavements is becoming a great nuisance.... Because of the leaving of bags of produce such as potatoes during the afternoons, evenings and all night, mosquitoes are plentiful, caused by the smell of rotten

produce." Conflict between Indian squatters and stallholders was a constant feature of this period. In December 1919, a deputation of the Indian Market Stallholders' Association (IMSA) met with the Markets Committee to request that street traders be prevented from buying potatoes and onions from the Borough Market and selling these on the street as this was affecting their businesses. In February 1920 about 60 Indian non-farmers were told to discontinue their petty transactions. In February 1921 IMSA complained to the DTC that "the carrying on of business in the streets adjacent to the Market... is an obstruction to the use of the Market." This conflict articulated to the different origins of traders and gardeners, the one having arrived independently and the other as indentured labourers.

In May 1923 Indian Stallholders voiced their unhappiness at the fact that street traders obtained tables at cheaper rates, "thus seriously prejudicing the business of stallholders." Street trading was meant to be a service to bona fide farmers but "this concession is being abused by traders who are not farmers or producers." The Stallholders wanted a bye-law to remove this "unfair competition and benefit the public who can obtain the produce direct from the public." The Market Master rejected this on the grounds that the DTC had "no legal power to discriminate between the farmer and non-farmer traders" and that their removal would be unwise "from a revenue point of view." The Superintendent of Markets agreed that revenue of £900 per annum would be lost, which "will curtail the scope and limit the progress of the Early Morning Market." Further, there will be a "monopoly by one class of traders, the stallholders, for there will be no competition against them, and the buying public would be deprived of the benefits at present enjoyed."

Conflict between stallholders at the Indian market and the Street Market also articulated with the political division among Indians during this period. Stallholders were closely allied to elite politicians. In fact, the elite politicians Albert Christopher and P.R. Pather were members of IMSA and made representations to the DTC on their behalf. This is explained by the fact that most stallholders were traders. Squatters, on the other hand, were members of the Indian Agricultural Association and NIFA which had branches in Springfield, Newlands, Cato Manor, Clairwood and Riverside. Squatters realised that stallholders had their own agenda and made it clear to the DTC that the NIC did not represent them. When in 1927, for example, IMSA petitioned the DTC to reduce traffic on Victoria Street, street traders made it clear that a "special Association exists to look after the vendors on the street", the Indian Morning Market Association, "which body is quite capable to manage its own affairs... the highhanded action of the Stallholders Association in interfering with matters concerning the Early Morning Market is taken exception to and resented."

In 1932 squatters told the Markets Committee that the NIC has "no mandate to represent us.... We are quite capable of looking after our own affairs and do not require the services of any intermediary... We want to have direct communication with the Town Council.... We hope that you will give our Association that consideration to which we are entitled." When the option was available, market gardeners allied themselves with those in opposition to merchants. For example, in 1927 S.A. Naidoo and the Cato Manor Farmer's Association joined the South African Indian Federation which was opposed to merchant dominated NIC. Later, the Springfield Farmer's Association joined the Anti-Segregation Council which was formed in 1943 to challenge elite politics in Natal. There was a clear class difference between stallholders, many of whose stalls qualified to be called shops while

stallholders can be regarded as merchants, and squatters struggling to eke out a living in arduous circumstances and who, in time, would become proletarianised.

Another complaint of whites was that the street market was a traffic hazard and a cause of congestion. The Chief Constable complained in 1921 that the street market was creating two serious problems. First, as a result of Indians leaving their stands standing around for hours outside the market there was serious traffic congestion in the vicinity of the market. Second, Indians trespassed the Christian cemetery and desecrated graves. To resolve the latter problem the DTC decided to build a brick wall along the boundary of the cemetery; "having regard to the fact that Indians attending the Indian Market are responsible for the nuisances created, the cost of such construction be a charge against the Indian Market Department". No action was taken regarding the traffic congestion because an alternate site could not be found for animals. A few years earlier the Town Clerk, in fact, did not see the carts as a problem. When the Chief Constable had complained about the carts in 1916 the Town Clerk replied that he did not have any "grave objection to carts remaining in Victoria Street, Brook Street and Cemetery Road during the period of selling. It will be found that the streets adjacent to large markets all over the world are practically blocked with produce waggons during the early hours of the morning. I know from my own experience that this is the case in and around Covent Garden Market, London."

