



GANDHI  
AND  
SOUTH AFRICA  
*1914-1948*

EDITED BY  
E. S. REDDY  
GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

# **GANDHI AND SOUTH AFRICA**

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## FOREWORD

I feel greatly honoured to be asked to write a Foreword to this book. It appears at precisely the right moment in the history of the struggle against the institutionalised racism known as 'apartheid.' For only now, after nearly a century of oppression by the white minority governments of South Africa and after forty-five years of racist legislation by the National Party, has the process of negotiation to end 'apartheid' begun.

One of the reasons why it has been so difficult to mobilise international opposition to this vicious and evil system based on racism is the lack of any historical perspective against which to judge it. It is as if the sudden "U-turn" (I refuse to call it a conversion) of President de Klerk and his party were simply due to a pragmatic and realistic political decision: a decision based on the obvious fact that South Africa could not re-enter the open market of the world community whilst still practising and upholding a racist ideology. So, to gain essential investment and development capital, 'apartheid' must be ended. The world has been only too ready to interpret all this as a proof of the highmindedness of President de Klerk and the rightness of the policies of those Western powers - particularly Great Britain - who have consistently opposed the imposition of economic, cultural and sporting sanctions on South Africa as the one non-violent means of ending 'apartheid.'

It is only a truly historical perspective that can put things straight. And in this immensely important book Enuga Reddy and Gopal Gandhi have put us all in their debt. Here for the first time the true significance of Mohandas Gandhi's sojourn in South Africa has been spelt out. And it is urgent that, at this present time of negotiation for a truly democratic, non-racist society based on human rights and human dignity, Gandhiji's contribution should be recognised and honoured.

How many people in the western world even know that he spent twenty-one years in South Africa? That it was in these years that Gandhiji's concept and technique of non-violent defiance originated? That, as far back as 1906 he decided to defy the humiliating Asiatic Ordinance, whatever the consequences? But, even more significant is the way in which that concept of non-violent resistance to tyranny (in whatever form) has influenced the struggle for freedom across the face of the earth. We have seen it in the civil rights movements, the defiance campaigns, the non-violent rebellion in Eastern Europe - in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and the Soviet Union itself. But most of all, I would dare to affirm, we have seen it in the long years of struggle in South Africa itself. And of this I can speak with some authority since, from 1943 till the present moment, I have been involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Until 1956, when I became a most reluctant exile, I was directly participating in that non-violent struggle. I was present at a momentous gathering, known as 'The Congress of the People' at Kliptown, just outside Johannesburg, in 1955. It was there that, clause by clause, the Freedom Charter was passed and has been ever since the basic political and philosophical and ethical document of the African National Congress. Like the choice of the word 'Congress' the essence of the Freedom Charter is Gandhian. Similarly, in the struggle for liberation itself, non-

violence has continued to be the chosen method of resistance to the evil of 'apartheid.' Whilst it is true that after the Sharpeville massacre the 'armed struggle' - strictly defensive, as Nelson Mandela has always defined it - became for the first time since 1912-13 one element in the strategy of liberation, it was never the only or even the predominant way to freedom. The Negotiating Process now begun and the Peace Accord now signed between virtually all the conflicting parties are a proof - if such is needed - that Gandhiji's life and work in South Africa have been triumphant. Shortly before his own death, in May 1947, Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, both South African Asians, visited Gandhiji and he told them, "The slogan today is no longer merely 'Asia for the Asians' or 'Africa for the Africans' but the unity of all the oppressed races of the earth."

It is impossible, in a brief Foreword, to do justice to this massive and wide-ranging book. But it will surely become the definite account of those twenty-one years in which the influence of Gandhiji was fundamental to the development of the whole freedom struggle. To know *that* history is to understand the history of the present moment. And to understand its significance for peace, not only in South Africa, but in the world, is an essential duty for all who care about the future of our planet Earth.

I pray that this book may be read by those who have responsibilities in the government of nations, but, even more, by those in universities and schools who will be the inheritors of the world which is yet to be.

December 1991

Trevor Huddleston CR

## INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji left South Africa on July 18, 1914, after spending almost 21 years in that country as an attorney and public worker. He wrote as he sailed toward London:

"I have left South Africa, but not my connection with that country." (*Indian Opinion*, August 26, 1914).

It was in South Africa that Gandhiji had realised his vocation in life. It was there that he invented and practised satyagraha. It was in South Africa that not only his philosophy of life but his attitude to the social problems of India crystallised.

Gandhiji often asserted that he was an Indian and a South African. He told his prayer meeting in New Delhi on June 28, 1946, that he was born in India but was made in South Africa. (Item 214). He said at another prayer meeting in Poona on July 10, 1946:

"...in a way I belong to South Africa, having passed twenty years of the best part of my life there." (Item 218)

Dr. Y. M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, leaders of the passive resistance movement in South Africa, met Gandhiji on April 11, 1947. He said to them:

"Truly speaking, it was after I went to South Africa that I became what I am now. My love for South Africa and my concern for her problems are no less than for India..." (Item 233)

On January 28, 1948, two days before he was assassinated, he told a prayer meeting in New Delhi: "I have myself lived in South Africa for twenty years and I can therefore say that it is my country." (Item 244). Gandhiji reminisced on South Africa even in his last public speech, at the prayer meeting the day before he was assassinated.

The South African experience left a deep and lasting impression on Gandhiji and influenced the Indian national movement that he was to lead. As he began to lead local and then national struggles in India, Gandhiji often recalled his South African experience as a frame of reference for the direction of the struggles in India.

In South Africa, Gandhiji became convinced of the invincibility of non-violent resistance to evil, if properly led. He developed strong convictions on the need for the elimination of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, national language, prohibition, respect for manual labour, promotion of spinning and cottage industries etc.

He had encouraged the participation of women in the last decisive phase of the struggle in 1913 and was gratified by the way they had acquitted themselves and inspired others. He was so impressed by the heroism of the poor workers that he said in London on August 8, 1914:

"These men and women are the salt of India; on them will be built the Indian nation that is to be."

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He continued to follow the situation in South Africa until the end of his life, and to respond to appeals from the Indian community as it faced ever new measures of discrimination and harassment. He wrote and spoke extensively on the plight of Indians in South Africa, built public opinion and promoted public and governmental action in support of their legitimate rights. Towards the end of his life, he gave guidance and support to the Indian passive resistance movement in South Africa (1946-48), which was to inspire all the oppressed people and lead to the emergence of the great national movement of that country.

The time and effort that Gandhiji spent on support to the Indians in South Africa, and his views on developments in South Africa after his departure from that country, are, however, not sufficiently known, as no collection of the relevant speeches, articles and letters has been available.

The present collection is being published on the eve of the centenary of his voyage to South Africa and at a time when we, in India, can look forward to fruitful and friendly relations with a new South Africa. It will, we hope, promote a greater understanding between the peoples of India and South Africa whose national movements have been intimately linked for almost a century.

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The struggle for human dignity led by Gandhiji in South Africa may be briefly reviewed here as it had a lasting impact on South Africa and India and forms the background for this volume.

A year after he arrived in South Africa as a 23-year-old barrister, Gandhiji decided to devote himself to serving the Indian community which was subjected to discrimination and humiliation by the white rulers. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 and the Transvaal British Indian Association in 1903.

For over a decade, he prepared numerous petitions and memoranda, led deputations to the authorities, wrote letters to the press and tried to promote public understanding and support - in South Africa, as well as in India and Britain - for the cause of the Indians in South Africa. His professional practice also came to be largely devoted to the same cause.

At that time, Gandhiji had entertained faith in the fairness of the British and in Imperial principles. But it became clear by 1906 that appeals and petitions had proved ineffective and promises had been betrayed. The Transvaal Asiatic Ordinance of 1906, requiring all Indians to register and carry passes, was the last straw. He decided not to

submit to this unjust and evil measure. The Indian community in the province took a solemn pledge at a large meeting on July 31, 1906, to defy the law.

The Ordinance was denied Royal assent after an Indian deputation (Gandhiji and Haji Ojer Ali) appealed to the Imperial authorities in London. But self-government was granted to the Transvaal at the beginning of 1907 and it enacted the terms of the Ordinance in the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907.

The first *Satyagraha*, or the campaign of non-violent defiance, began in July 1907 when that Act came into force. About 150 persons courted imprisonment by defying the Act and picketing registration offices. This initial phase of the campaign ended at the end of January 1908 when General Smuts and Gandhiji reached a provisional settlement under which the Indians would register voluntarily and the Government would repeal the law.

The *satyagraha* had to be resumed in July 1908 when the Government reneged on the promise to repeal the Act. Over two thousand people, from the small Indian population of less than ten thousand in the Transvaal, as well as some Indians from the Natal, went to prison defying the Registration Act and an immigration law which restricted inter-provincial movement by Indians.

The movement was suspended in 1911 during talks with the government of the newly-established Union of South Africa. But the talks proved fruitless. The Union Government repudiated a promise it made to Gopal Krishna Gokhale, in 1912, to abolish the £3 annual tax which Natal had imposed on indentured labourers who did not re-indenture or return to India at the expiration of their contracts. And in 1913, the Cape Supreme Court declared virtually all Indian marriages invalid, by deciding that only marriages performed under Christian rites and duly registered were valid. The Government ignored appeals by the Indian community for legislation to validate the marriages.

Gandhiji then decided on a resumption of the *satyagraha*, both in the Transvaal and in Natal. The abolition of the £3 tax and the validation of marriages were added to the demands of the *satyagraha*.

During this last stage, the movement was joined by workers and women who were directly affected by the £3 tax and the judgment on marriages, and it became a mass movement. People of all religious persuasions - Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians - and of varied occupations - merchants, hawkers, professionals, workers and indentured labourers - came together in this righteous struggle.

"The whole community rose like a surging wave. Without organisation, without propaganda, all - nearly 40,000 - courted imprisonment. Nearly ten thousand were actually imprisoned... A bloodless revolution was effected after strenuous discipline in self-suffering." (Gandhiji in *Young India*, April 20, 1921; *Collected Works*, Volume 20, page 15).

Gandhiji and his colleagues were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The strikers were rendered leaderless. The army, police and the employers were ruthless in attempts to coerce the workers and suppress the strike. The striking miners were confined in mine compounds turned into prisons and subjected to cruel assaults. Indentured labourers on sugar plantations were beaten and fired at. Several workers were killed. But the strikers remained firm and disciplined; equally significant, they did not deviate from non-violence. John Dube, the first President-General of the African National Congress, gave a moving eye-witness account of an incident in which 500 strikers at Phoenix would not move despite whipping, beating with sticks and rifle butts, running of horses over the crowd, torture and killing of their leader, and firing. (Raojibhai M. Patel, *Gandhijiki Sadhana*, 1939).

A notable aspect of this phase of the campaign was the active participation of women. Gandhiji's wife Kasturba - who was then in poor health and living on a diet of fruit alone - led the way along with several relatives. Gandhiji wrote in *Satyagraha in South Africa*:

"I knew that the step of sending women (from Phoenix settlement) to jail was fraught with serious risk. Most of the sisters in Phoenix spoke Gujarati. They had not had the training or experience of the Transvaal sisters. Moreover, most of them were related to me, and might think of going to jail only on account of my influence with them. If afterwards they flinched at the time of actual trial or could not stand the jail, they might be led to apologise, thus not only giving me a deep shock but also causing serious damage to the movement. I decided not to broach the subject to my wife, as she could not say no to any proposal I made, and if she said yes, I would not know what value to attach to her assent, and as I knew that in a serious matter like this the husband should leave the wife to take what step she liked on her own initiative, and should not be offended at all even if she did not take any step whatever. I talked to the other sisters who readily fell in with my proposal and expressed their readiness to go to jail. They assured me that they would complete their term in jail, come what might. My wife overheard my conversation with the sisters, and addressing me, said, 'I am sorry that you are not telling me about this. What defect is there in me which disqualifies me for jail? I also wish to take the path to which you are inviting the others.' I replied, 'there is no question of my distrust in you. I would be only too glad if you went to jail, but it should not appear at all as if you went at my instance. In matters like this every one should act relying solely upon one's own strength and courage. If I asked you, you might be inclined to go just for the sake of complying with my request. And then if you began to tremble in the law court or were terrified by hardships in jail, I could not find fault with you, but how would it stand with me? How could I then harbour you or look the world in the face? It is fears like these which have prevented me from asking you too to court jail.' 'You may have nothing to do with me', she said, 'if being unable to stand jail I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships and so can my boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle.' 'Then I am bound to admit you to it', said I. 'You know my conditions and you know my temperament. Even now reconsider the matter if



you like, and if after mature thought you deliberately come to the conclusion not to join the movement, you are free to withdraw. And you must understand that there is nothing to be ashamed of in changing your decision even now.` 'I have nothing to think about, I am fully determined`, she said..."

The women from the Phoenix Settlement and those from the Transvaal were not arrested for several days and they travelled around, encouraging the workers to strike. Kasturba came out of prison emaciated. Valliamma, a 16-year-old girl, insisted on serving her full term in prison despite serious illness and died a few days after release.

Public opinion all over India was aroused. The Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, expressed sympathy with the satyagrahis: the Indian and British Governments intervened and the South African Government was forced to negotiate.

The *satyagraha* ended with the Smuts-Gandhi agreement of June 30, 1914, under which all the demands of the *satyagraha* were conceded.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of Satyagraha soon assumed world historic importance.

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In a letter to Indians in South Africa, which he wrote on the eve of his departure from that country and signed "the community's indentured labourer," Gandhiji said:

"Though I am leaving for the motherland, I am not likely to forget South Africa. I should like friends who may have occasion to go to India to come and see me there. I do intend, of course, to work in India in regard to the disabilities here..."

He kept his promise.

While he was leading the Indian people in South Africa, their motherland and many of its leaders had lent support. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, in particular, had done much, with a "single-minded and selfless devotion," even to the detriment of his health. Gandhiji, after his return to India, took the mantle of Gokhale. His services proved essential as an anti-Asiatic movement gained strength in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> The demands were: (1) Repeal of the Asiatic Act; (2) Removal of racial or colour disqualification from legislation on immigration; (3) Validation of Indian marriages; (4) Removal of annual poll tax of three pounds imposed by a Natal law in 1898 on ex-indentured labourers and their families; and (5) Just administration of existing laws with due regard to vested rights.

Gandhiji had been encouraged by what he saw as a change in attitude of the South African Government during the negotiations in 1914. He understood that the settlement with General Smuts implied that no racial distinction would be made in any legislation affecting the Indian community. With the protection of vested rights, and the promise of generosity in administering existing laws, he hoped for a steady improvement of the position of the resident Indians, especially since the Europeans had no more reason to fear of unrestricted Indian immigration.

The Smuts-Gandhi Agreement had dealt only with certain specific issues which hurt the self-respect of the Indian community and formed the points of the *satyagraha*. There remained numerous other discriminatory measures and grievances. Gandhiji had made it clear - in his letter of June 30, 1914, which forms part of the agreement - that Indians "could not be expected to rest content until full civil rights had been restored." But he believed that the objective could now be achieved by a process of education of European opinion and the intercession of Indian and British Governments which had participated in the negotiations of 1914. (Item 1).

Gandhiji's hopes for an amelioration of the situation of Indians in South Africa were, however, short-lived. An anti-Asiatic agitation began within a few years after he left South Africa, and he received frequent appeals from the Indian community for help. He tried to do his best, despite his immense preoccupations in India, to publicise the situation, and persuade the Indian Government to act.

He felt rather powerless and despondent after 1920 as he lost faith in the British Imperial professions and became a non-co-operator. As he wrote in *Young India* of March 20, 1924, he developed "utter distrust of the British Imperial system."

"... I am able no longer to rely upon verbal or written promises made by persons working under that system and in their capacity as officials or supporters. The history of Indian emigrants to South Africa, East Africa and Fiji is a history of broken promises and of ignominious surrender of their trust by the Imperial Government and the Indian Government, whenever it has been a question of conflicting interests of Europeans against Indians."

He could only try to exert some influence by promoting public agitation in India.

In that situation, his valued friend, the Reverend C.F. Andrews, proved a great asset. The latter took special interest in the position of Indians overseas. He made several visits to South Africa at critical times and played a significant role in rallying support for the Indian cause from European churchmen, media and liberals. A visit to South Africa in 1924 by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, another close associate of Gandhiji, was also most helpful. After a round table conference in Cape Town in 1926-27, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, for whom Gandhiji had great respect, was appointed Agent of the Government of India in South Africa; he sought the advice of Gandhiji and helped persuade the South African Government to redress some grievances of the Indians.

Gandhiji warned several times that the weapon of satyagraha had to be kept alive. It was only when the Indian community in South Africa was prepared to suffer and sacrifice that it could mould its own destiny. Mere diplomatic action could only obtain compromises mitigating new discriminatory measures, accepting what was feasible in the context of white racist opinion and agitation, but could not prevent a steady deterioration of the legal position of the Indians.

By 1939 a new leadership emerged in South Africa with the conviction that the rights of the Indian community can only be defended by struggle and sacrifice. It pledged to emulate Gandhiji's own experience in South Africa and sacrifice for the honour and dignity of the Indian people. Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo, who became chairman of a Council of Action in the Transvaal, appealed to Gandhiji for his blessings for a passive resistance campaign.

Gandhiji was impressed by the sincerity Dr. Dadoo. While he advised postponement of passive resistance at that time, pending efforts by the Indian Government for an honourable compromise, he gave moral support to resistance. The passive resistance campaign had to be deferred, however, except for a token *satyagraha* in 1941, especially by persons who had been associated with Gandhiji and their descendants.

A nation-wide passive resistance was launched in June 1946, under the leadership of Dr. Dadoo in the Transvaal and Dr. G. M. Naicker in Natal, when the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act - the "Ghetto Act" - came into force. Gandhiji lent them guidance and valuable support until the end of his life.

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Reference must be made to the attitude of Gandhiji towards Indian-African relations in South Africa, especially on co-operation in the struggle for freedom.

Gandhiji had dedicated himself in South Africa to serving the small Indian community which was being subjected to discriminatory and humiliating measures in breach of undertakings by the British and colonial governments, in violation of acquired rights and in disregard of professions of British Imperial policy. The Transvaal Asiatic Registration Ordinance of 1906 came soon after thousands of Chinese workers were summarily deported from the Transvaal. There was reason to believe that the intention of the authorities was to make the life of the Indians so miserable as to force all Indians, except the indentured labourers, to leave. The Indians were vulnerable.

For Gandhiji, the issue was not only the specific grievances of the Indians but their individual and national self-respect. Many Indian traders had earlier accepted humiliations in order to make money, but that was not acceptable to Gandhiji. The satyagraha was a part of the struggle of India for its dignity, and a moral crusade, though waged on the South African soil.

The satyagraha was, therefore, confined to the Indian community. The small Chinese community, which was also affected by the anti-Asiatic legislation in the Transvaal, carried on a parallel struggle. The grievances of the Asians were, however, of little direct concern to the indigenous Africans and the Coloured people.

Gandhiji recognised that the root cause of the injustice being perpetrated against the Indians was the fact that the authorities in South Africa were representative of white settlers only. But he felt that the Indian settlers or indentured labourers could not change the political system in the country: that was a task for the natives of the soil. He did not at that stage call for full political rights for the Indians, but only for civil rights and for the removal of any "colour bar" in legislation.

He made great efforts to inform the white community of the cause of the Indians in order to secure their understanding and support. He maintained friendly contacts with African leaders, and expressed full sympathy for their aspirations, but neither conceived of a joint struggle for full political rights at that stage.

Gandhiji foresaw already, according to his first biographer, the Reverend J. J. Doke, the coming confrontation between the African people and the whites. He said:

"When the moment of collision comes, if, instead of the old ways of massacre, *assegai* and fire, the Natives adopt the policy of Passive Resistance, it will be a grand change for the Colony ..."

After his return to India in 1914, when Gandhiji devoted much of his time to mobilise Indian public opinion in support of the Indians in South Africa, he repeatedly stressed that the Indians should maintain amicable relations with the Africans and should not press any claims if they conflicted with the interests of the African majority, they should not be pressed. That message was also carried to South Africa by his associates, the Reverend C. F. Andrews and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.

In 1928, commenting on a report that some Indians in South Africa favoured separation from Africans in education, Gandhiji wrote in *Young India* on April 5, 1928:

"Indians have too much in common with the Africans to think of isolating themselves from them. They cannot exist in South Africa for any length of time without the active sympathy and friendship of the Africans. I am not aware of the general body of the Indians having ever adopted an air of superiority towards their African brethren, and it would be a tragedy if any such movement were to gain ground among the Indian settlers of South Africa."