There was an outcry in August 1925 when a white woman was killed by a horse in the vicinity of the market. Whites were alarmed and many called for the termination of the market. In his report, however, the Market Master stated that the accident had nothing to do with traffic. A horse took fright in Cemetery Road, ran through Brook Street into Victoria Street with a cart attached to it and struck the woman who died, "an unfortunate accident which might have taken place in West Street. To place the responsibility ... upon the Market is unfair and unreasonable." This incident highlights the conflict within the DTC between the Market Master and Finance Committee, which saw the financial benefit of the market, and the Chief Constable, Public Health Committee, Inspector of Nuisances and many Councilors who took a developmental perspective and were determined to change the image of the city into one modeled on those overseas.

After this incident the Market Master suggested that Victoria Street be barricaded to prevent unnecessary and "extraneous" traffic from entering this street during the peak period of trade. Alternately, extra policemen should be placed on duty to "fully control and regulate" traffic. Another of his complaints was that in order to widen the area available to vehicles, the Chief Constable had narrowed the space available to squatters by 8 feet on each side of the road, which "seriously affected a large number of poor women who have large families to support in so far as their trading facilities are concerned." The Market Master also said that moving the market to an enclosed area with higher rental fees would "inflict a great hardship upon a large number of poor agriculturalists" and would "raise the cost of living all round." Finally, the Master dismissed criticism from a public health point of view, pointing out that Dr. Geldenhuys, the Chief of Economics and Markets, Union of South Africa, and the Chairman of the Markets' Committee, Cape Town, who had recently visited the market, commented in "eulogistic" terms upon the "cleanly conditions under which agricultural products are sold." In his response the Chief Constable stated that the provision of extra policemen was "hardly justified" while the "proposal to divert traffic "is not at all desirable." In 1927 the Chief Constable again complained that

squatters and their carts, "practically blocked the thoroughfare, rendering it impossible to all through traffic." But he again emphasised that diverting traffic would "only serve to arouse a feeling of irritation, and lead to further protest and augment in connection with the administration of the Indian Market." As far as the Chief Constable was concerned the only solution was to move the market to a less congested area: "By adopting this recommendation, the risk to life and limb of those frequenting the institution would be greatly minimised - a risk which has been created at the instance of the Town Council, and one to which no public body should be a consenting party."

The Chief Constable was not the only one who wanted the Market moved. In 1926 several Councilors proposed that the squatters be moved to site on which the Native Women's Hostel was situated, which was next to the Indian Market. However, the Market Master, Borough Engineer and Town Treasurer vetoed this idea for a number of reasons. First, the area was too small. Whereas the area utilised for the market on the street measured two acres, the hostel site was two thirds this. This meant that many squatters would have to remain on Victoria Street. Second, the DTC would lose £1700 per annum in the form of rates on the new land, whereas no rates were paid for the street, and additional expenses on staff and administration. This could not be recouped from squatters who would not be able to afford higher rent. Third, because the hostel site was square in shape the few persons occupying a stand fronting the street would be at a great advantage. It is clear that finance was an important reason for the DTC not eliminating street traders. A Report in July 1930 indicated that income from the Street Market was £3,300 per annum, while expenditure for staff, interest, etc. was £1,292 per annum. Income for the Indian market was £8,263 per annum while expenditure was £10,271. Thus the Street Market was making a profit and subsidising the Indian Market to the tune of £2,008 per annum.

Aside from money, the Master also felt that the street Market "was unique in itself. It affords not only a magnificent sight whilst on the street, but becomes an object of especial interest." However, this was only a temporary reprieve as the movement to relocate the market gained ground rapidly. In October 1929 the DTC again asked the Market Master to move the market to the site of the Women's Hostel. The latter opposed this scheme, citing the reasons stated in 1926 by the previous Market Master and mentioned that the Markets and Abattoir Committee had recommended in July 1928 to transfer the Market to a site at the corner of Victoria and Warwick avenues, which was then occupied by Indian second-hand timber sheds. As the DTC did not act on this suggestion, the Market Master suggested that the DTC should "make a bold move and transfer the entire Morning Market from the Street to the proposed Warwick Avenue site."

Farmers carts continued to prove a nuisance. There was an average of 217 carts at the Market each day. These stood on the "unhardened" roads for hours each day resulting in the "vacant land becoming saturated with horse urine and manure." The DTC failed to provide an outspan for the carts so the Chief Sanitary Inspector repeated his complaints in May 1923. He stated that because the carts had to move by 9:30 AM each day the farmers parked their carts in any available spot in "adjacent streets for hours... many residents and shopkeepers have complained of the offensive smells." Harry Marples of Prince Edward Street, for example, complained that because of the carts outside his shop "it is hardly possible for me to get to my own premises from the road... the stench is unbearable, and the flies caused through having horse dirt in quantity so close to my place are a distinct menace to health." The Chief Sanitary

Inspector reported that the complaints were "well-justified". Mr Marples manufactured confectionary and the stench led to "undesirable contamination." In response to these complaints the DTC resolved in March 1924 to prepare an outspan for carts at the bottom of Cemetery Lane bridge. Drivers of carts were to be "compelled" to take up a stand in the outspan and prohibited from leaving them in the streets in the vicinity of the market.