Gandhiji was cautious in responding to suggestions by militant Indian leaders in the 1930s for a united struggle by African, Coloured and Indian people. He did not receive timely information when a Non-European United Front was formed in Cape Town in 1939, and came under criticism for expressing reservations about an Indo-African united front. But his reasoning was significant.

He told the Reverend S. S. Tema, a member of the African National Congress, in an interview on January 1, 1939:

"The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a menace to the white population. You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance. You are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indian. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races."

As sentiment for unity grew among the Africans and Indians, Gandhiji revised his views. He showed no hesitation in supporting Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo, a leader of NEUF, in his efforts to build unity of Indians and Africans in resistance to unjust laws, warning only that the movement should remain strictly non-violent.

In July 1946, when white gangsters were brutally attacking Indian passive resisters in Durban, Gandhiji told the All India Congress Committee that he would not shed a single tear if all the Indian *satyagrahis* were wiped out, for they would thereby point the way to the Africans and vindicate the honour of India. (*Harijan*, July 21, 1946).

In May 1947, when Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, the Presidents of the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses, visited him in India after signing a pact of co-operation with the African National Congress, he gave them a message in which he said:

"Political co-operation among all exploited races in South Africa can only result in mutual good if wisely directed."

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This book consists of speeches and writings of Gandhiji on South Africa since he left that country in July 1914. Casual references or reminiscences are omitted, as is most personal and family correspondence of the period.

His books, *Satyagraha in South Africa* and *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, both written during this period, are not included as they are easily available.

Most of the items in this book are from the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, the invaluable collection published by the Government of India. A number of items, which had not been included in the *Collected Works* or were hitherto unpublished, were found in the process of research for the preparation of this book.

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Finally, it is with great pleasure that we thank Archbishop Trevor Huddleston for contributing a foreword to this volume. His efforts for half a century, in South Africa and abroad, to promote effective non-violent action for the eradication of apartheid carry forward the legacy of Gandhiji.

E. S. Reddy  
Gopalkrishna Gandhi

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APPENDIX III. THE CAPE TOWN AGREEMENT, 1927

## PART I

### 1914-1918

#### Editors' Note

When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi left South Africa for London on July 18, 1914, he was forty-five and already a celebrity. "M. K. Gandhi, Attorney" to his clients and to the authorities, he was "Gandhibhai" to his large and growing circle of friends in the Indian community of South Africa.

He had lived two decades in that country of black, brown and white populations, writing, speaking, organising and practising law with restless zeal.

Restless and unremittingly preoccupied as he was, an inner stillness permeated him, a calm self-assurance. Ex-indentured labourers, tradespeople and professionals looked upon him as one who had ministered to their personal, professional and political needs. The Tolstoy Farm and Phoenix Settlement set up by Gandhiji were places which invited Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews and Parsis, speaking many languages - Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu - to live self-sufficiently and selflessly in a society of chaste human fellowship. Gandhiji was like the head of a family in these settlements, guiding and instructing the inmates and, of course, working at the same time for the cause he had given to himself: the vouchsafing of the dignity of Indians in South Africa and the honour of India.

After three major campaigns spread over eight years during which the term "satyagraha" came to be "invented and employed," Gandhiji was able to secure the "Smuts-Gandhi Agreement" of 1914. This settled the long-drawn and bitterly contested issue of the validity in South Africa of the marriages which were held legal in India (with some qualifications in regard to plural marriages). It also abolished the annual tax of £3 on ex-indentured labourers and their wives and children and obtained the promise that existing laws will be administered in a just manner and with due regard to vested rights.

In the conclusion to his book *Satyagraha in South Africa*, written sometime in 1924, Gandhiji observed:

"Thus the great Satyagraha struggle closed after eight years, and it appeared that the Indians in South Africa were now at peace. On July 18, 1914, I sailed for England, to meet Gokhale, on my way back to India, with mixed feelings of pleasure and regret, - pleasure because I was returning home after many years and eagerly looked forward to serving the country under Gokhale's guidance, regret because it was a great wrench for me to leave South Africa, where I had passed twenty-one years of my life sharing to the full in the sweets and bitters of human experience, and where I had realised my vocation in life."

At a reception that was hosted in his honour at London on August 8, 1914, Gandhiji spoke with fervour of the sacrifices made by his compatriots and fellow-satyagrahis in South Africa. He was unstinting in his acknowledgement of the role played by General Smuts, then Minister of the Interior, in bringing the Smuts-Gandhi compact into effect. But he had no illusions about the future. "Grievances remain," he made it clear, "which will have to be redressed in no distant future. But I hope it will not be by way of passive resistance..."

A startling statement from one who had created the instrument of satyagraha and wielded it with palpable success. But Gandhiji had his reasons for "reserving" satyagraha to the role of an ultimate weapon. "They (the grievances) are capable of settlement by pressure of Indian opinion, by pressure from Downing street and from Delhi or Calcutta," he said to his London audience. (Item 1).

This optimism was not to last long. Although the Indian community won praise for raising a volunteer ambulance corps to serve under General Smuts in East Africa during the First World War, irritating new discriminatory measures were introduced even before the War ended.

Gandhiji warned as early as 1917 that the Indian community must be prepared to resume passive resistance. He wrote in a letter to *Indian Opinion* on December 15, 1917:

"I note... that our people in South Africa are not yet free from difficulties about trade licences and leaving certificates. My Indian experience has confirmed the opinion that there is no remedy like passive resistance against such evils. The community has to exhaust milder remedies, but I hope that it will not allow the sword of passive resistance to get rusty." (Item 10).

Setting up, within months of his return to India, the Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad, Gandhiji continued the pattern of the Phoenix Settlement. But, as with Phoenix, the ashram was only the base for his activities. These grew apace and extended to the tackling of wrongs throughout the length and breadth of the country.

The indigo cultivators at Champaran, the textile workers at Ahmedabad and the peasants of Kheda gave him cause in 1917-18 for the launching of highly successful, though localised, satyagraha campaigns which contained in them clear signs of their South African lineage.

## **1. SPEECH AT LONDON RECEPTION, AUGUST 8, 1914<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Gandhiji, Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach arrived in London on August 4, 1914, and were given a reception at Hotel Cecil by British and Indian friends on August 8th. Among those present were Mrs. Sarojini Naidu,



...It is impossible to express in adequate terms the sense of gratitude which Mrs. Gandhi and I feel to you all. We come among you almost as barbarians. We have lived isolated on a little farm, cut off from the cities. That is why I said we were "barbarians." We have worked in the limelight, and you have seen what we have done in exaggerated form. If we merit any approbation, how much more those behind us, who went into the battle with simple faith, with no thought of appreciation.

What will you say to Harbat Singh, an ex-indentured Indian, 75 years of age, who was with me at Volksrust Gaol? He was 6 feet tall and of noble carriage. "Why have you come?" I asked. "How could I help it?" was the reply. "In the evening of my days I am content to pass the rest of my life in prison to deliver my countrymen." He remained in gaol and died there.<sup>3</sup>

What do you think of the young lad, Narayanswamy, whose parents came from what is falsely called the "Benighted Presidency," Madras? He had never seen India except as a deportee; he starved for some days when he returned. He died.<sup>4</sup>

And what of Nagappan, another lad from Madras who suffered imprisonment. He worked as a prisoner on the African veldt in the bitter cold of winter, in the early morning when there was no sun. You know what the cold of a London winter is like, but few of you know the biting cold of the early mornings of winter on the veldt. Unfit for work, he still held on, but at last he died.<sup>5</sup>

Then there is Sister Valliamma, a girl of 18. She went to prison and was only discharged when she was very ill. I remember well when Mr. Polak<sup>6</sup> and I went to see her; how we lifted her with greatest care on to her carpet, and tended her to the best of our powers. She died, leaving thousands of Indians in South Africa to mourn the loss.<sup>7</sup>

There were 20,000 strikers who left their tools and work because there was something in the air. People said they did not know why they had struck. There was a half-truth in that saying; they went out in faith. Violence was entirely eschewed. These men and

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Satchidanand Sinha, Lala Lajpat Rai, M. A. Jinnah, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Mrs. W. J. Wybergh and Albert Cartwright. The Hon. Bhupendranath Basu presided.

<sup>3</sup> Harbat Singh, a labourer originally from Uttar Pradesh, India, died of pneumonia in Volksrust jail on January 5, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Narayanswamy was deported to India as a passive resister. He returned with other deportees, but the ship was not allowed to land in South African ports. He died in Delgoa Bay on October 16, 1910.

<sup>5</sup> Sammy (Swami) Nagappan died on July 6, 1909, soon after release from prison.

<sup>6</sup> H. S. L. Polak. Journalist, attorney and close associate of Gandhiji; editor of *Indian Opinion* for several years.

<sup>7</sup> Miss Valliamma Moonsamy Moodaliar died on February 22, 1914, a few days after release from prison.

women are the salt of India; on them will be built the Indian nation that is to be. We are poor mortals before these heroes and heroines.

But victory is due not only to their work. They quickened the conscience of the Empire and of South Africa. Success was due also to the help given by the Motherland in the hour of trial of her sons and daughters, led by that saintly politician, Gopal Krishna Gokhale;<sup>8</sup> to the stand made by India; and to the action of that great Viceroy, Lord Hardinge.<sup>9</sup> Success would, however, have been impossible had not the conscience of South Africa been quickened, had not the people realised the moral force which Indians could bring to bear against brute force.

Marching over the veldt last November, Europeans came to our aid. I have spoken elsewhere of unreasonable and unreasoning prejudice; but the masses stood aside; they never worried us; and during the march they helped us and showed us practical sympathy.

The Botha Government, too, "played the game." Mr. Smuts<sup>10</sup> said to me: "We do not want any misunderstanding; we want all the cards on the table. Take these documents; read them; come to me again and again if you are not satisfied; we will make changes." And he did.

You see many things conspired to enable the Settlement<sup>11</sup> to be made. But I must mention one more: Mr. Andrews.<sup>12</sup> You have no notion what he did; how he worked in selfless zeal, preaching love for India through his Master - the poet-saint at Bolpur whom I have come to know through Mr. Andrews - Rabindranath Tagore.<sup>13</sup>

I have called the Settlement the *Magna Charta* of the British Indians of South Africa;

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<sup>8</sup> For a tribute to Mr. Gokhale, please see items 6 and 9 below.

<sup>9</sup> Lord Hardinge, Viceroy from 1910 to 1916, in a speech in Madras on November 23, 1913, publicly expressed his sympathy with the struggle of the Indian people in South Africa. (Please see item 6).

He persuaded the British Government to intervene and, when the South African Government appointed a Commission to look into Indian grievances, sent a senior civil servant, Sir Benjamin Robertson, to give evidence on behalf of the Government of India before the Commission and to promote a settlement.

<sup>10</sup> General Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950), then Minister of the Interior of the Union of South Africa

<sup>11</sup> The Smuts-Gandhi settlement was reached by an exchange of letters on June 30, 1914.

<sup>12</sup> The Reverend C. F. Andrews (1871-1940), sent by Mr. Gokhale, arrived in South Africa in January 1914 and greatly assisted in promoting a settlement. He was closely associated with Poet Rabindranath Tagore.

<sup>13</sup> Poet, writer and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore established, at Bolpur, Santiniketan and Viswa Bharati University, where the Reverend C.F. Andrews was a professor.

after due deliberation I repeat my statement. It is the *Magna Charta* of British Indians, not only because of its substance, which is great enough, but for its spirit, which indicates a change of attitude on the part of South Africa and the South African Government. The sufferings of our countrymen sealed the Settlement. The discovery was made that the ancient force could be applied in South Africa; conviction came after the sufferings of eight long-drawn-out years. They saw that Indians, when in earnest, were irresistible; that they would not take a bit less than the minimum they demanded.

Mr. Cartwright<sup>14</sup> is here; he has been our staunch friend throughout and I honour him for his help. But I tell him here that he almost tried to weaken us. I remember, and he will remember, how he came to me in Johannesburg Gaol, and said: "Will not this letter do?" "No, Mr. Cartwright," was my reply; "not until this alteration is made." "But everything is achieved by compromise," he urged. "There can be no compromise on principles," I answered. There never was any compromise on principles from 1906 to 1914.

The Settlement is final on all the points of our passive resistance, but not of all our grievances. Grievances remain which will have to be redressed in no distant future. But I hope it will not be by way of passive resistance. They are capable of settlement by pressure of Indian public opinion, by pressure from Downing Street, and from Delhi or Calcutta. The attitude of South Africa has changed; that is our great asset. On our behaviour depends the future settlement in South Africa...

*Indian Opinion*, September 30, 1914; *Collected Works*, Volume 12, pages 523-26

## 2. THE LAST SATYAGRAHA CAMPAIGN: MY EXPERIENCE<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Albert Cartwright, editor of the *Transvaal Leader* and member of the Progressive Party, helped promote the provisional settlement between General Smuts and Gandhiji in January 1908 when Gandhiji served his first term in prison. He was a leader of the Committee of European Sympathisers formed in 1908 to support the Indian cause.

<sup>15</sup> Gandhiji started writing this article on board the ship *Kinfauns Castle*, on which he left South Africa for England in July 1914. The preface was written on July 23, 1914. The main article was delayed because of his illness and other preoccupations in London, and was published in a special issue of *Indian Opinion* in December 1914 devoted to *satyagraha*.

He gave a fuller account of the *satyagraha* in his book, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, which he wrote mostly in Yeravda jail where he was incarcerated from 1922 to 1924. But this article has a value as this account was written while the struggle was still very fresh in his mind.

## ***Preface***

I have left South Africa, but not my connection with that land. I said in many of my speeches during the final days that I would not give up that connection. My writings in *Indian Opinion* will furnish some proof of my keeping the promise. In them, I shall express my thoughts from time to time, hoping that readers will like them and find them useful as well.

I am commencing this article on board the *Kinfauns Castle*. Five days have passed since we left the Cape...

The love of our Indian brethren in their thousands and the honour they accorded us are constantly in our minds. That love reminds me of the wonderful power of the soul and its extraordinary properties. The functions at Durban, Verulam, Johannesburg, Kimberley and Pretoria are, we find, impossible to forget. The Cape Town friends, moreover, placed us under a crushing burden of gratitude by taking out a procession. Where so many showed such immeasurable love, whom shall we thank by name? The white people, too, made an excellent demonstration of their affection. During the final days, we drank the cup of their love also full to the brim. Occasions such as these prove that there is no bar or permanent division as between the whites and Coloureds and that, if both the sides make the required effort, the evil in South Africa can be overcome. If one side at least were to practise *satyagraha* on every occasion and in every manner, it is my firm faith, borne out by experience, that even such effort, one-sided as it would be, would suffice to remove the evil of colour-bar. So much by way of preface.

(From Gujarati).

*Indian Opinion*, August 26, 1914; *Collected Works*, Volume 12, pages 507-508.

## ***Account of the last satyagraha campaign***

During the last campaign, the very highest limit was reached. I have had simply no time to write of the experience. I had meant to share it with the readers of *Indian Opinion*. They will remember that the last struggle was, as it were, the third chapter in the story of *satyagraha*.<sup>16</sup> When the first chapter came to a close, we, at any rate I, had

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<sup>16</sup> Gandhiji refers here to the three stages of the *Satyagraha*.

The first stage, which began with the decision of 1906 to defy the Asiatic Ordinance in the Transvaal (replaced by the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907), ended with the provisional settlement with General Smuts on January 30, 1908.

The second stage began with the resumption of the *Satyagraha* in July 1908, when General Smuts reneged on the promise to repeal the obnoxious Act. Some Indians from Natal joined the struggle by defying the Transvaal Immigration

thought that it was definitely the last. When the time came for the second chapter to open many friends said to me: "Now who will fight? The community cannot be expected to put forth so much strength every time." I laughed when I heard this. My faith in truth was unshakeable and I replied, "The people, having tasted once the joy of struggle, will fight now with even greater zeal." And that was precisely what happened. On the first occasion, a hundred or two hundred Indians went to gaol. The second time, not only did hundreds court imprisonment, but the whole of Natal woke up and leaders came from there to join the struggle. The fight dragged on, but the morale never went down and we advanced. When it came to launching the last fight, I heard only talk of defeat. "Every time the Government deceives you," they said, "and you allow yourself to be imposed upon and the people's interests suffer. This will never do." I had to listen to bitter words like these. I knew only too well that neither I nor anyone else had any remedy against the Government's foul play. If, after we have accepted a promissory note, the signatory refuses to honour it or confesses his inability to do so, how are we to blame? To me it was clear that, if the Government broke its promise, though we would have to put in greater efforts, it would have to yield all the more. The longer the time taken to repay a debt, the heavier the burden becomes. This unalterable law applies to both material and moral obligations. My reply at that time was, "*Satyagraha* is a kind of struggle in which there can be no defeat and no cause for regret. A man can only become stronger through the struggle. He suffers no exhaustion and at every stage he gains fresh strength. If truth be on our side, the Indian community will work harder this time and earn an even more glorious name." When I made this reply, I never dreamt that 20,000 poor Indians would arise and make their own and their country's name immortal. General Botha<sup>17</sup> observed in the course of a speech that the whites had not been able to start and conduct the kind of strike that the Indians had done this time. This fight was joined by women and by many young boys of sixteen, so that the campaign became much more of a moral struggle. South African Indians became the talk of the world. In India, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, kings and labourers, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, citizens of Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Lahore - all were roused, became familiar with our history and came to our assistance. The Government was taken aback. The Viceroy, gauging the mood of the people, took their side. All this is public knowledge. I am stating these facts here in order to show the importance of this struggle. My main purpose in writing this article is to reveal certain details with which I am particularly familiar, which are not known in India and even to Indian friends in South Africa.

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Restriction Act of 1907. It continued until 1911 when it was suspended during talks for a settlement.

The third stage began in September 1913. Women and indentured labourers were encouraged to join the struggle as the validation of Indian marriages and the abolition of the £3 tax were added to the demands, and the struggle extended beyond the Transvaal into Natal. It ended with the Smuts-Gandhi agreement of June 30, 1914.

<sup>17</sup> General Louis Botha, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, 1910-19

The training imparted in Tolstoy Farm<sup>18</sup> proved to be of great use in this last fight. The mode of life accepted by the *satyagrahis* on the Farm became an invaluable asset in the struggle. It was copied and improved upon in Phoenix.<sup>19</sup> When Tolstoy Farm was closed, the pupils who wished to, came over to Phoenix.<sup>20</sup> The discipline was severe and there was an understanding with each pupil and his parents that those of the pupils who chose to live in Phoenix should, provided they were of a suitable age, join the struggle, if it was launched again. To tell the truth, the education in Phoenix was for the most part a preparation for *satyagraha*. The rules applied also to the families living in Phoenix. Only one of them kept aloof. The result was that, leaving aside those engaged in running Phoenix, all were fully prepared when the agitation started. Thus the third struggle began with the residents of Phoenix. I shall never forget the scene when these men, women and children marched out. Each had but one thought - that this was a holy war and that all were setting out on a pilgrimage. They set out singing hymns, one of which was the famous "Let not thy mind be affected by joy or sorrow." The strains of music that issued from the throats of those men, women and children still echo in my ears. The great Parsee Rustomjee<sup>21</sup> was among this band. Many had thought that Mr. Rustomjee had suffered so much in the previous struggle that he would not join this one. Those who said so did not know his true greatness. That women and children should go forth and he stay behind was unthinkable to him. Two other incidents of this period stand out in my memory. There was an argument between Mr. Rustomjee and his lion-hearted son, Sorabjee, who insisted that he would accompany his father. "Father, let me go in your place," he said, "or take me along with you."

The second incident was the meeting between the late Hoosen Mian<sup>22</sup> and Rustomjee. When Mr. Rustomjee went to see him, tears streamed from his eyes and he said, "*Kakaji*,<sup>23</sup> if I had been well, I would have accompanied you to gaol." *Bhai*<sup>24</sup> Hoosen loved his country dearly; though bed-ridden, he gave full support to the struggle and spoke constantly of it to all who visited him.

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<sup>18</sup> The Tolstoy Farm at Lawley, Johannesburg, was given by Hermann Kallenbach in 1910 for the use of passive resisters and their families for the duration of the struggle.

<sup>19</sup> Gandhiji had established the Phoenix Settlement near Durban in 1904, and *Indian Opinion* was published there.

<sup>20</sup> The Tolstoy Farm was closed in January 1913, when an agreement on the struggle in the Transvaal seemed imminent, and Gandhiji went to Phoenix with the pupils in the school at the Tolstoy Farm and some passive resisters.

<sup>21</sup> Rustomjee Jeewanjee Ghorcoodoo, a wealthy trader from the Parsee community and a close associate of Gandhiji. He repeatedly went to jail during the *Satyagraha*. Please see obituary by Gandhiji, item 65 below.

<sup>22</sup> Haji Hoosen Dawad Mahomed, who spent some time in the Phoenix Settlement. He was the son of Dawad Mahomed, a businessman and leader of the Indian community, who went to prison several times. On Dawad Mahomed, please see item 30.

<sup>23</sup> Parsee Rustomjee was affectionately addressed as "*Kakaji*" (uncle).

<sup>24</sup> Brother

Among those who remained behind in Phoenix were boys under sixteen. Although they and the others who managed the affairs of Phoenix stayed out of prison, they did better work than those who went to gaol. Day and night were one to them. They placed themselves under the strictest vows till such time as their companions and elders should be released, lived on saltless diet and fearlessly took upon themselves even the most onerous tasks. When the strike began in Victoria County, hundreds of indentured labourers took shelter in Phoenix. To have looked after them was in itself a very great achievement. It was equally an achievement to have gone on doing their work in complete fearlessness in spite of the danger of raids by their masters. When the police came and arrested Mr. West,<sup>25</sup> they prepared themselves for the possibility that others might also be taken. But not a single person moved out of Phoenix. As I have said already, only one family remained an exception. The Indian community can never truly measure the services that the Phoenix workers rendered to it at that time. This secret history has yet to be written, that is why I am recording a part of it here in the hope that some lover of truth might collect further information and might appreciate the services of the Phoenix workers at their true worth.<sup>26</sup> I am very much tempted to write more, but I drop Phoenix here.

When the Phoenix batch went to prison, Johannesburg could not remain behind. The women there became restive. They were fired with the desire to be in gaol. The entire family of Mr. Thambi Naidoo<sup>27</sup> got ready. His wife, sister-in-law, mother-in-law, Mr. Moorgan's relatives,<sup>28</sup> Mrs. P. K. Naidoo,<sup>29</sup> Valliamma who made herself immortal,<sup>30</sup> and other women came forward. They marched forth with children in their arms. Mr. Kallenbach<sup>31</sup> took them to Vereeniging. The idea was that, when they crossed the Free State border and returned, they would be arrested.<sup>32</sup> Their expectations were not fulfilled.

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<sup>25</sup> Albert H. West, one of the close European associates of Gandhiji, was Joint Manager of the International Printing Press and of *Indian Opinion*. He was briefly jailed in 1913 for helping indentured labourers who fled to the Phoenix Settlement during the strike.

<sup>26</sup> For some further information, please see Gandhi, Prabhudas, *My Childhood with Gandhiji*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957), Chapters XIV-XIX.

<sup>27</sup> A leading *satyagrahi* who went fourteen times to prison

<sup>28</sup> Rajoo and Willie, members of the Moorgan (Murgan) family, went to prison in October 1913. *Indian Opinion*, October 8, 1913.

<sup>29</sup> Wife P. K. Naidoo, a prominent *satyagrahi*. She again courted imprisonment in the passive resistance movement of 1946.

<sup>30</sup> Valliamma, a young girl in her teens, became seriously ill in prison and died soon after release - on February 22, 1914.

<sup>31</sup> Hermann Kallenbach. A European architect in Johannesburg, he became a devoted friend and co-worker of Gandhiji.

<sup>32</sup> Indians were not permitted to reside in the Free State. They could be arrested if they crossed the Transvaal border as they had not registered under the Asiatic Registration Act.

They somehow managed to spend a few days in Vereeniging, where they tried to get arrested by going round with baskets hawking, but they were left free.

This frustration held within itself a glorious future.<sup>33</sup> If the women had been arrested in Vereeniging itself, the strike might not have taken place; at any rate it would never have reached the proportions it finally did. But the community was in the (protective) hand of God. He is ever the protector of truth. When the women were not arrested, it was decided that they cross the Natal border. If they were not arrested even there, they were to fix, along with Mr. Thambi Naidoo, their headquarters at Newcastle. Accordingly, they proceeded to Natal. At the border, the police did not arrest them. They made their home in Newcastle. There Mr. D. Lazarus<sup>34</sup> handed over his own house to the women; his wife and sister-in-law, Miss Thomas, took it upon themselves to look to the comforts of the women *satyagrahis*.

The plan was that in Newcastle the women should meet the indentured labourers and their wives, give them a true idea of their conditions and persuade them to go on strike on the issue of the £ 3 tax. The strike was to commence on my arrival at Newcastle. But the mere presence of these women was like a lighted match-stick to dry fuel. Women who had never before slept except on soft beds and had seldom so much as opened their mouths, now delivered public speeches among the indentured labourers. The latter were roused and, even before I arrived, were all for commencing the strike. The project was full of risk. I got a wire from Mr. Naidoo. Mr. Kallenbach went to Newcastle and the strike began. By the time I reached there, Indians in two coal mines had already stopped work.

I was sent for by the Committee of European Sympathisers presided over by Mr. Hosken.<sup>35</sup> I met them. They approved of the strike and decided to support it. I stopped for a day at Johannesburg and proceeded to Newcastle and stayed on there. I saw that the people's enthusiasm was tremendous. The Government could not tolerate the presence of the women and finally they were sent to gaol as "vagabonds". The house of Mr. Lazarus now became a *dharmshala* for *satyagrahis*. Food had to be cooked there for hundreds of indentured labourers. Mr. Lazarus was not to be daunted. The Indians in Newcastle appointed a committee. Mr. Sidaat<sup>36</sup> was elected Chairman, and the work proceeded

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<sup>33</sup> Literally, "immortal hope."

<sup>34</sup> "... a middle class Christian TAMILIAN, who owned a small plot of land and a house consisting of two or three rooms... (he) belonged to a family of indentured labourers." Gandhiji, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter XLI.

Gandhiji and several other *satyagrahis* stayed at his modest home in October 1913.

<sup>35</sup> A European Committee of Sympathisers was formed in 1908 to support the Indian cause. William Hosken, a leader of the Progressive Party and former President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa, was Chairman.

<sup>36</sup> I. Seedat



apace. Indians in other mines downed tools.

Thus, as the strike by the Indian workers in the mines was spreading, a meeting of the Mine-Owners' Association was held. I was invited to attend. A great deal of discussion ensued but no solution was found. Their proposal was that, if we called off the strike, they would undertake to write to the Government about the £ 3 tax. This, the *satyagrahis* could not agree to. We had no quarrel with the mine-owners. The object of the strike was not to hurt them but rather to invite suffering on ourselves. And so the suggestion of the owners was unacceptable. I returned to Newcastle. When I reported the result of this meeting, enthusiasm mounted still higher. Work stopped in more mines.

Till then the workers had always resided at the mines where they worked. The Council of Action in Newcastle felt that so long as the labourers continued to live on their masters' estates, the strike would not have its full effect. There was the risk that they might be either tempted or coerced to resume work. Then again, to live in the master's house or eat his bread while refusing to work for him would be immoral. The workers' continued stay on the mines was morally wrong. This last taint, it was felt, would sully the purity of the *satyagraha* movement. On the other hand, to house and feed thousands of Indians was a stupendous problem. Mr. Lazarus' house was now too small. The two poor ladies had laboured night and day but found it impossible to cope with the work. It was decided, even in the face of this, to adopt only the right course, whatever the cost. Messages were sent to miners to stop work and proceed to Newcastle. The moment these messages were received, an exodus from the mines began. Indians from the Belangi mine were the first to arrive. It appeared as though bands of pilgrims were daily streaming into Newcastle. Men, young and old, women - some by themselves, others with children in their arms - all arrived with bundles on their heads. The men, one saw, were carrying trunks. Some arrived by day, others by night and food had to be provided for them. How can I describe the contentment of these poor people? They were pleased with what they got, no matter how little. Rarely did one come across anyone with a downcast look. A smile played on every face. To me they appeared to have come from among the 33 *crores*<sup>37</sup> of gods. The women were like goddesses. From where could shelter be provided for all? For bedding, straw was spread on the earth and the sky was their roof. God was their protector. Someone asked for a *bidi*.<sup>38</sup> I explained that they had come out, not as indentured labourers, but as servants of India. They were taking part in a religious war and at such a time they must abandon addictions such as drinking and smoking. Those who were unable to give them up should not expect their requirements to be paid for from the common coffers. The good men accepted this advice. I was never again asked for money to buy a *bidi*. The exodus from the mines continued. One pregnant woman had a miscarriage on the way. In spite of numberless hardships of this kind, no one gave up the struggle or turned back.

There was a tremendous increase in the Indian population of Newcastle. The houses of Indians were over-filled. The number made available was enough to accommodate

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<sup>37</sup> A "crore" is ten million or 100 lakhs.

<sup>38</sup> Tobacco rolled by hand in a dry leaf and smoked like a cigarette

women and old people. I must state here that the white people of Newcastle showed us great courtesy, even sympathy. No Indian was harassed by them. One good lady even gave her house free for our use; other assistance of a minor nature was also received from a number of whites all the time.

It was, however, not possible to keep thousands of Indians permanently in Newcastle. The Mayor became apprehensive. The normal population of Newcastle is about three thousand. An additional ten thousand could not be accommodated in such a town. Labourers stopped work in other mines also. And so the question arose: what should be done? The intention behind the strike was to court imprisonment. The Government could have arrested the workers if it had so wished, but there were not enough prisons to house those thousands. Hence, they had not so far touched the strikers. The one simple way left to us now was to cross the Transvaal border and get arrested. We thought that the congestion in Newcastle would thereby be relieved and the strikers could also be put to the test. In Newcastle, the agents of the mine owners were trying to lure away the workers. Not a single person had yielded; even so, it was the duty of the Council of Action to keep them away from all temptation. It seemed desirable, therefore, that they should march from Newcastle to Charlestown. The distance is about 35 miles. To provide railway fare for thousands was out of the question. It was therefore arranged that all able-bodied men and women should do the journey on foot. The women who could not walk were to be taken by train. There was a possibility of arrests on the way. Moreover, this was the first experience of its kind for them. It was therefore decided that I should myself take the first batch. It consisted of about 500 persons of whom 60 were women, with their children. I shall never forget the scene. The company walked along raising cries of "Victory to *Dwarkanath*," "Victory to *Ramachandra*" and "*Vande Mataram*." Each person was given enough cooked rice and *dal* to last for two days. Everyone carried his or her things in a bundle. The following conditions were read out to them:

1. It was probable that I would be arrested. Even if this happened, they were to march on until arrested themselves. Though every effort would be made to provide them with meals, etc., on the way, they should not mind, if by chance, food was not available on some days.

2. For the duration of the struggle, they should abstain from drinks.

3. They must not retreat even in the face of death.

4. They should expect no shelter for night halts during the march, but should sleep on the grass.

5. No trees or plants on the way should be harmed in the least nor should any article belonging to others be touched.

6. If the Government's police came to arrest anyone, the latter should willingly surrender.

7. No resistance should be offered to the police or any others; on the contrary, beating should be patiently borne and no attempt should be made to protect oneself by offering violence in return.

8. They should cheerfully bear the hardships in gaol and live there as if the gaol was a palace.

There were persons of every caste and community in this pilgrim-band. There were Hindus, Muslims, *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Sudras*.<sup>39</sup> There were men from Calcutta and there were Tamils. Several *Pathans* and *Sindhis* from the North found it difficult to accept the conditions requiring them to refrain from defending themselves in case they were beaten; not only did they accept it, however, but, when the testing time came, they actually made no move to defend themselves.

And so, the first batch started on its march.<sup>40</sup> On the very first night, we had the experience of sleeping out on the grass. On the way, warrants were received for the arrest of about 150 persons and they surrendered themselves readily. A single police officer had come to make the arrests. He had no assistant; how the arrested men were to be taken away became a problem. We were only 6 miles from Charlestown. So I suggested to the officer that these persons could proceed along with me and that he should take them into custody at Charlestown, or do whatever he thought fit after obtaining instructions from his superiors. The officer agreed and left us. We arrived at Charlestown. This is a very small township, with a population of barely 1,000. There is only one main road and the Indian population is negligible. The whites were amazed, therefore, at the sight of our party. At no time had so many Indians appeared in Charlestown. There was no train ready to convey the prisoners to Newcastle. Where could the police keep them? There was not enough room for all these arrested persons at the Charlestown police station. And so, the police handed them over to me and agreed to pay for their food. This is no small tribute to *satyagraha*. In the ordinary course of things, how could people arrested from among us be placed in our charge? If some of them had escaped, the responsibility would not have been ours. But everyone knew that it was the job of the *satyagrahis* to court arrest and they had, therefore, full confidence in us. The arrested men thus stayed with us for four days more. When the police were ready to take charge of them, they went away willingly.

More and more people were being recruited to our party. On some days 400 would join, on others even more. Many arrived on foot, while women came mostly by train. These were put up wherever there was space in the houses of Indian merchants of Charlestown. The local Corporation also offered us houses. The whites did not give us the slightest trouble. On the contrary, they went out of their way to help us. One Dr. Briscoe<sup>41</sup> took it upon himself to give us free medical aid and, when we proceeded beyond Charlestown, he gave us *gratis* some expensive medicines and useful instruments. Our food was cooked in the mosque premises. The fire had to remain lit all the twenty-four hours. The

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<sup>39</sup> The four castes in Hinduism

<sup>40</sup> On October 28, 1913

<sup>41</sup> District Health Officer in Charlestown

cooks came from among the strikers. During the final days, four to five thousand persons were being fed. Yet these workers never lost heart. In the morning, the meal consisted of mealie pap with sugar and some bread. In the evening they had rice, *dal* and vegetables. Most people in South Africa eat thrice a day. The indentured labourers always have three meals, but during the struggle they remained content with only two. They like to have small delicacies with their meals, but these, too, they gave up at this time.

What to do with these huge crowds of people became a problem. If they were kept somehow in Charlestown, there was the likelihood of an epidemic breaking out. Moreover, it was not desirable that so many thousands accustomed to hard work should be kept in a state of idleness. It needs to be mentioned here that, although so many poor people had come together in Charlestown, not one of them committed a theft. The police had never to be called and they had no extra work on our account. However, it seemed best not to keep waiting in Charlestown. It was therefore decided to proceed to the Transvaal and, if not arrested, to go on ultimately to Tolstoy Farm. Before commencing the march, the Government was informed that we were proceeding to the Transvaal to court arrest, that we had no desire to stay there or to claim any rights, but that, so long as the Government did not arrest us, we would continue our march and finally stay on Tolstoy Farm. If, however, the Government promised to withdraw the £ 3 tax, we were willing to return. But the Government was in no mood to consider this notice. It was misled by its informants who assured it that the strikers would soon be exhausted. The Government had a notice printed in all languages and distributed among the strikers.

At last the time came for us to proceed beyond Charlestown. On November 6, a party of 3,000 left at day-break. The procession was more than a mile long. Mr. Kallenbach and I were at the rear. The procession reached the border where a police party stood in readiness. When the two of us reached the spot, we had a talk with the police. They refused to arrest us and the procession went on in a disciplined and peaceful manner through Volksrust. On reaching Standerton Road outside the town, we halted and had some refreshments. It had been arranged that women should not join in this march, but later it became impossible to check the tide of enthusiasm and a few women managed to accompany the procession. However, some women and children still remained behind in Charlestown. After crossing the border at Volksrust, Mr. Kallenbach was sent back to look after them.

On the following day, the police arrested me near Palmford. I was charged with having brought unauthorised persons into the Transvaal. There was no warrant for the arrest of anyone else. Therefore, on reaching Volksrust, I sent the following telegram to the Government:

"WHILST I APPRECIATE THE FACT OF GOVERNMENT HAVING AT LAST ARRESTED PRIME MOVER IN PASSIVE RESISTANCE STRUGGLE, CANNOT HELP REMARKING THAT FROM POINT VIEW HUMANITY MOMENT CHOSEN MOST UNFORTUNATE. GOVERNMENT PROBABLY KNOW THAT MARCHERS INCLUDE 122 WOMEN, FIFTY TENDER CHILDREN, ALL VOLUNTARILY MARCHING ON STARVATION

RATIONS WITHOUT PROVISION FOR SHELTER DURING STAGES. TEARING ME AWAY UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES FROM THEM IS VIOLATION ALL CONSIDERATIONS JUSTICE. WHEN ARRESTED LAST NIGHT LEFT MEN WITHOUT INFORMING THEM. THEY MIGHT BECOME INFURIATED. I, THEREFORE, ASK EITHER THAT I MAY BE ALLOWED CONTINUE MARCH WITH MEN OR THAT GOVERNMENT SEND THEM BY RAIL TOLSTOY FARM AND PROVIDE FULL RATIONS FOR THEM. LEAVING THEM WITHOUT ONE IN WHOM THEY HAVE CONFIDENCE AND WITHOUT GOVERNMENT MAKING PROVISION FOR THEM IS IN MY OPINION AN ACT FROM WHICH I HOPE ON RECONSIDERATION GOVERNMENT WILL RECOIL. IF UNTOWARD INCIDENTS HAPPEN DURING FURTHER PROGRESS MARCH OR IF DEATHS OCCUR, ESPECIALLY AMONG WOMEN WITH BABIES IN ARMS, RESPONSIBILITY WILL BE GOVERNMENT'S."

The procession went ahead. I was produced before the magistrate at Volksrust. I did not, of course, wish to defend myself. But as some arrangements had yet to be made regarding those who had gone beyond Palmford and those left behind at Charlestown, I asked for time. The Government pleader objected, but the magistrate pointed out that bail could be refused only in a case of murder. He then asked me to furnish a bail of £ 50 and gave me time for a week. The amount was immediately paid by a merchant in Volksrust. As soon as I was released, I went straight to the marchers. Their enthusiasm was doubled. Meanwhile, a wire came from Pretoria to say that the Government had no intention of arresting the Indians who were with me. Only the leaders were to be arrested. This did not mean that all the rest would be allowed to go free. But the Government had no desire to make our work easy by arresting all of us or to provoke agitation in India on this account.

Mr. Kallenbach followed with another large batch. Our party of over 2,000 was nearing Standerton. There, I was again arrested and the hearing was fixed for the 21st. We, however, proceeded on our way. But now the Government could stand this no longer and it took the step of separating me from the rest. At this time, preparations were afoot to send Mr. Polak<sup>42</sup> to India with a deputation. He came to see me before leaving. But "our undertakings remain unfinished, and the will of God prevails". This is what happened. On Sunday, I was arrested, for the third time, near Greylingstad. The warrant this time was issued from Dundee and the charge was that of instigating the workers to stop work. I was removed from there to Dundee in utmost secrecy. I have mentioned above that Mr. Polak was in the march with us. He now took charge. My case came up for hearing in Dundee on Tuesday. All three charges against me were read out and I pleaded guilty to all of them. I then made, with the Court's permission, the following statement:

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<sup>42</sup> H. S. L. Polak, an attorney and associate of Gandhiji. He was sent by Gandhiji to India in 1909-10 and to Britain in 1911 and 1913 to explain and promote support for the cause of Indians in South Africa.

### *Summary*

As a member of the profession, and being an old resident of Natal, he thought that, in justice to himself and the public, he should state that the counts against him were of such a nature that he took the responsibility imposed upon him, for he believed that the demonstration for which these people were taken out of the Colony was one for a worthy object. He felt that he should say that he had nothing against the employers, and regretted that in this campaign, serious losses were being caused to them. He appealed to the employers also, and he felt that the tax was one which was heavily weighing down his countrymen, and should be removed. He also felt that he was in honour bound, in view of the position of things between Mr. Smuts and Professor Gokhale, to produce a striking demonstration.<sup>43</sup> He was aware of the miseries caused to the women and babes in arms. On the whole, he felt he had not gone beyond the principles and honour of the profession of which he was a member. He felt that he had only done his duty in advising his countrymen, and it was his duty to advise them again, that until the tax were removed, to leave work and subsist upon rations obtained by charity. He was certain that without suffering it was not possible for them to get their grievances remedied.

I made myself quite comfortable in gaol. Afterwards, proceedings were taken against me in Volksrust and I was given another three months of gaol, besides the nine months I got at Dundee.