The 'health hazard' remained a major issue. The Medical Officer reported in June 1928 that fruits and vegetables were "sold in Victoria Street, on a manure strewn surface, and that such practice be discontinued." In October 1929 Councilor Benson tried to pass a motion to discontinue the street market from December 1929. This motion was considered drastic and was not passed. Instead, to reduce the 'health hazard', in view of the "objection that produce and other commodities are displayed on roadways, in many cases without coverings of any description and so become contaminated with all kinds of dirt and filth," the DTC legislated in December 1929 that squatters had to "display and sell their wares from baskets, barrows or other suitable raised platforms and stands." The DTC provided tables, "the height of which were a few inches off the ground". Squatters complained that the tables were very low which made it difficult to work on them while the problem of dust and dirt was not solved. In addition, "considerable amount of labour was needed in removing and placing the tables." Even the Market Master felt that the tables would not alleviate the problem. He stated that "hundreds of horse drawn vehicles" brought produce to the Market from midnight to 9:30 AM each day. This "constant stream of traffic" passing through an area "packed with squatters selling fruit, vegetables and other farm products" resulted in the spreading of filth and dust all over the place. He felt that the only solution was to move the market to an enclosed area. However, the DTC insisted on tables. The frontage of the existing stands was 3,400 feet and 560 platforms were provided, each 6ft by 3ft, and raised 9 inches off the ground. As the table would have to be placed in position before 4 AM and removed promptly at 9:30 AM each day, 30 men were hired to place and remove tables each day, at a cost of £1170 per annum, which covered their wages, rations and sleeping quarters. This was to be recovered by charging each squatter 3diem. The men worked in two gangs of 15 each, with one team tasked to put the tables in place and the other having the function of removing them. Six hand trolleys were built to transport the platforms.

By the late 1920s Indian farmers were themselves complaining of the conditions. In February 1930 a delegation of farmers handed the Town Clerk a memorandum outlining their grievances which included the following: the market being monopolised by non-farmer squatters even though it was created for farmers, farmers from distant areas had to spend the night on the street "exposed to inclement weather" and "police prosecution", unhygienic conditions which "has been the subject of unpleasant comment, reflecting poorly upon Indian farmers," "primitive method of dispersing the crowd by splashing water only aggravates the position, by more dirt being washed on the unsold produce," and the police allowing private vehicles into the market area but not hired vehicles which farmers were using to bring their produce to the market. In the interest of Indian farmers "who are the feeders of the Market and in the improvement of the amenities of the Town," the delegation wanted the market moved to an enclosed area with proper shelter, tables, space for carts and horses and hygienic conditions. In July 1930 the DTC finally set aside £15,000 for the development of a "proper enclosure" for squatters in Warwick Avenue, a site occupied by timber merchants who were paying the DTC an annual sum of £996. In comparison the Market would bring in revenue of £1,280. Before construction could begin the Borough Engineer

reported that he would be using African labour which was cheaper. This was opposed by Councilor Murray who moved a resolution that the Works Committee "utilise the services of European labourers for the erection of the new enclosure for Indian squatters."

NIFA, which represented farmers on the Street Market, wanted to be involved in the new market from the beginning. In a memorandum to the Town Clerk in February 1932, it made a number of proposals. It wanted the Refreshment Room stall to be granted to the Association on a co-operative basis "with profits to be devoted to the benefit of the Indian Farmers in general and voted to such charities as they deem necessary." NIFA also stipulated the number of toilets required, requested a shelter for carts and squatters, shed for animals, rooms for staying overnight, hours of business, storage rooms for unsold goods, and so on. The Association also wanted the DTC to meet with a "Consultative Committee" of the Association for advice on all "matters of a management and administrative nature."

However, In April 1932 a deputation of the Indian Early Morning Market Squatters' Association met with the Markets and Abbatoir Committee to explain that it represented the "non-farmer traders on the street" or squatters and demanded "consideration to which we are entitled" because it contributed over 50% of the whole revenue derived from the Early Morning Market. The Association complained of two things. First, that the plans drawn up by the Borough Engineer did not provide for a roof. Squatters made it clear that they would not move to the new premises unless shelter was provided: "We lay emphasis with all the strength at our command, that it is absolutely imperative that a roof be erected." Second, squatters also made it clear that "with regard to the NIC speaking on our behalf, whilst we have the greatest respect for the Association, we wish to state that this body has no mandate to represent us before you. We are quite capable of looking after our own affairs and therefore do not require the services of an intermediary. My Association is a commercial institution and we want to have direct communication with the Town Council." Although the majority of squatters were extremely poor, they were not meek and powerless but were willing to fight for their stake in the local economy.