About this time, I learnt that Mr. Polak had been arrested and that instead of going to India he found himself in gaol. I, for one, was delighted, because this, to my mind, was a far more weighty deputation than the other one. Soon after this, Mr. Kallenbach was arrested and he also, like Mr. Polak, found himself lodged in gaol for three months. The Government was sadly mistaken when it imagined that, once the leaders were arrested, the people would surrender. All the strikers were put into four special trains and taken to mines in Dundee and Newcastle. They were subjected to much cruelty and they suffered terribly. But they had come forward to suffer. They were their own leaders. They had to demonstrate their strength, left as they were without any leaders, so called; and they did so. How well they did is known to all the world...

(From Gujarati)

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<sup>43</sup> Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council and a prominent public leader in India, met Prime Minister General Botha on November 14, 1912, to discuss the position of Indians in South Africa. General J. C. Smuts and Abraham Fischer, the responsible Ministers, were also present. Mr. Gokhale understood that they undertook to repeal the £3 annual tax imposed by Natal on former indentured labourers from India, who did not re-indenture themselves or leave for India, as well as their wives and children. But the South African Government subsequently denied an undertaking and took no action.

*Indian Opinion*. Golden Number, December 1914; *Collected Works*, Volume 12, pages 508-19

### 3. THE REVEREND JOSEPH J. DOKE<sup>44</sup>

He who played an important part in the Indian Passive Resistance Movement did not live to see the final stages. He has described the struggle in his own graphic style in his monograph on me, Gandhi.

This chapter is intended to take a brief survey of the Movement from where Mr. Doke left it. No Englishman had such a keen grasp of the subject as he, by patient study, had acquired. Busy though he was with the work of his own flock, if a man of his breadth of vision and his all-round humanity could be said to have had a special flock, he made this Indian Question as much his own as the work of the Pastorate. He collected and tabulated every scrap of paper upon the subject. He wrote much upon it. He saw the authorities and spoke to them with the certainty of the knowledge of an expert. He took charge of the editorial work of the Passive Resistance organ, *Indian Opinion*,<sup>45</sup> during Mr. Gandhi's and Mr. Polak's absence from South Africa. The leading articles he wrote for the journal during the period are literally monuments. His anxiety to keep up the traditions of the journal was so great that, in matters of policy, he took the advice of, and allowed himself to be guided by, those whom he was not bound to consult. He came in contact with the best and the worst of Indians. All his study was not merely to bring to a close a movement, however great it may have been. He had dreams about the future of South Africa, the part that Indians were to play in it, the part that Christianity had to play in the great drama that was being enacted before him. His Indian work was taken up in answer to the question of his soul: "What am I to do in South Africa in the midst of many races?"

Mr. Doke had intended, if he had lived, to take part in the constructive programme of the Indian community after the struggle was finished. He had intended, too, to write a volume on the lessons of the struggle. But that was not to be.

The readers of these pages will, however, be glad to know the final results of the historical struggle which attracted world-wide attention. Only a bird's-eye view is possible in a single chapter of a book, when a full description would require several

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<sup>44</sup> Gandhiji wrote this for William E. Cursons who was preparing a biography of the Reverend Doke at the request of his family. It was published as Chapter XV of the biography - *Joseph Doke: The Missionary-Hearted* (Johannesburg: The Christian Literature Depot, 1929) - under the title: "The Asiatic Passive Resistance Struggle - The Final Stages - by M.K. Gandhi". The date when Gandhiji wrote this is not available; there was a delay of several years before the publication of the biography.

<sup>45</sup> *Indian Opinion*, a weekly, was established by Gandhiji in June 1903 with M. H. Nazar as editor.

The Reverend J. J. Doke was editor for a brief period in 1913.

volumes. During the last stages it took a most unexpected and brilliant turn. Every act of repression by the authorities only heartened the resisters. The refusal of the Government to recognise the legal status of Indian minors and to abolish the poll-tax on indentured Indians, which it was claimed on their behalf the Government had promised the late Mr. Gokhale to do, brought thousands to the Passive Resistance fold. Indentured Indians, working in the Natal mines and in the sugar fields, struck work and sought imprisonment. This strike must be distinguished from ordinary strikes. It was undertaken, not to usurp the functions of the Government or to paralyse the industries concerned. It was declared simply as a protest against the £3 tax. It was an assertion on the part of the strikers, men and women, of their self-respect. They were no longer content to pay a tax, which not only told heavily upon their slender purses, but which was a mark of their degradation and a cause of terror to the women-folk. At one time nearly 30,000 men were on strike. The Government and the planters tried every means to bend the strikers, but without avail. They had but one purpose in life: these strikers refused to be left alone. They wanted to fill the prisons. After due notice to the Government, nearly 2,000 of them, men, women and children, marched into the Transvaal. They had no legal right to cross the border, their destination was Tolstoy Farm, established by Mr. Kallenbach for Passive Resisters, the distance to be covered was 150 miles. No army ever marched with so little burden. No wagons or mules accompanied the party. Each one carried his own blankets and daily rations, consisting of one pound of bread and one ounce of sugar. This meagre ration was supplemented by what Indian merchants gave them on their way. The Government imprisoned the leaders, i.e., those whom they thought were leaders. But they soon found that all were leaders. So when they were nearly within reach of their destination the whole party was arrested. Thus their object (to get arrested) was accomplished. That extreme reasonableness was mixed with such an unbending spirit was shown when the Indian strikers voluntarily stayed their activity during the strike of the Government railway men, which was certainly not a Passive Resistance Movement.

The Indian strikers at once stood aloof, and their self-restraint was much appreciated throughout the Empire; whilst it had not a little to do with the final settlement, for which negotiations were opened.

It will be easily imagined that India would not remain supine when a mighty effort was being made by her sons in this far-off Continent. Under the splendid leadership of the late Honourable Mr. Gokhale, meetings of protest were held all over the country, and thousands of pounds were collected to aid the Resisters. Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, who strongly protested in a public speech at Madras against what was transpiring in South Africa, sent a Commission to investigate the cause of the upheaval. A local Commission was appointed. Though for high political reasons, the Indian community as a whole refused to give evidence before it, the Commissioners completely vindicated the Resisters by declaring in favour of every one of the main contentions of the aggrieved Indians. And so at last legislation was passed, repealing the poll-tax, restoring racial equality in law, and recognising the status of Indian wives. Thus ended the great struggle in 1914, after having lasted nearly eight years.

Mr. Doke, along with many, considered it to be a religious or ethical struggle. It was



not undertaken in order to gain individual rights but to gain national dignity. The methods adopted were not those of brute force or violence, but those of self-sacrifice and suffering. Repeal of obnoxious legislation was an embodiment of the vital principle that Indian sentiment must not be flouted on Indian matters. It was an admission of the right of the Indians to be consulted in everything affecting their status and intimate well-being. And it was for such an achievement that Mr. Doke laboured during his life-time. Who knows how important a part he would have played in the more difficult work of reconstruction? Certainly the Indian community misses the guiding hand.

William E. Cursons, *Joseph Doke: The Missionary-Hearted*, pages 147-150.

#### 4. LETTER TO J. B. PETIT, JUNE 16, 1915<sup>46</sup>

Ahmedabad,  
June 16, 1915

Dear Mr. Petit,

...Whilst the actual courting of imprisonment has ceased, the struggle itself has by no means ended. In its last stages, nearly 25,000 Indians actively participated in it, that is, one-sixth of the total Indian population in South Africa. The balance of the community practically but with few exceptions supported the struggle whether by contributions in cash or in kind or by holding meetings, etc. It began in the Transvaal with the passing of the now famous Asiatic Registration Bill in the year 1906, but as year after year the struggle rolled on with temporary settlements, it included many other things besides the Asiatic Registration Act, and covered the whole of South Africa. At the time of the settlement, the points of Passive Resistance were as follows:

- (1) Repeal of the Asiatic Act.
- (2) Removal of the racial or colour disqualification as to immigration from the Union legislation.
- (3) Removal of the legal disabilities of Indian wives.
- (4) Removal of the annual poll tax of £ 3, which was payable by ex-indentured Indians, their wives and grown-up children.

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<sup>46</sup> This letter to Jehangir Bomanji Petit, Secretary of the South African Fund, contained an accounting of the income and expenditure in connection with the *satyagraha* in South Africa. It was printed and published on October 31, 1915, with minor alterations. The alterations are incorporated in the extract reproduced here.

(5) Just administration of existing laws with due regard to vested rights.

All these points are covered by the settlement of the last year which I consider to be a complete vindication of Passive Resistance and I venture to state that if more has not been gained, more was not - and could not be - asked for as an item in Passive Resistance, for a Passive Resister has to frame his minimum as well as his maximum and he dare not ask for more nor can he be satisfied with less.

But I do not wish to be understood to mean that nothing further remains to be done in South Africa, or that everything has been gained. We have only fought for removal of legal disabilities as to immigration but administratively we have taken note of existing conditions and prejudices. We fought to keep the theory of the British Constitution intact so that practice may some day approach the theory as near as possible. There are still certain laws in South Africa, for instance, the Law 3 of 1885, Trade Licence Laws of the Cape and Natal which continue to cause worry. Administration of the Immigration Law is not all it should be. For these, however, Passive Resistance [was not] applied and is at present inapplicable, its application being confined to grievances which are generally felt in a community and are known to hurt its self-respect or conscience. Any of the grievances referred to by me may any day advance to that stage. Till then only the ordinary remedies of petition, etc., can be and are at present being adopted. Letters received from South Africa show that difficulties are being experienced in some cases acutely by our countrymen and if not much has been heard of them in India just now, it is because of the extraordinary self-restraint of our countrymen in South Africa during the crisis that has overtaken the Empire.

The struggle has defined principles and removed disabilities which were in the shape of a national insult. The larger question of the treatment of British Indians who came from outside can only be dealt with here. For the question of the local disabilities still unredressed, your Committee will have to exercise a ceaseless watch and assist as heretofore the efforts of our countrymen in South Africa.

I feel I ought to place on record my strong conviction, based upon close personal observation extending over a period of twenty years, that the system of indentured emigration is an evil which cannot be mended but can only be ended. No matter how humane the employers may be, it does not lend itself to the moral well-being of the men affected by it. I therefore feel that your Committee should lose no time in approaching the Government of India with a view to securing entire abolition of the system for every part of the Empire.

Before closing, I am bound to mention that the struggle would not have ended so soon and even as satisfactorily as it did, but for the generous support rendered by the Motherland under the leadership of the great and saintly patriot whose death we all mourn<sup>47</sup> and but for the very sympathetic and firm attitude taken by the noble man who at

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<sup>47</sup> Gopal Krishna Gokhale

present occupies the Viceregal chair.<sup>48</sup>

M. K. Gandhi

## **5. SPEECH AT THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, BOMBAY, DECEMBER 28, 1915<sup>49</sup>**

Mr. President and friends,

The resolution that stands in my name reads as follows:

"The Congress regrets that the existing laws affecting Indians in South Africa and Canada have not, in spite of the liberal and imperialistic declarations of Colonial statesmen, been justly and equally administered and this Congress trusts that the self-governing Colonies will extend to the Indian emigrants equal rights with European emigrants and that the Imperial Government will use all possible means to secure the rights which have been hitherto unjustly withheld from them, thus causing widespread dissatisfaction and discontent."

May I please appeal to the press to alter the "equally" to "equitably" because that was the word given last night at the Subjects Committee meeting?

Friends, it is an irony of fate that, whilst this vast assembly will be regretting the attitude, the hostile attitude that has been adopted by the self-governing Colonies, a contingent of your countrymen formed in South Africa will be nearing the theatre of war in order to help the sick and the wounded. I am in possession of facts in connection with the contingent formed in South Africa, which shows that it is composed of the middle classes which, according to the *Times of India*, are going to form the future self-governing nation. These men are drawn from ex-indentured Indians and their children; they are drawn from the petty hawkers, the toilers and the traders - all these men compose this great contingent. And yet the Colonies do not consider it necessary to alter their attitude, nor do I see the logic in their altering their policy. It is the fashion now-a-days to consider that because we have taken our humble share in the war by not being disloyal to the Government at the present juncture, we are entitled to rights which have been hitherto withheld from us as if those rights were withheld because our loyalty was suspected. No, my friends. If they have been withheld from us, the reasons are different and those reasons will have to be altered. They are due, some of them, to undying prejudices; they are due, some of them, to economic causes and these will have to be examined. The prejudices will have to be borne down.

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<sup>48</sup> Lord Hardinge

<sup>49</sup> Gandhiji moved the resolution regarding India and the Colonies on December 28, 1915.

What are the hardships that our countrymen are labouring under in South Africa, in Canada and in the other self-governing Colonies? In South Africa, the settlement of 1914 secured what the passive resisters were fighting for and nothing more and they were fighting for the restoration of legal equality in connection with emigration from British India and certain other things. That legal equality has been restored, the other things granted, but the domestic troubles still remain, and if it was not the custom unfortunately inherited for the last thirty years that the language, the predominant language in the assembly, should be English, our Madras friends will have taken good care to learn one of the northern vernaculars and then there are men enough from South Africa who would tell you in one of our own tongues the difficulties that we have to go through even now in South Africa. They are in connection with the holding of landed property; they are in connection with men who, having been once domiciled in South Africa, return to South Africa; there are difficulties in connection with the admission of their children and in connection with trade licences. These are, if I may call them so, bread-and-butter difficulties. There are other difficulties which I shall not enumerate just now...

Then how are these difficulties to be met? I do not intend to go into details, but the Congress proposes that this difficulty can be met by an appeal to the sense of justice of Colonial statesmen and by an appeal to the Imperial Government. I fear that the Congress can only do this. Lord Hardinge, only a few months ago, made a fervent appeal to Indian publicists and to Indian statesmen for helping him to come to an honourable solution which will retain the dignity of India and at the same time not cause any trouble to the self-governing Colonies. Lord Hardinge is still waiting for an answer. That answer is not supplied by the Congress nor can it be supplied by the Congress. It has to be supplied by associations such as the Imperial Citizenship Association, the specialists, if I may call them so.<sup>50</sup> The Congress has given them the lead and it is for these associations to frame the details in which they will have to examine the rival claims and offer to Lord Hardinge a detailed solution, a solution which will satisfy the Colonial Governments as well as the Indian people and will not take away anything whatsoever from the just demands that this resolution makes. With these words, I have much pleasure in proposing this resolution. (Loud applause)

*Report of the Thirtieth Indian National Congress (Bombay), pages 62-64; Collected Works, Volume 13, pages 153-155*

## **6. GOKHALE AND THE SATYAGRAHA<sup>51</sup>**

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<sup>50</sup> The Imperial Citizenship Association was formed in Bombay in 1915 to use the balance from funds collected for the struggle in South Africa for the benefit of overseas Indians.

<sup>51</sup> This article was written before February 4, 1916, and originally published in *Bhagini Samaj Patrika*.

...He who lives in the manner of a *sadhu*, whose desires are simple, who is the image of truth, is full of humility, who represents the very essence of truth and has wholly renounced his ego, such a one is a holy soul, whether he knows it or not. Such a one was *Mahatma* Gokhale, as I could see from my twenty years` acquaintance with him.

In 1896, I discussed (with leaders) in India the question of indentured labour in Natal. At that time, I knew the Indian leaders only by name. This was the first occasion when I had contact with the leaders at Calcutta, Bombay, Poona and Madras. The late Gokhale was then known as a follower of Ranade.<sup>52</sup> He had already at this time dedicated his life to the Ferguson College. I was a mere youth, with no experience. This bond which developed between us on the occasion of our very first meeting in Poona never came to exist between any other leader and me. Sure enough, all that I had heard about *Mahatma* Gokhale was confirmed by my own experience; but especially the effect which the soft expression of his lotus-like face had on me has still not vanished from my mind. I instantly recognised him as *dharma* incarnate...

The *satyagraha* struggle made so profound an impression on his mind that, though his health absolutely forbade it, he decided to pay a visit to South Africa. He went there in 1912. The Indians in South Africa gave him a right royal welcome. On the very next day after his arrival in Cape Town, there was a meeting in the local Town Hall. The Mayor was in the chair. Gokhale was in no condition to attend meetings and make speeches. But he left intact all the countless and taxing engagements that had been fixed. Following this decision, he attended the meeting in the Town Hall. At that very first appearance, he conquered the hearts of the whites in Cape Town. Everyone felt that a great soul was visiting South Africa. Mr. Merriman,<sup>53</sup> a prominent leader in South Africa and a man of character and liberal views, had this to say when they met: "Sir, a visit by a person like you brings a breath of fresh air into this land of ours."

As the late Mr. Gokhale's tour progressed, the first impression became stronger. At every place the distinction between whites and Coloureds was forgotten for the moment. There were meetings in all places like the one held at Cape Town. The whites and Indians sat in the same rows at these meetings and, according equal honour to the late Mr. Gokhale, earned similar honour for themselves. There was a dinner in his honour in Johannesburg. It was attended by nearly three hundred prominent whites. The Mayor was in the chair. The whites in Johannesburg are not likely to be awed by anyone. If they have some multi-millionaires among them, they have also men who know people's worth. These vied with one another in shaking hands with Mr. Gokhale. There was only one reason for this. In his speeches, the audiences saw Gokhale's overflowing love for his motherland

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<sup>52</sup> Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901). Judge, social reformer, author and one of the founders of the Indian National Congress.

<sup>53</sup> John Xavier Merriman (1841-1926). Prime Minister of the Cape, 1908-10, later member of the Union House of Assembly. Chairman of "Fair Play to Indians".

and a sense of fairness at the same time. He wanted his country to be treated with the fullest respect and honour but did not want that any other country should be humiliated. If he was anxious to see all the rights of his countrymen preserved, he was equally anxious to see that the rights of others were not jeopardised in the process. Because of this, everyone felt a genuine sweetness in his utterances.

Mr. Gokhale believed that he delivered in Johannesburg his best speech in South Africa. It lasted more than three-quarters of an hour but I never felt that anyone in the audience was bored. How did he make this speech? He started preparing for it six days in advance. He acquainted himself with the history of the question, as much as was necessary for his purpose, posted himself with the relevant figures and, sitting up late the preceding night, got ready with his language. The result was as I have stated. He satisfied both the whites and his own people.

I shall never forget while I live the pains he took to prepare himself for his meeting with Generals Botha and Smuts in Pretoria, the capital of South Africa. On the day before the interview,<sup>54</sup> he closely examined Mr. Kallenbach and me. He got up at three o'clock and woke us up. He had finished with the literature he had been supplied and now wanted to cross-examine me, in order to make sure whether he was fully prepared. I told him politely that he need not have exerted himself so much. that we would fight it out if we obtained nothing then, but that we did not want him to be sacrificed for our sake. But how would a man, who had made it a rule to throw himself heart and soul into everything that he undertook, listen to my words? How shall I describe his manner of cross-examining (me)? How shall I praise his thoroughness? Such pains could have only one result. The Cabinet promised Mr. Gokhale that a Bill conceding the *satyagrahis'* demands would be introduced in Parliament in the ensuing session and that the annual tax of £ 3 on the indentured labourers would be repealed.

The promises were not kept at the time mentioned. Did Mr. Gokhale hold his peace thereafter? Not for a moment. I am sure his exertions in 1913 to secure the fulfilment of the promises must have shortened his life by at least ten years. This is what his doctors believe. It is difficult to give an idea of the labour he went through in that year in rousing India and collecting funds. India was in an uproar about the issue of South Africa. The power which brought this about was Mr. Gokhale's. Lord Hardinge made a speech in Madras which will go down in history.<sup>55</sup> This too was owing to Gokhale. Those who

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<sup>54</sup> Mr. Gokhale had a meeting with Prime Minister General Louis Botha on November 14, 1912. Two other Ministers of the South African Government - General J. C. Smuts, Minister of Finance, and Abraham Fischer, Minister of the Interior - were also present at the meeting.

<sup>55</sup> Replying to addresses of welcome by the Mahajan Sabha and Madras Provincial Conference Committee at Madras on November 24, 1913, Lord Hardinge said:

"Recently your compatriots in South Africa have taken matters into their own hands by organising what is called passive resistance to laws which they consider

were the nearest to him bear witness that, worrying himself over the South African issue, he became permanently bed-ridden. Even so, till the very last he refused to rest. He would receive, at midnight, telegrams from South Africa as long as letters. He attended to them immediately and drafted a reply on the instant. A telegram would be sent to Lord Hardinge the same moment and a statement for the press prepared. In attending to the question, he delayed his meal and delayed going to bed, ignored the difference between day and night. Such single-minded and selfless devotion would be possible only to an elevated soul...

(From Gujarati)

*Mahatma Gandhiji Vicharsrishti; Collected Works, Volume 13, pages 202-08*

## 7. INDENTURED LABOUR<sup>56</sup>

The question of indentured labour is a seasonable subject for more reasons than one. Messrs. Andrews and Pearson<sup>57</sup> have just returned from Fiji after finishing their self-imposed labours for the sake of India which they have learnt to love as they love their motherland. Their report is about to be issued. Mr. Malaviya<sup>58</sup> has given notice for leave

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invidious and unjust - an opinion which we who watch their struggle from afar cannot but share. They have violated as they intend to violate those laws with full knowledge of the penalties involved and ready with all courage and patience to endure those penalties. In all this they have the sympathy of India deep and burning and not only of India but of all those who, like myself, without being Indians themselves, have feelings of sympathy for the people of this country."

<sup>56</sup> Gandhiji - supported by the Reverend C. F. Andrews, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and H. S. L. Polak, as well as the Imperial Citizenship Association - devoted great effort from 1916 to 1918 to the campaign to secure the total abolition of the indentured labour system. While recruiting of labour for Natal had been stopped in 1911, export of labour to Fiji and the West Indies had continued. Gandhiji spoke at many meetings and wrote several articles on the subject. He was able to arouse public opinion because of his intimate knowledge of the condition of indentured labour in South Africa. (Please see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 13, pages 306, 338-42, 347-51, 354-55, 512-15; *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Part V, Chapter 11.

The Government suspended recruitment of indentured labour in 1917 and prohibited it in 1918.

<sup>57</sup> The Reverend C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson. Earlier, in 1914, they had visited South Africa at the request of Mr. Gokhale and helped promote the Smuts-Gandhi settlement.

<sup>58</sup> In March 1916, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a resolution in the

to move a resolution in the Imperial (Legislative) Council which will, if adopted, commit the Government to a repeal of the system of indentured labour. Mr. Malaviya's resolution will be, it may be recalled, a continuation of the late Mr. Gokhale's work in 1912, when in a speech full of fervour and weighted with facts and figures, he moved his resolution demanding repeal of this form of labour. The deceased statesman's resolution was thrown out only by the force of official majority. The moral victory lay with Mr. Gokhale. The death-knell of the system was rung when that resolution was moved. The Government, as it could not then abolish the system, outvoted Mr. Gokhale but did not fail to note that they must hurry forward to do so at an early date. Mr. Malaviya's proposed resolution and the report of Messrs. Andrews and Pearson, which latter, it is known, is to suggest total abolition of the system, will enable Lord Hardinge fittingly to close his most eventful viceroyalty removing this long-standing and acknowledged grievance.

These lines will be merely an attempt to give personal observations and to indulge in a few reflections upon the question. For facts and figures, the readers and the public workers must look up Mr. Gokhale's speech referred to above and Messrs. Andrews and Pearson's forthcoming report.

Indentured labour is admittedly a remnant of slavery. The late Sir William Wilson Hunter, when his attention was drawn to it in 1895, was the first to call it a state "perilously near to slavery". Most legislation only partly reflects the public opinion of its time. Legislation abolishing slavery was really a bit in advance of public opinion, and that was a big bit. And its effect, like that of all such legislation, was largely neutralised by the dissatisfied slave-owner resorting to the dodge of indentured labour. The yoke, if it fell from the Negro's black neck, was transferred to the brown neck of the Indian. In the process of transfer, it had to be somewhat polished, it had to be lightened in weight and even disguised. Nevertheless, in all its essentials, it retained its original quality. The hideousness of the system was forcefully demonstrated when the curse descended upon South Africa in the shape of indentured labourers from China for working the gold mines. It was no mere election cry that the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman<sup>59</sup> had taken up when he made the British Isles from end to end ring with denunciation of the system. No cost was counted as too great for ridding South Africa of the evil. The great multi-millionaires of Johannesburg spared nothing to be enabled to hold on to the indentured Chinaman. They asked for breathing time. The House of Commons remained unmoved. Mine-owners had to shift for themselves. The interests of humanity overrode all other considerations. The mines were threatened to be closed. The House did not care. The millions promised to Mr. Chamberlain<sup>60</sup> would not be forthcoming. The House laughed. Within six months of the passage of the measure for the abolition of Chinese indentured labour, every Chinese labourer had been repatriated bag and baggage. The mines survived the shock. They discovered other methods of life. And now be it said to the credit of the mine-owners as well as of the Conservatives who opposed the measure, that

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Imperial Legislative Council for the abolition of the indenture system.

<sup>59</sup> Prime Minister of Great Britain, 1905-08

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914). British statesman; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1895-1903.



both these classes recognise that the abolition was a great deliverance.

Indian indentured labour is not less demoralising. It has persisted because its bitterness, like that of a sugared pill, has been cleverly, though unconsciously, concealed. The one great distinction between the two classes was that the Chinese were brought in without a single woman with them, whereas every hundred Indian labourers must include forty women among them. Had the Chinese remained, they would have sapped the very foundations of society. The Indian labourers confine the evil to themselves. This may be unimportant to non-Indians. But for us, the wonder is that we have allowed the sin to continue so long. This business about the women is the weakest and the irremediable part of the evil. It therefore needs a somewhat closer inspection. These women are not necessarily wives. Men and women are huddled together during the voyage. The marriage is a farce. A mere declaration by man and woman made upon landing before the Protector of Immigrants that they are husband and wife constitutes a valid marriage. Naturally enough, divorce is common. The rest must be left to the imagination of the reader. This is certain - that the system does not add to the moral well-being of India. And it is suggested that no amount of figures adduced to show that the labourer is far richer at the end of his contract of labour than when he entered upon it can be allowed to be any set-off against the moral degradation it involves.

There is another most powerful consideration to be urged against the continuance of this system. The relations between Englishmen and Indians in India are not of the happiest. The average Englishman considers himself to be superior to the average Indian and the latter is generally content to be so considered. Such a state of things is demoralising to both and a menace to the stability of the British Empire. There is no reason why every Englishman should not learn to consider every Indian as his brother, and why every Indian should not cease to think that he is born to fear every Englishman. Be that as it may, this unnatural relationship is reflected in an exaggerated form outside India when the artificial state of indentured service under the white employer is set up. Unless, therefore, the relation between the English and ourselves is put on a correct footing in India, any transference of Indian labourers to far-off lands, whether parts of the Empire or otherwise, even under a free contract must harm both employer and employed. I happen to have the privilege of knowing most humane employers of Indian labourers in Natal. They were their men. But they do not, they cannot, give them more than the most favoured treatment that their cattle receive. I use this language in no uncharitable spirit. The humanest of employers cannot escape the limitations of his class. He instinctively feels that the Indian labourer is inferior to him and can never be equal to him. Surely no indentured Indian, no matter how clever and faithful he may be, has ever inherited his master's state. But I know English servants who have risen to their master's state even as Indian servants have risen to their Indian master's state. It is not the Englishman's fault that the relationship with his Indian employees has not been progressive. It is beyond the scope of these lines to distribute the blame, if there is any, on either side, or to examine the causes for the existence of such a state of things. I have been obliged to advert to it to show that apart from all considerations the system of indentured labour is demonstrably so degrading to us as a nation that it must be stopped at any cost and that now.

## 8. THE SECRET OF SATYAGRAHA IN SOUTH AFRICA<sup>61</sup>

In brief, the significance of *satyagraha* consists in the quest for a principle of life. We did not say to anyone in so many words that our fight was in pursuance of this quest. If we had said so, the people there would only have laughed at us. We only made known the secondary aim of our movement, which was that the Government there, thinking us lowly and mean, was making laws to oust us from the country, and that it was right for us to defy these laws and show that we were brave. Suppose the Government passes a law saying that Coloured persons shall wear yellow caps; in fact, a law of this kind was made in Rome for the Jews. If the Government intended to treat us in a similar fashion and made a law that appeared to humiliate us, it was for us to make it clear to the Government that we would not obey such a law. If a child says to his father: "Please put on your turban the wrong side up for me," the father understands that the child wants to have a laugh at his expense and at once obeys the command. But when someone else, with uncharitable motives, says the same thing, he clearly answers, "Look, brother, so long as my head is on my shoulders, you cannot humiliate me in this manner. You conquer my head first and then make me wear my turban in any fashion you please." The Government there in a similar way, thinking the Indians lowly, wanted to treat them as slaves and as far as possible to prevent their coming into the country. And with this end in view, it began inventing ever new laws, such as putting names of Indians in a separate register, making them give finger-prints in the manner of thieves and bandits, forcing them to live in particular areas, forbidding their movement beyond a specified boundary, making rules for them to walk on particular foot-paths and board specified carriages in trains, treating their wives as concubines if they could not produce marriage certificates, levying on them an annual tax of forty- five rupees *per capita*, etc., etc. Often a disease manifests itself in the body in various forms. The disease in this case, as has been explained, was the evil purpose of the Government of South Africa and all the rules and regulations mentioned above were the various forms that it took. We, therefore, had to prepare ourselves to fight against these.

There are two ways of countering injustice. One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetrates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process. All strong people in the world adopt this course. Everywhere wars are fought and millions of people are killed. The consequence is not the progress of a nation but its decline. Soldiers

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<sup>61</sup> Speech in reply to a question during a post-prayer meeting at *Satyagraha Ashram* near Kochrab, Ahmedabad, on July 27, 1916

returning from the front have become so bereft of reason that they indulge in various anti-social activities. One does not have to go far for examples. In the Boer War, when the British won a victory at Mafeking, the whole of England, and London in particular, went so mad with joy that for days on end everyone did nothing but dance night and day! They freely indulged in wickedness and rowdyism and did not leave a single bar with a drop of liquor in it. *The Times*, commenting, said that no words could describe the way those few days were spent, that all that could be said was that "the English nation went amafficking (a- Mafeking)." Pride makes a victorious nation bad-tempered. It falls into luxurious ways of living. Then for a time, it may be conceded, peace prevails. But after a short while, it comes more and more to be realised that the seeds of war have not been destroyed but have become a thousand times more nourished and mighty. No country has ever become, or will ever become, happy through victory in war. A nation does not rise that way, it only falls further. In fact, what comes to it is defeat, not victory. And if, perchance, either our act or our purpose was ill-conceived, it brings disaster to both belligerents.

But through the other method of combating injustice, we alone suffer the consequences of our mistakes, and the other side is wholly spared. This other method is *satyagraha*. One who resorts to it does not have to break another's head; he may merely have his own head broken. He has to be prepared to die himself suffering all the pain. In opposing the atrocious laws of the Government of South Africa, it was this method that we adopted. We made it clear to the said Government that we would never bow to its outrageous laws. No clapping is possible without two hands to do it, and no quarrel without two persons to make it. Similarly, no State is possible without two entities (the rulers and the ruled). You are our sovereign, our Government, only so long as we consider ourselves your subjects. When we are not subjects, you are not the sovereign either. So long as it is your endeavour to control us with justice and love, we will let you do so. But if you wish to strike at us from behind, we cannot permit it. Whatever you do in other matters, you will have to ask our opinion about the laws that concern us. If you make laws to keep us suppressed in a wrongful manner and without taking us into confidence, these laws will merely adorn the statute-books. We will never obey them. Award us for it what punishment you like, we will put up with it. Send us to prison and we will live there as in a paradise. Ask us to mount the scaffold and we will do so laughing. Shower what sufferings you like upon us, we will calmly endure all and not hurt a hair of your body. We will gladly die and will not so much as touch you. But so long as there is yet life in these our bones, we will never comply with your arbitrary laws.

It all began on a Sunday evening in Johannesburg when I sat on a hillock with another gentleman called Hemchandra. The memory of that day is so vivid that it might have been yesterday. At my side lay a *Government Gazette*. It contained the several clauses of the law concerning Indians. As I read it, I shook with rage. What did the Government take us for? Then and there I produced a translation of that portion of the *Gazette* which contained the said laws and wrote under it: "I will never let these laws govern me." This was at once sent for publication to *Indian Opinion* at Phoenix. I did not dream at the time that even a single Indian would be capable of the unprecedented heroism the Indian revealed or that the *satyagraha* movement would gain the momentum it did.

Immediately, I made my view known to fellow-Indians and many of them declared their readiness for *satyagraha*. In the first conflict, people took part under the impression that our aim would be gained after only a few days of suffering. In the second conflict, there were only a very few people to begin with but later many more came along. Afterwards when, on the visit of Mr. Gokhale, the Government of South Africa pledged itself to a settlement, the fight ceased. Later, the Government treacherously refused to honour its pledge, and a third *satyagraha* battle became necessary. Gokhale at that time asked me how many people I thought would take part in the *satyagraha*. I wrote saying they would be between 30 and 60. But I could not find even that number. Only 16 of us took up the challenge. We were firmly decided that so long as the Government did not repeal its atrocious laws or make some settlement, we would accept every penalty but would not submit. We had never hoped that we should find many fellow-fighters. But the readiness of one person without self-interest to offer himself for the cause of truth and country always has its effect. Soon there were twenty thousand people in the movement. There was no room for them in the prisons, and the blood of India boiled. Many people say that if Lord Hardinge had not intervened, a compromise would have been impossible. But these people forget to ask themselves why it was that Lord Hardinge intervened. The sufferings of the Canadian Indians were far greater than those of the South African Indians. Why did he not use his good offices there? Where the spiritual might of thousands of men and women has been mustered, where innumerable men and women are eager to lay down their lives, what indeed is impossible? There was no other course open for Lord Hardinge than to offer mediation and he only showed his wisdom in adopting it. What transpired later is well known to you: the Government of South Africa was compelled to come to terms with us. All of which goes to show that we can gain everything without hurting anybody and through soul-force or *satyagraha* alone. He who fights with arms has to depend on arms and on support from others. He has to turn from the straight path and seek tortuous tracks. The course that a *satyagrahi* adopts in his fight is straight and he need look to no one for help. He can, if necessary, fight by himself alone. In that case, it is true, the outcome will be somewhat delayed. If I had not found as many comrades in the South African fight as I did, all that would have happened is that you would not have seen me here in your midst today. Perhaps all my life would have had to be spent in the struggle there. But what of it? The gain that has been secured would only have been a little late in coming. For the battle of *satyagraha* one only needs to prepare oneself. We have to have strict self-control. If it is necessary for this preparation to live in forests and caves, we should do so.

The time that may be taken up in this preparation should not be considered wasted. Christ, before he went out to serve the world, spent forty days in the wilderness, preparing himself for his mission. Buddha too spent many years in such preparation. Had Christ and Buddha not undergone this preparation, they would not have been what they were. Similarly, if we want to put this body in the service of truth and humanity, we must first raise our soul by developing virtues like celibacy, non-violence and truth. Then alone may we say that we are fit to render real service to the country.

In brief, the aim of the *satyagraha* struggle was to infuse manliness in cowards and to

develop the really human virtues, and its field was the passive resistance against the Government of South Africa.

(From Hindi)

Ramachandra Varma, *Mahatma Gandhi; Collected Works*, Volume 13, pages 287-91

## 9. GOKHALE'S MISSION OF SERVICE

The Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale's work in connection with the issue of indenture reveals his single-minded devotion better than his other activities do. His tour of South Africa and the agitation he subsequently carried on in India give us a very good idea of his ability to identify himself with the work on hand. It is because of this ability of his that I have often said that one could see an underlying religious impulse in all his work.

Let us go over his work in South Africa in some detail. When he announced his intention of paying a visit to South Africa, there was a commotion in the official circles in India. What would happen if a man like Gokhale should be insulted in South Africa? Should he not drop the idea? But there was no one who could muster courage to suggest this to him. While yet in England, Gokhale had a foretaste of what he might expect in South Africa. He asked for a ticket but the officials of the Union Castle Company would not oblige. The report reached India Office. The latter issued peremptory instructions to Sir Owen Tudor, manager of the company, that Gokhale should be treated with the respect due to his status. In the event, Gokhale was able to go on the ship like an honoured guest. He told me, when describing the incident: "I was not very particular about respect to me as an individual, but the honour of my nation is dear to me as my very life and, since I was going on this occasion in my public capacity, I felt that any insult to me would be an insult to India, and hence I tried to secure for me facilities in keeping with my status." The wiser for this incident, India Office had seen to it through the Colonial Office that Gokhale should also be properly received in South Africa and the Union Government had made advance arrangements for the purpose. They kept a saloon ready for him and also provided a cook to accompany him on his tour. An officer was detailed to look after him. The Indian community, on its part, had made arrangements to accord him more than royal honours. Gokhale accepted the Union Government's hospitality only in Pretoria, capital of the Union. Everywhere else, he was the guest of the Indian community. The moment he arrived in Cape Town, he took up a careful study of the South African issue. Even the general information on the subject with which he arrived in Cape Town was of no mean order, but that was not enough to satisfy him. During his four weeks' stay in South Africa, he went so deep into the question of Indians there, that everyone who met him was surprised by the vastness of his knowledge. When he was to meet Generals Botha and Smuts, so numerous were the notes he wanted to be prepared that I wondered why he would take all that trouble. He was in indifferent health

all the time and needed the utmost care. Despite this, he would keep awake working till midnight, and get up again at four o'clock in the morning and ask for papers. In the result, the meeting he had with Generals Botha and Smuts led ultimately to the *satyagraha* campaign for the repeal of the £3 tax on the indentured labourers. This tax had been imposed, since 1898, on the labourers whose indenture had expired and on their wives and children. If any labourer did not wish to pay the tax, he was obliged under the law to return to India. This reduced the Indians who had been trapped into indenture, rather, into slavery, to a miserable plight. A man who had given up everything and gone over to South Africa with his entire family, what could he do on returning? Here he would have nothing but starvation to face. How, on the other hand, could he remain in indenture for a lifetime? When free men around him earned as much as £4 or 5 or 10 a month, how could he be content with 14 or 15 shillings? If he wanted to remain free, he would have to pay, assuming that he had one son and one daughter, £12 every year by way of tax, including the tax on his wife. How could he pay this exorbitant tax? The Indian community had been fighting against this tax from the very beginning. There had been repercussions in India too. But the tax had yet to be repealed then. Along with many other things, Gokhale was to demand repeal of this tax. He had been boiling over as if this tax on his poor brethren were a tax on himself. He brought into play the entire strength of his spirit when he met General Botha. So strong was the impression that his words created on Generals Botha and Smuts that they yielded and gave him a promise to repeal the tax during the ensuing session of the Parliament. Gokhale announced the news to me with great joy. These two Ministers had given other promises as well. As we are, however, considering only the question of indenture, I restrict myself here to this part of his meeting with the Union Government. The Parliament commenced its sittings. Gokhale had left South Africa by then and the Indians there discovered that the £3 tax was not to be repealed. To be sure, General Smuts had made a lukewarm effort to bring round the Natal members; in my judgement, however, he had not done all that he should have. The Indian community informed the Union Government that the latter had bound itself before Gokhale to repeal the tax and that, therefore, if the tax was not repealed, it would be included among the issues on which they had been offering *satyagraha* since 1906. At the same time, Gokhale was informed telegraphically. He approved of this step. The Union Government ignored the warning given by the Indian community. Everyone knows what followed: 40,000 indentured Indians started *satyagraha*, went on strike and endured hardships past all bearing. Quite a few of them were killed. Ultimately, however, the promise given to Gokhale was fulfilled and the tax was repealed.<sup>62</sup>

(From Gujarati)

*Dharmatma Gokhale* (1917); *Collected Works*, Volume 14, pages 128-30

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<sup>62</sup> By the Indians Relief Act, 1914

## 10. LETTER TO *INDIAN OPINION*, DECEMBER 15, 1917<sup>63</sup>

Motihari,  
December 15, 1917

When I left South Africa, I had fully intended to write to my Indian and English friends there from time to time, but I found my lot in India to be different from what I had expected it to be. I had hoped to be able to have comparative peace and leisure but I have been irresistibly drawn into many activities. I hardly cope with them and local daily correspondence. Half of my time is passed in the Indian trains. My South African friends will, I hope, forgive me for my apparent neglect of them. Let me assure them that not a day has passed when I have not thought of them and their kindness. South African associations can never be effaced from my memory.