A very sticky issue was the closing time for the new enclosure. Whereas the street market had closed at 9:00AM, squatters wanted the closing hour at the new market to be extended to 10:00 AM on weekdays and 11:00AM on Saturdays. The Markets and Abbatoir Committee resolved in May 1932 that the closing hour would remain 9:00AM. In July 1933 NIFA then tried to get the closing time extended to 9:30 AM "in the interests of the Indian farming community who have a very hard task to make ends meet in these rather difficult times, but also in the interest of the householder. To fix 9 a.m. for women alone we think is scarcely reasonable." This was opposed by Indian Stallholders who considered that "any departure from the existing closing time would be detrimental to the interests of the Stallholders who are the largest contributors to the Revenue of the Indian Market Department. The damaging effect of giving the farmers another half hour would be to bring about a total collapse of the business in the Indian Market proper." However the DTC agreed to extend trading hours to 9:30 AM.

Further, Indian Stallholders also wanted an "assurance" from the DTC that the "nature of the business" will not change, meaning that squatters would not be allowed to sell "articles or goods other than what they were already selling on the streets." The Market Master gave the assurance that the new enclosure would not become a general bazaar: "it can definitely be laid down that it is not the intention of the

Council to create a Bazaar" but would be used for "such trades as are being carried on in the Street today." In fact the number and types of goods sold at the new market was reduced because squatters were prevented from selling cooked foodstuffs, such as sweetmeats, cakes and rice-balls which they had done on the streets. The DTC took this decision because it had built a new restaurant and did not want a conflict over items sold. The new owner of the restaurant Mr. Ramawatar had paid the DTC £775 for the right of occupation and wanted "protection form the competition". The sale of cooked foodstuffs was prohibited from 18 June 1934. The editor of the **Indian Opinion** commented that "the authorities themselves have become capitalists and are out to squeeze the poor.... We do not think it is fair to allow poor people to starve because there is one man who could afford to get a monopoly of a certain class of business...." In April 1935 the NIC intervened on behalf of five widows who had sold rice cakes in the mornings, which was their only "source of livelihood," and which they were now being prohibited from doing. However, the Town Clerk refused to grant them permission to carry on this activity in the mornings. This restaurant was a source of dispute from the beginning. Initially the DTC had decided to let out the Refreshment Room to NIFA, which represented the farming section of the Street Market. This was opposed by the Squatters whose chairman, R. Boodhoo, informed the Town Clerk that his Association contributed over fifty percent of the market revenue and wanted a public tender process to select the most suitable applicant or, alternatively, let the two bodies have an equal share. At a meeting in June 1933 the DTC decided to grant the tea-room concession jointly to NIFA and the Early Morning Market Squatters Association. However, because did not resolve the problems between the two organisations the DTC gave the restaurant out on public tender and awarded it to Mr. Ramawtar.

Rents at the new premises were double those on the street. According to NIFA since the new enclosure was "an experimental one" it wanted the charges to be fixed at the prevailing rate for one year: "By imposing charges which are much beyond our slender resources at the present time, and when we do not know how we are going to come out, will cripple the usefulness of the market." The Market Master disagreed and said that in view of the substantially better facilities nothing could be done even though "I admit that many Indian gardeners are poor whose industry is admired by me". Instead he said that the matter would reviewed in a year and if the Market had made a substantial profit the rent could be reduced.

The significance of this Market and the desire of Indians to ensure that their voice was heard can be seen in the number of meetings that they held with the DTC on this issue. In May 1932 the Councilors, Mayor, Town Treasurer and Market Master met with the NIC, represented by A. Christopher, A.I. Kajee, and P.R. Pather, NIFA and the Indian Stallholders Association to discuss and resolve arguments over various issues which were of concern to Indians such as the closing time, rental, shelter, etc. In June 1933 Councilors and the Market Master met with NIFA. Later in the same month the DTC met with the NIC, Indian Market Stallholders' Association, Early Morning Market Squatters Association, NIFA and Natal Indian Fishermen's Association. It is not necessary to examine these meetings in detail, suffice to say that they showed that Indians were not willing to leave it to the DTC to decide their fate. They wanted a say in what was being built and how. Further, there was tremendous competition amongst Indians between the different interest groups in the market. Some of the exchanges were acrimonious and show that Indians cannot be treated as a homogenous entity. The inherent class differences prevailing amongst Indians at this time came to the fore in the struggle over the market. Each

group sought to bolster its own position. During these meetings Albert Christopher told the DTC that farmers should be given priority because the Market had originally been built for them but had developed into a general "bazaar". The Master took exception to this remark, and stated that farmers were themselves to blame for the traders having taken over the enclosed market in 1910.