You will not now be surprised when I tell you that it was only today that I learnt from *Indian Opinion* to hand, about the disastrous floods. During my travels I rarely read newspapers and I have time merely to glance at them whilst I am not travelling. I write this to tender my sympathy to the sufferers. My imagination enables me to draw a true picture of their sufferings. They make one think of God and His might and the utter evanescence of this life. They ought to teach us ever to seek His protection and never to fail in the daily duty before us. In the divine account books only our actions are noted, not what we have spoken. These and similar reflections fill my soul for the moment and I wish to share them with the sufferers. The deep poverty that I experience in this country deters me even from thinking of financial assistance to be sent for those who have been rendered homeless. Even one pie in this country counts. I am, at this very moment, living in the midst of thousands who have nothing but roasted pulse or grain-flour mixed with water and salt. We, therefore, can only send the sufferers an assurance of our heartfelt grief.

I hope that a determined movement will be set on foot to render residence on flats exposed to visitations of death-dealing floods illegal. The poor will, if they can, inhabit even such sites regardless of consequences. It is for the enlightened persons to make it impossible for them to do so.

The issues of *Indian Opinion* that acquainted me with the destruction caused by the floods gave me also the sad news of Mr. Abdul Gani's death.<sup>64</sup> Please convey my respectful condolences to the members of our friend's family. Mr. Abdul Gani's services to the community can never be forgotten. His sobriety of judgement and never-failing courtesy would have done credit to anybody. His wise handling of public questions was a demonstration of the fact that services to one's country could be effectively rendered without a knowledge of English or modern training. I note, too, that our people in South

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<sup>63</sup> This was published under the caption "Advice to South African Indians".

<sup>64</sup> Abdul Gani, a prominent businessman, was Chairman of the British Indian Association from 1903 to 1907.

Africa are not yet free from difficulties about trade licences and leaving certificates. My Indian experience has confirmed the opinion that there is no remedy like passive resistance against such evils. The community has to exhaust milder remedies, but I hope that it will not allow the sword of passive resistance to get rusty. It is our duty, whilst the terrible war lasts, to be satisfied with petitions, etc., for the desired relief, but I think the Government should know that the community will not rest until the questions above mentioned are satisfactorily solved. It is but right that I should also warn the community against dangers from within. I hear from those who return from South Africa that we are by no means free of those who are engaged in illicit traffic. We, who seek justice, must be above suspicion, and I hope that our leaders will not rest till they have purged the community of internal defects.

*The Hindu*, March 4, 1918; *Collected Works*, Volume 14, pages 108-09

## **11. RESOLUTION OF THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, CALCUTTA, DECEMBER 29, 1917<sup>65</sup>**

This Congress re-expresses its regret that the British Indians of South Africa still labour under disabilities which materially affect their trade and render their residence difficult, and unjustly and unduly restrict their movement to and in these parts of the Empire, and hopes that the local authorities will realise their responsibility to the Indians who have, in spite of disabilities, taken their full share in the War by raising corps and otherwise remove the disabilities complained of, and authorises the President to cable the substance of the resolution to the respective authorities.

*Report of the 32nd Session of the Indian National Congress, 1917; Collected Works*, Volume 14, pages 117-118

## **12. AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS' STRIKE: LEAFLETS OF MARCH 4, 5 AND 6, 1918<sup>66</sup>**

*Leaflet No. 7 of March 4, 1918*

South Africa is a large British colony. The Europeans have been settled there for

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<sup>65</sup> This resolution was moved by Gandhiji.

<sup>66</sup> In 1918, Gandhiji guided a strike of workers in textile mills in Ahmedabad. These leaflets were issued when the strike seemed to be flagging. He later went on a fast to induce the workers to stick to their pledge, and ended it after three days when the employers agreed to arbitration. A settlement was reached after 21 days of strike.



over four hundred years. They enjoy autonomy. Many European workers are employed in the railways of that country. These workers felt that they did not receive just wages. Instead of merely trying to get their wages increased, they thought of capturing the Government. That was unjust; it was Satanic justice. It increased the bitterness between the Government and the labour, and the whole of South Africa was in the grip of fear. Nobody felt secure. Ultimately, there was even open fighting between the parties and some innocent persons were killed. The military took over control everywhere. Both parties suffered heavily. Each desired to defeat the other. Neither cared for justice as such. Each side magnified the other's misdeeds. Neither had regard for the feelings of the other.

While this was going on, our workers behaved justly. When the railway strike was launched, a strike involving 20,000 Indian workers had already begun. We were fighting the Government of that country for justice, pure and simple. The weapon our workers employed was *satyagraha*. They did not wish to spite the Government, nor did they wish it ill. They had no desire to dislodge it. The European workers wanted to exploit the strike of the Indians. Our workers refused to be exploited. They said, "Ours is a *satyagraha* struggle. We do not desire to harass the Government. We will, therefore, suspend our struggle while you are fighting." Accordingly, they called off the strike. We may call this true justice. Eventually, our workers succeeded and the Government, too, got credit because it did justice by accepting our demands. Our workers obeyed sentiment and did not seek to take advantage of the opponent's embarrassment. The end of the struggle saw better mutual regard between the Government and the people and we came to be treated with more respect. Thus, a struggle fought on the basis of true justice benefits both sides.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> In 1913, a strike by white railwaymen presented the Botha-Smuts government with a crisis: the government declared martial law when there was violence, and the strike was suppressed by violence.

In July 1913, Gandhiji agreed to a request by General Smuts to defer discussions on the Indian question until the railway strike was resolved. Correspondence continued after some days, and there was no agreement. Gandhiji resumed the *satyagraha* in September 1913 and it developed into a mass resistance.

The Government appointed a commission on Indian grievances and, on its recommendation, released Gandhiji on 18 December. Mass meetings of the Indian community, addressed by Gandhiji in the next few days, decided against testifying before the Commission unless at least one nominee of the Indian community was appointed to it and all other *satyagrahis* released from prison. It was agreed to resume the struggle in January if these demands were not met.

Gandhiji went to Pretoria in January and had an interview with General Smuts. Before the interview, he told the press that he had postponed the resumption of the struggle since the passive resisters would not wish to embarrass the government while the resumed railway strike was on.

If we conduct our struggle on the same basis, with a sense of justice, if we bear no malice towards the employers and ask only for what is our right, not only shall we win but there will also be increased goodwill between the workers and the employers.

Another thing to observe from this instance is that, in *satyagraha*, both the sides need not be followers of truth. Even if one side alone follows it, *satyagraha* will finally succeed. The party, moreover, which fights with bitterness will lose its bitterness when this is not returned by the other side. If a man violently swings his hand in the air, he only strains it thereby. Similarly, bitterness is fed only by bitterness.

We may, therefore, rest assured that, if we fight on with firmness and courage, we are bound to win in the end.

Tomorrow we shall consider some instances of *satyagraha*.

*Leaflet No. 8, March 5, 1918*

In this leaflet, we are not going to talk about *satyagrahis* who have won fame in the world. It would be more profitable for us and inspire us with strength to know what suffering common men like ourselves have found it possible to go through... Such a *satyagrahi* was Harbat Singh. He was an old man of 75 years. He had gone to South Africa on a five-year contract to work on an agricultural farm on a monthly wage of seven rupees. When the strike of 20,000 Indians, referred to in the last leaflet, commenced, he also joined it. Some strikers were jailed, and Harbat Singh was among them. His companions pleaded with him and said, "It is not for you to plunge into this sea of suffering. Jail is not the place for you. No one can blame you if you do not join such a struggle." Harbat Singh replied: "When all of you suffer so much for our honour, what shall I do by remaining outside? What does it matter even if I die in jail?" And, verily, Harbat Singh died in jail and won undying fame. Had he died outside, no one would have noticed his death. But, as he died in jail, the Indian community asked for his dead body and hundreds of Indians joined his funeral procession.

Like Harbat Singh was the Transvaal businessman, Ahmed Mohamed Cachalia.<sup>68</sup> By the grace of God he is still alive, and lives in South Africa where he looks after the Indian community and safeguards its honour. During the struggle in which Harbat Singh sacrificed his life, Cachalia went to prison several times. He allowed his business to be ruined and, though he now lives in poverty, is respected everywhere. He saved his honour, though he had to pay heavily for it.

Just as an old labourer and a middle-aged businessman of repute stood by their word and suffered, so also did a girl of seventeen years. Her name was Vallamma.

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<sup>68</sup> Please see Gandhiji's obituary on the death of Mr. Cachalia in 1918, item 18 below.

She also went to jail for the honour of the community during that same struggle. She had been suffering from fever when she was imprisoned. In jail, the fever became worse. The jailer advised her to leave the jail, but Valliamma refused and with an unflinching mind completed her term of imprisonment. She died on the fourth or the fifth day after her release from jail.

The *satyagraha* of all the three was pure. All of them suffered hardships, went to jail but kept their pledge...

*Leaflet No. 9, March 6, 1918*

Yesterday we discussed the examples of three *satyagrahis*; they were not the only *satyagrahis* in that struggle. Twenty thousand workers were out of work at a time, and the trouble was not over within twelve days. The entire struggle lasted for seven years and during that period hundreds of men lived under great suspense and anxiety and stuck to their resolve. Twenty thousand workers lived homeless and without wages for three months. Many sold whatever goods they had. They left their huts, sold their beds and mattresses and cattle and marched forth. Hundreds of them marched twenty miles a day for several days, even getting on only on 3/4 lb. of flour and an ounce of sugar. There were Muslims as well as Hindus among them. One of them is the son of the *Muezzin* of the Jumma Masjid of Bombay. His name is *Imam Saheb Abdul Kadir Bawazeer*. He who had never suffered any hardship before endured the rigours of jail life, labouring, during his terms of imprisonment, on cleaning roads, breaking stones, etc., and for months lived on tasteless and simple food. At present he has not a pie with him. The same is true of *Dadamiya Kaji* of Surat. Two seventeen-year-old youngsters from Madras, *Narayanswamy* and *Nagappan*, suffered to the utmost and sacrificed their lives, but did not give in. In this same struggle, we may note, women who had never done any manual work before went round hawking and laboured as washerwomen in jails.

Remembering these examples, will any worker among us not be prepared to suffer some inconvenience to keep his pledge?

(From Gujarati)

*Ek Dharmayuddha; Collected Works, Volume 14, pages 235- 40*

## **PART II**

**1918-1921**

### *Editors' Note*

The year 1919 saw Gandhiji plunge headlong into all-India politics. The World War I restrictions on civil rights embodied in the "Rowlatt Act" made Gandhiji launch mass protest. In moves markedly reminiscent of his trans-communal initiatives in South Africa, Gandhiji secured powerful Muslim support for his satyagraha. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre of April 13, 1919, and the Khilafat Movement further cemented the constructive solidarity. By 1920-21, Gandhiji was not only a bridge between India's principal communities but also India's foremost mass leader: a leader, however, whose ability to organise civil disobedience was matched by an uncompromising adherence to non-violence.

Throughout the intensifying struggle Gandhiji kept tuning into developments in his erstwhile theatre of resistance. And his friends in South Africa kept him posted.

In June 1918, Gandhiji received a cable from Ahmad Mahomed Cachalia which spoke of new railway regulations imposing a statutory colour bar in regard to the issue of tickets, seating in trains, and removal of non-whites from compartments. Gandhiji was also told of a decision of the Natal Supreme Court to the effect that subjects of "Native States" were aliens and not British subjects and hence not entitled to its protection. Gandhiji was stung by these reports into writing to *The Bombay Chronicle* and to Sir George Barnes, member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, urging that if the Natal Supreme Court's judgement regarding "Native subjects" was sound in law, the law should be altered and if unsound, should be set aside by appeal to the Privy Council. (Items 13-14).

Likewise, Gandhiji came down heavily on an Imperial Council Resolution (August 1918) which spoke of the principle of reciprocity in future immigration. Under this principle the Government of India could restrict immigration into India even as South Africa restricted immigration into South Africa of dependents of Indians settled there. Describing the resolution as "an eyewash," Gandhiji said only Indians would be affected under the reciprocity arrangement. The number of Indians wishing to go to South Africa to join their families there could not be compared to the few whites who may wish to enter India. "It is like a giant telling a dwarf that the latter is free to give blow for blow...." (Item 16).

Two of his closest associates in South Africa - Shapurji Sorabji Adajania and Ahmad Mahomed Cachalia - died in 1918. Gandhiji wrote moving tributes in letters to the Indian press about these colleagues in the South African campaigns.

The summer of 1919 witnessed unparalleled repression in India. The Punjab wrongs had angered the whole country as did the betrayal by Britain of promises made to the Indian Muslims concerning the Ottoman Empire and the holy places. Gandhiji's faith in the British Empire - which he had supported because of its profession of equality for all its subjects - was shaken. He was estranged from the Government of India which he felt was hopelessly indifferent to the welfare of the people.

Gandhiji led the non-co-operation movement in which tens of thousands of people courted imprisonment. But his insistence on non-violence came to be disregarded by spontaneous protests turning violent in different parts of the country. He was anguished and called off the satyagraha, speaking of the need to start movements only after careful preparation. The period was, clearly, one of intensities, both inner and outer.

But all these preoccupations notwithstanding, South Africa continued to claim his time.

Hardly had the World War ended when an anti-Asiatic movement mushroomed in South Africa, determined to abolish the vested rights of the Indians, particularly the traders, and force them to leave the country. Leaders of government and major political parties, instead of resisting this movement, went along with it and even fanned anti-Asiatic prejudice.

The first objective of the anti-Asiatic agitators, especially in the Transvaal, was to freeze trading licences and make it impossible for Indians to acquire land or other fixed property through mortgages and shareholdings in private companies, as they had been able to do legally until then. They even misinterpreted a letter by Gandhiji in 1914 in justification of such action.

The South African Parliament set up a Select Committee in May 1919 to look into this matter and on its recommendation, the Government rushed the Asiatics (Land and Trading) Act, 1919, through the Parliament to appease the anti-Asiatic lobby. This law made it almost impossible for Indians to obtain new trading licences or to own property through mortgages and private limited liability companies.

Leaders of the Indian community contemplated civil resistance. In July 1919, the officers of the Transvaal British Indian Association and other leaders signed a covenant pledging resistance. The first Union-wide conference of Indians was convened on August 4, 1919, and it decided to resort to civil resistance unless full civic rights were granted.

During this crisis, Gandhiji did all he could to publicise the situation, to promote public agitation in India and to persuade the Indian Government to act. He endorsed the plans for civil resistance in South Africa. "Never has a community been engaged," he wrote in *Young India* (December 17, 1919), "in an unequal fight such as our countrymen are in South Africa." (Item 41).

There was one redeeming factor in this grim scenario that pleased Gandhiji. "It is a

matter of great consolation," he told *The Tribune*, "that Mr. Andrews is on the spot." (Item 45).

The British and Indian Governments managed to avert resistance by giving hope of a Commission in which Indian interests would be adequately represented. An Indian civil servant, Sir Benjamin Robertson, was sent to South Africa. But the Asiatic Inquiry Commission, appointed by the Union Government in February 1920, was a wholly one-sided Commission designed to appease the anti-Asiatic lobby. It included no member representing India or Indians. It reported on March 3, 1921, with a series of recommendations detrimental to Indians.

This shocking report came at the height of the non-co-operation movement in India. Gandhiji wrote:

"... at the present moment, I must invite our countrymen in South Africa to carry on their battle bravely and single-handed, and help us here in the best way they can..."

"Either (white) supremacy must go in its entirety, or those of us who recognise the tubercular nature of the disease must perish in the attempt to combat it... The Report of the Commission can only spur my non-co-operation spirit to further effort." (Item 50)

The contents of this section record the sharp deterioration in the attitude of the South African authorities towards the Indians domiciled there, within a few years after the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement.

### 13. ANTI-INDIAN LEGISLATION IN SOUTH AFRICA<sup>69</sup>

Sir,

I offer no apology for seeking the hospitality of your columns for the enclosed extracts from *Indian Opinion*. They deal with the well-being of over two *lakhs*<sup>70</sup> of emigrants from India. Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Cachalia, the esteemed President of the British Indian Association of Johannesburg,<sup>71</sup> has sent from that place the following

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<sup>69</sup> Letter to the *Bombay Chronicle* which published it under the caption, "Anti-Indian Legislation in South Africa". The letter appears to have been released generally to the press.

<sup>70</sup> A *lakh* is one hundred thousand.

<sup>71</sup> Mr. Cachalia was President of the Transvaal British Indian Association from 1908 until his death in 1918.

cablegram regarding one of the matters referred to in the extracts:

"MASS MEETING, FIFTH, STRONGLY PROTESTED SECTION NINETEEN RAILWAY REGULATIONS. RESOLVED CABLE SUPPORTERS INDIA. REGULATIONS IMPOSE STATUTORY COLOUR BAR IN REGARD TO ISSUE OF TICKETS, PLACING IN, AND REMOVING FROM COMPARTMENTS, OCCUPATION OF PLACES ON STATION PLATFORMS, EMPOWER MINOR OFFICIALS REMOVE WITHOUT ASSIGNING REASON. PLEASE MAKE SUITABLE REPRESENTATION APPROPRIATE QUARTERS. COMMUNITY UNANIMOUS ASSERT RIGHTS UNLESS RELIEF SOUGHT GRANTED."

Mr. Cachalia was one of the staunchest workers during the passive resistance campaign that raged for eight years in South Africa. During that campaign, he reduced himself to poverty, and accepted imprisonment for the sake of India's honour. One can, therefore, easily understand what is meant by the words "Community unanimous assert rights unless relief sought granted." It is not a threat, it is the burning cry of distress felt by a community whose self-respect has been injured.

It is evident that the white people of South Africa have not been visibly impressed by the war which is claimed to be waged for the protection of the *ryots*<sup>72</sup> or weaker or minor nationalities. Their prejudice against colour is not restrained even by the fact that local Indians have raised a volunteer bearer corps which is gallantly serving in East Africa with the column that was taken to East Africa by General Smuts.

The problem is difficult - it is complex. Prejudices cannot be removed by legislation. They will yield only to patient toil and education. But what of the Union Government? It is feeding the prejudice by legalising it. Indians would have been content if the popular prejudice had been left to work itself out, care being taken to guard against violence on either side. Indians of South Africa could not complain even against a boycott on the part of the whites. It is there already. In social life, they are completely ostracised. They feel the ostracism, but they silently bear it. But the situation alters when the Government steps in and gives legal recognition to the anti-colour campaign. It is impossible for the Indian settlers to submit to an insulting restraint upon their movements. They will not allow booking clerks to decide as to whether they are becomingly dressed. They cannot allow a platform inspector to restrict them to a reserved part of the platform. They will not, as if they were ticket-of-leave men, produce their certificates in order to secure railway tickets.

The pendency of the war cannot be used as an effective shield to cover fresh wrongs and insults. The plucky custodians of India's honour are doing their share in South Africa. We are here bound to help them. Meetings throughout India should inform the white inhabitants of South Africa that India resents their treatment of her sons. They should call upon the Government of India and the Imperial Government to secure effective protection for our countrymen in South Africa. I hope that Englishmen in India will not

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<sup>72</sup> Farmers and peasants

be behind-hand in lending their valuable support to the movement to redress the wrong.

Mr. Cachalia's cable is silent on the grievance disclosed in the second batch of extracts. It is not less serious. In its effect it is far more deadly. But the community is hoping to right the wrong by an appeal to the highest legal tribunal in the Union. But really the question is above that tribunal. Let me state it in a sentence. A reactionary Attorney-General has obtained a ruling from the Natal Supreme Court to the effect that subjects of "Native States" are aliens and not British subjects and are, therefore, not entitled to its protection so far as appeals under a particular section of the Immigrants' Restriction Act are concerned. Thus, if the local court's ruling is correct, thousands of Indians settled in South Africa will be deprived of the security of residence in South Africa, for which they fought for eight years and which they thought they had won. At least a quarter of the Indian settlers of South Africa are subjects of the Baroda and Kathiawad States.<sup>73</sup> If any law considers them as aliens, surely it has to be altered. It is an insult to the States and their subjects to treat the latter as aliens.

Yours, etc.  
M.K. Gandhi

*Bombay Chronicle*, June 7, 1918; *Collected Works*, Volume 14, pages 410-12

#### **14. LETTER TO SIR GEORGE BARNES, JUNE 2, 1918**

Dear Sir George Barnes,<sup>74</sup>

I believe matters affecting the status of emigrants to the Colonies fall under your department. If so, I beg to invite your attention to the attached papers.

You will note from the papers that the Union Government is again succumbing to the white prejudice against colour and that what is claimed to be a war for principles and for the defence of weaker nationalities has produced but little impression upon the whites of South Africa.

The problem, I know, is difficult. Prejudices cannot be removed by legislation. They will yield only to patient toil and education. But what I fear is that the Union Government, instead of holding the scales evenly between conflicting interests, is itself feeding this race prejudice. If my view be correct, it is a question as to how far it can use the protection of the Union Jack in its anti-Imperial course. Might not the Government of India effectively move the Imperial Government to make an energetic protest against this

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<sup>73</sup> This apparently refers only to free immigrants from Gujarat.

<sup>74</sup> Sir George Barnes, Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in charge of the Department of Commerce and Industry



indecent exhibition of pride and race prejudice?

I suppose you are aware that the small Indian colony in South Africa has rendered and is still rendering, as is admitted by all, much useful service during the war. A bearer corps has been serving in East Africa from the time that General Smuts proceeded there.

The papers are divided into two parts. One part deals with the newly framed railway regulations which speak for themselves. It is unthinkable that an Indian should have to confine himself to a reserved portion of a station platform, reserved carriage, a reserved ticket-office, etc., etc., and even then depend for a first or second-class ticket on the caprice of the booking clerk who is authorised to refuse to issue a ticket to an Indian if, in his opinion, the latter is not becomingly dressed.

The second part shows how, by the ill-judged action of the Union Government, Indians, born in Native States and domiciled in South Africa, have been deprived of valuable legal rights. If the Supreme Court's decision is sound, the law is clearly bad and should be altered. If it is unsound, the Union Government should have it set aside by supporting an appeal to the local Privy Council. Thousands of Indians from the Baroda State have settled in South Africa for years. The Government must have known when they resisted the application of the aggrieved party that they ran the risk of endangering the just rights of Indians who are, to all intents and purposes, British subjects.

I do hope that you will set the cable in motion and take the necessary steps to undo the wrong referred to in the papers herewith presented.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi

*Collected Works*, Volume 14, pages 412-413

## 15. THE LATE SORABJI SHAPURJI ADAJANIA<sup>75</sup>

One of the best Indians has just passed away in Johannesburg in the person of Sorabji Shapurji of Adajan, near Surat, at the age of thirty-five. And it is my mournful duty to pay a humble tribute to a fellow-worker. Mr. Sorabji, though known to a select company of friends, was unknown to the Indian public. His work lay in South Africa. He was a prince among passive resisters. He joined their ranks when the struggle in South Africa was at its highest and when it had travelled beyond the confines of the Transvaal. When he joined the struggle, I must confess, I had my doubts about his ability to go through it. But he soon made his mark as a front-rank *satyagrahi*. Neither he nor I ever expected that he would have to undergo a series of imprisonments amounting in all to over 18 months with hard labour. But he went through it manfully and cheerfully. Mr. Sorabji was a small

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<sup>75</sup> Letter to the press, July 27, 1918

trader when he took to public life in South Africa. He had a high school education. But such as it was, he made the most effective use of it in the Transvaal. During the struggle, he showed a steadfastness of purpose, probity of character, coolness of temper, courage in the midst of adverse circumstances, such as the best of us do not often show. There were occasions when the stoutest hearts might have broken - Sorabji never wavered.

After the struggle was closed, it was my intention to send to England someone from among a band of young Indians who had proved themselves capable warriors. A friend<sup>76</sup> had offered the needful funds. The choice, for a variety of reasons, fell upon Mr. Sorabji. It was a question, whether having abandoned the life of a student for over eight years, he could take to it again. He was, however, determined. His ambition was to become a barrister and fit himself for fuller service. To England he went. He had come in close touch with Mr. Gokhale when he was in South Africa. He came in closer touch in London. And I knew that Mr. Gokhale had the highest opinion of Mr. Sorabji's worth. He had invited him to become a member of his Society. The deceased took an active part in all the leading movements among Indians in London. He was for some time Secretary of the London Indian Society. He was the first to join the Indian Ambulance Corps that was formed in London at the inauguration of the war and served at Netley, nursing the sick and the wounded. After being called to the Bar, he proceeded to South Africa, where he intended to practise the profession and return to India after he had given a number of years to South Africa and found a substitute. But alas! fate has willed it otherwise and a career full of promise had to come to an abrupt end. The deceased was only 35 when he died.

In all I have said above, I have hardly described the man in Sorabji. He was faithful to a degree. He was a true Parsi, because he was a true Indian. He knew no distinctions of creed or caste. Love of India was a passion with him, her service an article of faith. He was indeed a rare man. He leaves a young widow to mourn his death. I am sure there are many friends of Sorabji to share her grief.<sup>77</sup>

*Bombay Chronicle*, July 29, 1918; *Collected Works*, Volume 14, pages 507-08

## 16. IMPERIAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTION

The Imperial Conference Resolution on the status of our countrymen emigrating to the Colonies reads well on the surface but it is highly deceptive. We need not consider it a great achievement that we can pass the same laws against the colonials that they may pass against us. It is like a giant telling a dwarf that the latter is free to give blow for blow.

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<sup>76</sup> Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, who met Gandhiji as a student in London in 1888, became a life-long friend and rendered financial help to Gandhiji until his death in 1932.

<sup>77</sup> Please see also *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter XXIX, on the role of Sorabjee Shapurji Adajania in the struggle in South Africa.

Who is to refuse permission and passports to the colonials desiring to enter India? But Indians, no matter what their attainments are, are constantly being refused permission to enter the Colonies even for temporary periods. South Africa legislation of emigration was purged of the racial taint by the passive resistance movement. But the administrative principles still continue and will do so, so long as India remains both in name and substance a dependency.

The agreement arrived at regarding those who are already domiciled practically re-states the terms of the Settlement of 1914<sup>78</sup>... I may perhaps add that the South African Settlement provides for the protection of those who had plural wives before the Settlement, especially if the latter had at any time entered South Africa. It may be the proper thing in a predominantly Christian country to confine the legality to only one wife. But it is necessary even for that country, in the interest of humanity and for the sake of friendship for members of the same Imperial Federation to which they belong administratively, to allow the admission of plural wives and their progeny.

The above agreement still evades the question of inequality of status in other matters. Thus, the difficulty of obtaining licences throughout South Africa, the prohibition to hold landed property in the Transvaal and the Free State, and virtual prohibition within the Union itself of the entry of Indians into the Free State, the prohibition of Indian children to enter the ordinary Government schools, deprivation of municipal franchise in the Transvaal and the Free State, and practical deprivation of the Union franchise throughout South Africa, barring perhaps the Cape. The resolutions of the Imperial Conference therefore are decidedly an eye-wash. There is no change of heart in the Colonies and certainly no recognition of Imperial obligations regarding India...

*New India*, August 15, 1918; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, pages 19-21

## **17. INDIANS AND THE TRANSVAAL: STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, AUGUST 29, 1918**

Mr. Ahmed Mahomed Cachalia, President of the British Indian Association, Transvaal, cables me to invite the attention of those educated Indians who may desire to go to the Transvaal, to the fact that six such men can, for the needs of the local community in the Transvaal, enter that Colony. If there be any such in the Presidency, they should apply to the President, British Indian Association, Transvaal, P. O. Box No. 6522, Johannesburg, stating their educational and other qualifications, age and place of residence, the applications to reach the President on or before the 30th October, 1918.

*Indian Review*, Madras, September 1918; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, page 33

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<sup>78</sup> The Smuts-Gandhi agreement of June 30, 1914

## 18. THE LATE A. M. CACHALIA<sup>79</sup>

It is my mournful duty to bring to public notice another South African Indian whose death has been just cabled to me. He bore the honoured name of Ahmed Mohamed Cachalia. He was for a number of years President of the British Indian Association of the Transvaal. It was during the passive resistance campaign that Mr. Cachalia suddenly leapt to fame and acquired among the Indians of South Africa a prestige unequalled by any other Indian. It was on the 31st day of July 1907, under the shadow of a tree in the holy mosque of Pretoria, that Mr. Cachalia hurled defiance at the might of General Botha and his Government. Mr. Hosken<sup>80</sup> had brought a message from the General to be delivered to the great mass meeting that was held in the mosque compound, to the effect that in resisting the Transvaal Government, the Indians were breaking their heads against a stone. Mr. Cachalia was one of the speakers. As I am dictating these few words of humble tribute, his voice rings in my ears. He said: "In the name of Allah, I wish to state that though my head may be severed from the trunk, I shall never obey the Asiatic Registration Act. I consider it unmanly and dishonourable to subscribe to a law which virtually reduces me to slavery." And he was among the very few who never flinched through those long and weary eight years of untold sufferings. Mr. Cachalia was by no means amongst the least of the sufferers. He felt that as a leader his sacrifice should be striking, and that he should stop at nothing if thereby the honour of this country might be saved. He reduced himself to poverty. He said good-bye to all the comforts of life to which he was used, and night and day worked for a cause he held sacred. Naturally he acquired a wonderful hold over the Indian community throughout South Africa and his was a name to conjure with amongst them. As may be imagined, there were often disputes among Mohamedans and Hindus and other sections of the community. Mr. Cachalia held the scales even between the conflicting interests and everyone knew that his decisions would be absolutely just and sound. Mr. Cachalia was practically illiterate, He was a self-made man. But his common sense was of the rarest order. It always stood him in good stead and he was able to command the confidence and respect of many Europeans who came in contact with him.

The loss is irreparable and it would be doubly felt by the community, coming as it does, closely after Mr. Sorabji's death. May God Almighty give this noble soul the rest and peace which, I am sure, he fully deserves.<sup>81</sup>

*Bombay Chronicle*, October 21, 1918; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, pages 56-57

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<sup>79</sup> Letter to the press on October 20, 1918, the day when Mr. Cachalia passed away

<sup>80</sup> William Hosken, member of the Legislative Assembly of the Transvaal and former President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa. He was sympathetic to the Indian cause.

<sup>81</sup> Please see also *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter XVI, on the role of Mr. Cachalia (Kachhalia) in the Satyagraha.

## 19. LETTER TO THE PRESS ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION, FEBRUARY 25, 1919<sup>82</sup>

Ahmedabad,  
February 25, 1919

Sir,

The cable received by me from Mr. Asvat, Chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association, and given below, shows that a revival of *satyagraha* with all the attendant sufferings is imminent in South Africa, unless the danger that threatens to overwhelm the Indians of the Transvaal is averted by prompt and effective action by the Government of India, and if necessary, by the public also. The situation warrants a repetition of Lord Hardinge's action, and the immediate despatch to South Africa of a mission consisting of, say, a distinguished civilian, and an equally distinguished Indian publicist.<sup>83</sup>

What is the situation? The Precious and Base Metals Act referred to in the cable affects

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<sup>82</sup> This was published under the caption "Ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa" in *Bombay Chronicle*. It was also published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (February 28) and *New India* (February 27).

<sup>83</sup> Mr. Ebrahim I. Asvat, a *satyagrahi*, was elected Chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association after the death of A.M. Cachalia in 1918.

His cable read:

"LEGAL PROCEEDINGS UNDER PRECIOUS METALS ACT, 1908 RESULTED AGAINST INDIAN MERCHANTS. LONG-STANDING KRUGERSDORP AREA AFFECT JUDGEMENT. VIRTUAL RUINATION MERCANTILE COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT WITWATERSRAND. TRANSVAAL ORDINANCE 9, 1912, RELIEF ACT AND OTHER LAWS AFFECTING INDIAN COMMUNITY RIGOROUSLY ENFORCED OBJECT BEING ELIMINATION INDIAN TRADE BENEFIT EUROPEAN COMPETITORS BRITISH COMMUNITY EMPHATICALLY PROTEST AGAINST CRUEL AND REACTIONARY POLICY. SIGNIFICANT THAT ACTION TAKEN ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH ARMISTICE. COMMUNITY SUBJECT SUCH POLICY POOR MARK APPRECIATION UNDER INDIAN SACRIFICES FOR EMPIRE DURING WAR. COMMUNITY EARNESTLY APPEALS FOR PROTECTION MEANWHILE ENDEAVOURING GET MATTER VERIFICATED BEFORE BAR ASSEMBLY CAPETOWN. PLEASE HELP EVERY POSSIBLE WAY. COLONEL SHAW MAINTAINS BEING PRESENT WHEN HON. GOKHALE AND SELF MADE VOLUNTARY STATEMENT TO SMUTS THAT PERSONS OUTSIDE UNION EVEN ON URGENT MATTERS NEED NOT BE ADMITTED ON TEMPORARY OR VISITING PERMITS PROVIDED THOSE WITHIN UNION ARE TREATED FAIRLY. ONE MOHAMMED ESSAK, DURBAN DIED LEAVING ESTATE FORTY THOUSAND RELATIVES MAURITIUS. INTERIOR REFUSES TEMPORARY PERMITS FOR ADMINISTRATION PURPOSE NOTWITHSTANDING ANY DEPOSIT. GOVERNMENT STATED POLICY BASED ON LATE HON. GOKHALE'S STATEMENT. KINDLY CLEAR UP POINT. GOVERNMENT OBJECT HARASS INDIAN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY. COMMUNITY IN GREAT DISTRESS UNLESS MATTERS IMPROVE RELUCTANTLY RESIST, MAINTENANCE SELF-RESPECT, HONOUR MOTHERLAND, ADVISE."

the Gold Area of the Transvaal in the largest part of its population. Krugersdorp is an important town near Johannesburg, and contains many Indian merchants, some of them owning stock probably worth three *lakhs* of rupees. If no relief is provided, it means ruin for the merchants and for those residing in the whole of the Gold Area. The goal of the Union Government seems to be, as has been openly declared by several Union statesmen, to reduce its Indian settlers to the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water. It is possible that the Court's interpretation is correct. If so, the Act itself must be changed and the Indian community must be saved, not merely because of their status as British subjects, but also because of the Passive Resistance Settlement of 1914, which protects vested or existing rights.

The judgement is a direct attack upon Indian liberty in pursuance of the policy referred to by me. The Government want further to harass the community throughout the Union by refusing facilities for conservation of its present Indian population. They cannot remain in it, if they may not receive occasional visitors, if, on the death of a propertied man, his trusted relatives may not enter the Union in order to administer his affairs. I can understand the dominant community in South Africa not wishing to have an unlimited influx of people alien to them in civilisation. But it is impossible to understand a policy of ruthless extermination, side by side with a profession of loyalty to a common Empire. Moreover, this refusal to issue temporary permits is a breach of the Settlement. It has been all along understood that temporary permits would be granted, whenever the necessity arose. Surely nobody could question it in the late Mr. Mahomed Essak's case quoted by Mr. Asvat in his cablegram. The reference to the late Mr. Gokhale in this connection is a libel on a sacred name. After the termination of the interview,<sup>84</sup> Mr. Gokhale came directly to the hotel where we were staying. I had the privilege of being his secretary and he related to me the whole of the conversation between ministers and himself and there was not a word about his having consented to the stoppage of temporary permits under any circumstances whatsoever. He had no authority to enter into any agreement. He went only to learn and to plead. Your readers will recall that at the historic meeting held in Bombay upon his return from South Africa, he declared publicly that he had no authority to negotiate a settlement and that he had agreed to nothing. As representing the Indian community, I was party to the Settlement of 1914. If any such agreement had been made, surely it would at least have formed part of the many discussions between General Smuts and myself. It is worthy of note that General Smuts is not now in South Africa. If he was asked, I doubt not that he would repudiate Colonel Shaw's allegation.

The cablegram adds that there are many other harassments going on throughout the Union. We are supposed to be on the eve of embarkation upon Reforms that are to eventuate in the near future in full Responsible Government. What answer has India to give to Mr. Asvat's pathetic appeal? The hundred thousand Indians of the Union have a right to look up to the Government of India and the people for the protection of their elementary rights.

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<sup>84</sup> Mr. Gokhale met with General Louis Botha, the Prime Minister, General J. C. Smuts, then Minister of Finance, Defence and Mines, and Abraham Fischer, Minister of the Interior, in Pretoria on November 14, 1912.

Yours, etc.,  
M.K. Gandhi

*Bombay Chronicle*, February 27, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, pages 107-110

## 20. LETTER TO THE PRESS ON SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION, JULY 3, 1919<sup>85</sup>

Sir,

The *Times of India* has led the way in showing that in the midst of sharp differences between us - the English and Indians - there are points of contact on which we can act with unison. Such is the South African Indian question. Notwithstanding our preoccupations, we may not - dare not - forget this big question.

Even whilst the Maharaja of Bikaner<sup>86</sup> was hoping and appealing to the Dominions' statesmen that the Indian settlers in the Colonies would receive fair and liberal treatment, a scheme was being hatched by the responsible officials of South Africa to deprive the Indians of the Transvaal of vested rights in breach of the compact of 1914, to which the Government of India was witness, if not party.<sup>87</sup>

The Bill, which is now being discussed in the press and which, according to the latest papers received, has passed the committee stage of the Union House of Assembly at the end of May last, virtually deprives the Indians of the Transvaal from holding fixed property even as shareholders of companies or as mortgagees, as they have hitherto successfully and legally done. It further deprives them of the right of obtaining new trade licences throughout the Transvaal. This means that Indian settlers, if they are not now efficiently protected, will be reduced to the status of menial servants, no matter what their capacity might be. It was bad enough to restrict so as almost to prohibit fresh immigration. It is intolerable to confiscate the economic and material rights of legally admitted immigrants and their descendants.

The duty of Englishmen residing in India and Indians is, in my humble opinion, clear. We can create such an emphatic public opinion that we can shame the Europeans of South Africa into doing the right thing. We can also by our united protest strengthen the hands of the Government of India in its endeavour, which it will make as trustee,

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<sup>85</sup> This was also published in *New India*, July 4, 1919; *Young India*, July 5, 1919; and *The Hindu*, July 7, 1919.

<sup>86</sup> The Maharaja of Bikaner represented India at the Imperial Conference of July 1918.

<sup>87</sup> Following white agitation against the acquisition of property in the Transvaal by Indians, through mortgages and shareholding in private companies, the Union House of Assembly set up a Select Committee on May 1, 1919, to look into the matter. Considering its report and recommendations, the Government introduced a Bill to make it almost impossible for Indians in the Transvaal to obtain new trading licences, and to prohibit them from owning land or other fixed property by taking mortgages or as shareholders in private limited liability companies as they had been entitled to.

effectively to protect the Union settlers of the Transvaal from impending extinction.

Yours, etc.,  
M. K. Gandhi

*Bombay Chronicle*, July 4, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, pages 427-428

## 21. LETTER TO SIR GEORGE BARNES, JULY 3, 1919

Bombay,  
*July 3, 1919*

Dear Sir George Barnes,

You were good enough to write to me some months ago that you were inquiring about the South African Indian situation. It has since gone from bad to worse... You will gauge it from the enclosed cuttings. Briefly, the position, if the Bill referred to in the enclosed becomes law, will be that Indians in the Transvaal will not be able to trade and hold fixed property, as they have hitherto been legally able to. This is a manifest and direct breach of the compact of 1914 to which the Government of India was witness, if not party. And party or no party, can it for a moment tolerate legal confiscation of economic and material, as distinguished from political, rights? It is one thing to stop or restrict immigration, it is another to deprive legally admitted immigrants of the means of honest and honourable livelihood. I know you will act, and that promptly. The Bill might even have passed all stages. I trust you will put the cable in motion and inquire...

Yours sincerely,  
*M.K. Gandhi*

*Collected Works*, Volume 15, page 428

## 22. SMUTS-GANDHI AGREEMENT

...I trust the readers of *Young India* will not grumble if they for the time being find its pages filled with references to the position of our countrymen in South Africa...

This question of the status of our countrymen in South Africa is a matter of no small importance. The measure of our capacity for self-government is the measure of our ability to feel for the meanest of ourselves. The cause being just, the wrong being clearly demonstrable, we have to be the readier to act when the cause is of the helpless. It is the magnitude of the wrong, not the person, that should arrest attention.



According to the above test, this question of the status of our countrymen in South Africa is of more immediate importance than even the all-absorbing question of Reforms.<sup>88</sup> This question cannot await solution till after the Reforms are granted. It must be dealt with now or never. It is to be hoped therefore that India will witness a revival of the agitation that was started by the late Mr. Gokhale in 1913 and which culminated in the settlement of 1914.