It was the farmers' own fault in refusing to acknowledge the right of the Town Council to establish an Indian Market that has cost them the rights and privileges which were originally intended for them in connection with this building. But having come into it at a belated hour, it seems most extra-ordinary that a claim of this kind is brought forward when the Town Council after considerable struggle has had to establish this Institution not by the aid of the farmers but by the assistance of the other members of the Indian community; in the circumstances it would not be fair on the part of the Council to ignore the claim of those who have originally helped to bring this market to its present condition.

The new market was formally opened on 31 January 1934, there having been a delay of several months because farmers had refused to move until a roof was built over the enclosure and a shed provided for animals. The opening ceremony was attended by the Deputy Mayor and a "large gathering" of burgesses and Town Councilors. On opening day squatters embarked on another boycott which lasted an hour, and took an "ugly shape". This began when the Master requested payment from farmers before they entered the market. Farmers, on the other hand, wanted to continue the old practice of paying after they had assumed their positions within the market. Dr. Rustomejee of the NIC effected a compromise whereby the old system was followed for three days, after which farmers had to pay at the gate before entering. Farmers were allowed to enter the new enclosure from 6 PM. A special concession was that they could enter with their animals. After they had fed and watered their animals, farmers unpacked their produce for sale. They then went to the Rest Room where they slept until 3 AM when sales began. Given white concern with the 'health hazard' it is not surprising that the Market Master referred specifically to this when he said that the new market was a "tremendous improvement... from the public health point of view" and was far more picturesque:

The Market has been alive with activity intensifying day by day, and the splendid lay-out with its beautiful greens, fruits-colourful and delicious displayed in tempting array, spread on tables in the open, gives special attraction, and the bright rays of the rising sun beating upon them simply adds lustre and picturesqueness to the spectacle - all oriental, but a sight worthy of inspection - very different from old conditions

Places were not reserved and tables were allocated on a first come, first serve basis. Within a few weeks of the market's opening, the Master reported that the area of the market was insufficient and that "the buying public and traders were greatly inconvenienced, owing to the number of farmers carts attending

being far in excess of the accommodation provided ... considerable friction was thereby caused. If allowed to continue farmers will take to selling in the streets again. This actually happened on one day, which is not desirable." The Master suggested that the market be extended by half an acre to accommodate another 100 carts. In subsequent years the market was extended but that discussion falls outside the scope of this paper.

CONCLUSION

Market gardening was an important avenue of employment for large numbers of Indians, and was often transitional between indenture and industrial employment. The major source of outlet for the produce of farmers was the Indian Market, initially held under the auspices of the Grey Street Mosque but later organised by the DTC. The market was an arena of struggle between Indians as well as between Indians and whites. As far as Indians were concerned it highlighted the acute tensions and class differences between traders, farmers and non-farming street traders. The division between farmers and traders articulated with the origins of Indians in India. While traders came at their own expense, farmers were mainly ex-indentured Indians and their descendents. However, there were also clear differences between farmers and non-farmers on the street, even though both groups were descendents of indentured Indians.

Whites were also opposed to street traders who were seen as a distasteful and repulsive anomaly, and an impediment to achieving a 'beautiful' modern city. They were seen as a public health nuisance, the sanitation syndrome being impressed in the mind's of officials. The street market was viewed as creating congestion and impeding the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, thus preventing the efficient workings of the city. While street markets are often associated with informal and unfettered activity, the Squatters Market did not operate separately from the 'formal' sphere. On the contrary it operated as part of the municipality which controlled and regulated it. The market existed as part of the formal economy. In fact, it supported capital in that it allowed the working classes to purchase food cheaply and also allowed large numbers of Indians to eke out a living in the absence of formal wage employment opportunities. For the majority of people at the street market this was merely a subsistence strategy, vital for survival, but with limited or no potential for accumulation and progress to petty capitalism

As the market developed it became increasingly formalised and brought under the control of the authorities who attempted to bureaucratised and regulate it. Increasingly, however, the attempts of Indians to escape the control of the system was closed down. Although the market was controlled by the state, and under strict regulations, and in an unequal structure designed to appease and serve the interests of traders, white civilians and town planners, what emerges is that those at the street market achieved a degree of permanence and stability. While they were removed from the streets it can be argued that the end result was better and improved facilities for them.