What, then, is the Smuts-Gandhi agreement? It is remarkable but it is true that every amelioration in the status of the Transvaal Indians has been used afterwards often successfully by their opponents to take away further rights from them. The Indian settlers have therefore always been engaged in resisting encroachment on their liberty. Their progress thus has been negative. The agreement is set forth in the two letters dated 30th June 1914, the one addressed to me on General Smuts' behalf and the other being my reply thereto.<sup>89</sup> There is another letter from me written to Mr. Gorges, the then Secretary for the Interior, setting forth my interpretation of the term "vested rights."<sup>90</sup> Anyone may see for himself that the reply of the 30th June was written in my representative capacity, the letter of the 7th July in my private capacity showing what I thought of "vested rights" in connection with the Gold Law and Township Amendment Act... I would not press for the insertion of a definition of vested rights in the representative correspondence, because I felt that any definition in the correspondence might result in restricting the future action of my countrymen. Thus my letter could not be used for the curtailment of our rights. But the definition given by me as a matter of fact does not in any way whatsoever curtail existing rights. There was even in 1914 and prior to it an attempt being made to interpret the two laws mentioned in my letter of the 7th July 1914 so as adversely to affect the rights of the Indians residing in the Gold Area. I therefore contended that the terms of the settlement required that no rights that were exercised by the Indians at the time of the passing of the two laws could be taken away even though the legal interpretation thereof went against our countrymen. In support of my contention, I used Mr. Jaup de Villiers' own statement prepared for the Imperial Government. If, therefore, my letter be part of the settlement, it could only protect Indians from statutory infringement of their liberty. That letter could not be used, as it has been used, even by the Committee of the House of Assembly for creating a legal restriction. Mr. Duncan's independent interpretation of it will bear repetition.

He did not regard the Smuts-Gandhi agreement as an agreement or an assertion that no more Indian licences should be obtained after that date. The agreement was a protective agreement, under which an undertaking was given that the law should be administered with due respect to vested rights and that the Gold Law would not be put into force against the Indian community.

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<sup>88</sup> Constitutional reforms in India. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were announced in 1918 and promulgated in 1919.

<sup>89</sup> Please see Appendix I.

<sup>90</sup> Please see Appendix II.

The letter written by Gandhiji to E. M. Gorges on July 7, 1914, defining "vested rights" to be protected, was misinterpreted to justify restriction of Indian trading rights.

Whatever the interpretation of my letter or the whole settlement, the only question before India - the Government and the people - is: "Are Indians of the Transvaal who have served the Empire as faithfully as any of the other inhabitants of South Africa to be deprived of the right to reside and trade freely and to hold fixed property there in at least as they have done hitherto?" The Government of India and the people can only answer it in one way. And I hope that before the week is out, India will send a message of hope to her children who are battling against heavy odds.

*Young India*, July 5, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, pages 432-435

### **23. LETTER TO H. S. L. POLAK, JULY 5, 1919**

I have your confidential memorandum. I must confess that I do not like it. We cannot accept merely formal legal equality with the full knowledge that administratively trade licences will be taken away. We must take up an unbending and unbendable attitude on the question of trade and fixed property. The existing law and the existing practice, and so far as the latter is in our favour, must be at least maintained and where the present law adversely interferes with the existing practice, as for instance in case of Dada<sup>91</sup>, the law must be altered to accord with the practice. I am moving here in that direction.

You will see from the columns of *Young India* what is being done. Mr. Sheppard of *The Times of India* has responded satisfactorily in the matter.

*Collected Works*, Volume 15, page 436

### **24. SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING IN BOMBAY, JULY 13, 1919<sup>92</sup>**

The problem which has brought us together today is a very important one and calls for an urgent solution. If we do not come forward to share the suffering of Indians, wherever they may be, it can be said that we are not fit to be an independent nation. The hardships of Indians in South Africa can be imagined only by those who have had to suffer them. It was many years ago that Indians started going to South Africa. In those days the way lay through Mauritius. Forty years ago, Indians in good numbers started going there under contract as indentured labourers. On the expiry of their contract, they lived as free citizens. Many Indians, especially our Memon brethren, went there as traders to supply the needs of these indentured Indians.

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<sup>91</sup> Dada Osman, secretary of the Natal Indian Congress for several years, had a licence to trade in Vryheid when the town was in the Transvaal under the Boer regime. In 1905, after it was annexed to the Natal, the Licensing Board refused to renew his licence unless he moved to a location in the outskirts of the town. He petitioned Lord Elgin, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, but in vain. (*Indian Opinion*, April 14, 1906).

<sup>92</sup> At a meeting under the auspices of the Home Rule League, with Faiz B. Tyabji in the chair

When gold was discovered in the Transvaal, a large number of Englishmen from surrounding areas descended on it and succeeded, too, in making their fortunes. Indians also earned, some more, some less. Following this, a few people suggested to President Kruger that Indians should be expelled from the Transvaal. He could not do this at the time, but later in 1885 a law was passed as a result of which our Indian brethren there were put to much hardship. This law contained two important provisions, one which prohibited Indian settlers in the Transvaal from holding immovable property and another which required an Indian to pay £3 for taking out a trading licence. One more law was passed later which is known as the Gold Act. This also interfered with the enjoyment of their rights by Indians.

An agreement was arrived at in 1914, which however did not remove all the hardships of Indians. The anti-Indian laws which the Government had recently passed were repealed. One of them was the Registration Act<sup>93</sup> against which the *satyagraha* campaign had been directed. This agreement between Mr. Smuts and me contained a provision to the effect that the existing rights of Indians would not be disturbed. This provision is being interpreted by Indians in one sense and by the Transvaal authorities in another.

In 1913, when I had got Indians ready to march into the Transvaal, Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy of India, sent Mr. Benjamin Robertson to South Africa. At that time, even here everyone felt that this would bring the desired results. Then followed correspondence between Mr. Smuts and me which brought about some understanding. Moreover, some Englishmen had also suggested that Indians should be refused licences in the "Gold Area." No one has succeeded so far in securing the repeal of the Act of 1885, which bears on the Indians' right of ownership of immovable property. But, in my capacity as a lawyer, I used to advise people that we were entitled to the use of lands mortgaged to us. In this way, many of our Indian brethren came to hold lands. Besides, two or more people forming a company could acquire land. Because of this freedom, our Indian brethren have been holding lands there by forming corporations.

But now they have been depriving us of these rights too. I admit of course that there was a provision to the effect that, without prejudice to their rights to the lands and immovable properties already held by them, Indians would not in future be able to own lands, even in the name of companies. What is happening, however, is altogether unjust.

A law has been passed as a result of which, after May 31, no Indian will be able to carry on trade. In this way, they are being deprived of trade rights which they have been enjoying for many years. As Indians, it is our duty to raise a united voice and call the attention of the Government of India to this intolerable situation. Our fight is not against the Indian Government; we have only to strengthen its hands. It does not stand to lose anything by our doing so. If at all the Imperial Government has been helping the South African Government in this matter, our raising a strong protest here will oblige it as well to take our side. The South African Government accepted my contention

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<sup>93</sup> Asiatic Registration Act, enacted by the Transvaal government in 1907

that there should be no racial discrimination in the Immigration Act. But today we find that the white population there has come forward to deprive people of their rights.

Unfortunately, the three able men who worked indefatigably for Indians in South Africa are no more. One of them was Mr. Sorabji Shapurji Adajania. As fate would have it, he has passed away.<sup>94</sup> Another was Mr. Ahmad Mohamed Cachalia. He has also passed away.<sup>95</sup> The third was Mr. Polak<sup>96</sup> who has left South Africa and has settled in London. There is still one person there, but he has to attend to this matter in addition to his own work.

In short, I shall merely say that when we find Indians in South Africa being unjustly deprived of their rights, we should help them. I hope you will pass these resolutions with acclaim.

"(1) That this public meeting of the Bombay citizens respectfully protests against the Asiatic Land and Trading Amendment Bill reported passed by the Parliament of the Union of South Africa as it contravenes the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914 and violates the elementary rights of the British Indians lawfully resident in the Transvaal and, therefore, calls upon the Government of India and the Imperial Government to intervene so as to secure the repeal or the veto of the said Bill.

"(2) That this meeting tenders its heartfelt sympathy and assurance of support to their Indian fellow-citizens in the Transvaal who are heroically struggling against the unjust and unwarrantable encroachments made by the said Bill upon their rights as citizens of the Empire."

(From Gujarati)

*Gujarati*, July 20, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, pages 456-58

## **25. LETTER TO SIR GEORGE BARNES ON TRANSVAAL ASIATIC LAW, JULY 26, 1919<sup>97</sup>**

Bombay  
July 26, 1919

Dear Sir George Barnes,

I thank you for your full letter<sup>98</sup> of the 18th instant regarding the recently enacted

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<sup>94</sup> Please see obituary, item 15.

<sup>95</sup> Please see obituary, item 18.

<sup>96</sup> H. S. L. Polak, a close colleague of Gandhiji in South Africa

<sup>97</sup> Asiatic (Land and Trading) Amendment Act, No. 37 of 1919

<sup>98</sup> This letter reviewed at length the position in South Africa and regretted that protests from the Indian Government had been unavailing. It also gave assurance that the Government would consider further action

Transvaal Asiatic Law.

In view of the last sentence of your letter,<sup>99</sup> I am publishing it together with my reply.<sup>100</sup> I am deeply grateful that H.E. the Viceroy and you have been moving in the matter. I am, however, sorry to have to observe that the information placed at your disposal as to the true nature of the Bill is incomplete, if not misleading, and so is the information regarding the judgement of the Transvaal Supreme Court referred to in your letter.

Here is the true position regarding the Supreme Court judgement. Sections 130 and 131 of the Transvaal Precious and Base Metals Act, 1908, merely refer to residential rights. They have no reference to trade rights which another judgement of the same Supreme Court has held to be inviolable so far as the existing Transvaal laws are concerned. You will, therefore, see that the new law deprives the Indian settler in the Transvaal of his existing trading right. Sections 130 and 131 of the Law of 1908 attempted to curtail residential rights; the new law superadds the curtailment of trade rights and thus completes the virtual ruin of Indians lawfully resident within the Gold Area of the Transvaal. How can the Union Government with any cogency claim to have scrupulously observed the compact of 1914? Let me add that the law of 1908 has always been a bone of contention between the Transvaal Government and the Indian community, and it was, I am thankful to say, because of the strenuous fight that the Imperial Government put up in our behalf that the provisions of Sections 130 and 131 remained practically nugatory. You will perhaps now see what is meant by the promise, in General Smuts' letter to me, "to see that they (the existing laws) are administered in a just manner and with due regard to vested rights." The vested rights regarding residence were the rights which were exercised and enjoyed by the Indians even before 1908, *viz.*, the right of holding fixed property under leases throughout the Transvaal. Let me recall a bit of old history. Law 3 of 1885 itself had become a matter of protracted correspondence between the South African Republic and His Majesty's Government through the British Agent at Pretoria. The matter was then referred to the arbitration of the then Chief Justice of the Orange Free State.<sup>101</sup> He declared all legislation apart from Law 3 of 1885 as amended in 1886 to be contrary to the London Convention. All laws, therefore, passed after the award in further restrictions of the liberty of British Indian settlers of the Transvaal were

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to be taken when the full text of the new statute was received.

<sup>99</sup> "Of course, you are welcome to make any use you may think fit of this letter".

<sup>100</sup> Published in *Bombay Chronicle* and *New India*, both of July 29, 1919

<sup>101</sup> The British Government protested to the South African Republic (Transvaal) against Law 3 of 1885 which restricted Indians to locations, on the grounds that it contravened the London Convention of 1884 between the two Governments. Britain agreed subsequently not to raise objection when a slightly amended law was promulgated in 1887.

There was a further dispute in 1893 when the legislature of the Transvaal passed a resolution asking the Government to apply strictly the prohibition of Indian residence as well as trade outside the designated locations.

The two Governments eventually agreed to refer the matter to arbitration by the Chief Justice of the Orange Free State, Melius de Villiers. He held that Law 3 of 1885 was valid but that its interpretation must be by tribunals in the country. The 1893 resolution was, therefore, declared invalid.

contrary to it and it was, I expect, for that reason, apart from the equity of the case, that Mr. Harcourt<sup>102</sup> declared on 27th June, 1911, from his place in the House of Commons:

"Complaints against that legislation (the Gold Law and Township Amendment Act) have been made and are now being investigated by the Government of the Union of South Africa, who have lately stated that there is no intention of interfering with any business or right to carry on business acquired and exercised by Indians prior to the date of legislation."

Similarly, in 1912, Mr. De Villiers, the then Attorney- General of the Transvaal, said: "No right or privilege which a Coloured person has at the present time is taken away by the new Act." Indians had a right to rely upon Mr. Harcourt's assurance and Mr. De Villiers' interpretation of the Act in question, and if the Transvaal judgement has gone against us, it is the duty of the Union Government not merely in virtue of the compact of 1914, but also of the assurance and the interpretation above referred to, now to amend the law of 1908 and not to put a further restriction upon Indian liberty as the new law does.

I know you are overworked. My only fear is that as you have to act upon briefs prepared for you, and as a powerful Government like the Union Government can far more easily gain your ear than a handful of British Indians of South Africa, their case may suffer simply for want of information. Do you know that the Indians of South Africa raised an Ambulance Corps which served under General Smuts in East Africa?<sup>103</sup> Is the new law to be their reward? I ought not to have to bring in the war services in order to secure the protection of an elementary right which considerations alike of honour and justice entitle them to. I commend to your attention the Report of the Select Committee of the Union House of Assembly. I will gladly lend you a copy, if you do not have one yourself.

Regarding fixed property, I see you have not got full information. I know you will share my sorrow that the Union Government, unmindful of their trust and equally unmindful of the written word, accepted the amendment

"prohibiting the holding of mortgages by Asiatics on property, except as security for a *bona fide* loan for investment and providing that any Asiatic company which acquired fixed property after the 1st instant should dispose of the same within two years or a further period as fixed by a competent Court, with a rider that in the event of failure to do so, the property might be sold by order of the court."

I am quoting from Reuter cable, dated the 23rd May, from Cape Town. You will see that this completes legalised confiscation of property rights throughout the Transvaal and virtually the trade rights within the Gold Area of Indian settlers. There was no evasion of Law 3 of 1885. The Indians did openly what the law permitted them to do, and they should be left free to do so.

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<sup>102</sup> L. Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies

<sup>103</sup> The Indian community contributed two companies of stretcher-bearers during the War.

I do not wish to prolong this tale of agony. The Government of India are bound to protect the rights of the 5,000 Indian settlers of the Transvaal at any cost.

Here is my solution. Law 3 of 1885 authorises the Government to appoint wards and streets in which Indians can hold fixed property. In virtue of this authority, they can declare streets and wards of Gold Area township for Asiatic residence and ownership, and they can instruct receivers of revenue to issue trade licences in respect of such streets and wards to lawful Indian applicants. This will be pending the Commission promised by the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Malan. The Government of India can see (by sending a strong representative) that the Commission does not prove as abortive as the Select Committee of the House of Assembly. The Dominions may have the right to regulate immigration. But as part of a professedly civilised Europe, they cannot restrict or take away the trading and property rights of lawfully resident settlers. The proposed Commission should result in the abolition of all racial restrictions upon such settlers.

*Young India*, July 30, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 15, pages 477-80

## **26. SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING IN POONA, AUGUST 3, 1919<sup>104</sup>**

Mr. Gandhi got up amidst loud cheers and moved the following resolution:

"This public meeting of the citizens of Poona, held under the auspices of the Deccan Sabha, hereby places on record its deep sympathy with the British Indian settlers in South Africa struggling for the elementary rights of citizenship, congratulates them on the brave and sustained struggle carried on by them, and assures them of hearty support from the motherland. This meeting further desires to thank the Government of India for their advocacy of the Indians' case and trusts that the Government of India and the Imperial Government will not rest satisfied until full justice has been done to the British Indian settlers in South Africa by the withdrawal of the Act recently passed and by the restoration of full rights of residence, trade and ownership."

Mr. Gandhi, speaking in Hindi, told the audience that it was impossible for them to have an adequate idea as to how severely the recently passed iniquitous measure had affected the interests of the Indians in South Africa. It was a subject worthy of their serious consideration and it was their duty to help their suffering countrymen in every way.

Mr. Gandhi said he had a telegram from Bombay informing him of Sir George Barnes' letter to him wherein the latter promised that the Government of India would give careful consideration to all that Mr. Gandhi had to say and that they were already communicating with the Secretary of State in the matter. He said he was grateful to the

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<sup>104</sup> The Deccan Sabha, Poona, held a meeting of the citizens to protest against the legislation restricting the property and trading rights of Indians in the Transvaal. Rao Bahadur Khopkar, retired Deputy Collector and Vice-President of Deccan Sabha, presided.

Government of India for their sympathetic attitude.

The new law, Mr. Gandhi declared, robbed the Indians of their elementary rights such as those of being domiciled citizens of South Africa trading as others did, holding landed property, etc. He recalled a Poona meeting held in 1896 under the chairmanship of Dr. Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, to protest against a similarly iniquitous enactment.<sup>105</sup> Dr. Bhandarkar on that occasion said that he never took part in politics, nor did he ever desire to do so, but as he was assured that the Indians in the Transvaal were suffering intolerable wrong, he had decided to preside at the meeting with the greatest pleasure. Poona, the speaker reminded the audience, was a great centre of political, social and educational movement and its contribution therefore in the agitation in question should be very substantial.

Mr. Gandhi then referred to the encomiums paid to India for her sacrifices in war by Gen. Smuts, on leaving for South Africa, and said that Gen. Smuts recommended in effect that India should be accorded a treatment of equality, and still it was the Union Government, of which he was a member, that was passing the obnoxious legislation.

The Indians in South Africa were not, Mr. Gandhi emphasised, asking for political rights from the Union Government, nor were they demanding the right to sit in the South African Parliament. There was, again, no fear of unrestricted immigration into the country. It was a thousand pities that the Transvaalers grudged the Indians even the simple rights to reside and trade, or the right to purchase land with money out of their own pockets. Did it become them to deprive Indians of their bare elementary rights or snatching from the Indians' mouths their scanty morsel? Mr. Gandhi told the audience that the Indians there had now resolved to reply by asking for full civil rights and to resort to civil resistance until those rights were granted.<sup>106</sup>

The Transvaalers sought by their new legislation to rob the Indians of rights of trading in the Gold Area that were especially given them by a Supreme Court decision. They maintained that the new legislation did recognise vested rights and even attributed to the speaker his having tacitly given his consent to the legislation. It was, said Mr. Gandhi, a downright lie. But they did not rest satisfied with that legislation. Some of them, said Mr. Gandhi, were then striving for excluding the Indians altogether, by asking them to restrict their trade and business to their own locations - which the speaker likened to *Mahanwadas* and *Bhangiwadass*<sup>107</sup> in Indian village - i.e., by asking them to trade among themselves.

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<sup>105</sup> Concerning the meeting addressed by Gandhiji in Poona (now Pune) on November 16, 1896, please see *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter VII; and *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 2, page 136.

Dr. Bhandarkar (1837-1925) was a prominent Orientalist and social reformer. He was later Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University.

<sup>106</sup> The reference is to the first Union-wide conference of Indians in South Africa held on August 4, 1919. Please see item 27.

<sup>107</sup> Areas, generally on the outskirts of a town or village, where the "untouchables", working as scavengers, were compelled to reside



In conclusion Mr. Gandhi said that the time had come for Indians in South Africa to resort to the civil resistance that they resorted to some years ago, and which was approved and blessed by the late Mr. Gokhale.<sup>108</sup> While the Indians there were on the threshold of such a crisis, it behoved them here to understand the question thoroughly. It behoved the Maharashtra people, more than others, as they were noted for their learning and studiousness, to give their serious study to the situation in South Africa and to strive by body, speech and mind to bring about a solution of the question.

The resolution was supported by Prof. Kale, Mr. Bhopatkar and Mr. Deodhar and unanimously carried.

*Young India*, August 13, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 16-18

## **27. LETTER TO THE PRESS, AUGUST 13, 1919<sup>109</sup>**

I have just received the following cablegram from Mr. Ebrahim Ismail Asvat, Chairman of the British Indian Association, Johannesburg:

"BILL ASSENTED 23RD JUNE, PROMULGATED 3RD INSTANT. RESTRICTS COMPANIES ACQUIRING FURTHER FIXED PROPERTIES AND HOLDING BONDS AS PRIOR TO COMPANY LAW. REAFFIRMS GOLD AND TOWNSHIP ACTS OPERATING ON NEW LICENCES AFTER 1ST MAY AND RESTRICTING PRESENT TRADERS AND SUCCESSORS TO PARTICULAR TOWNSHIPS. DEPUTATION WAITING HIS EXCELLENCY URGING WITHHOLD ASSENT ON GROUND CLASS LEGISLATION. GOVERNMENT PROMISED ANOTHER COMMISSION DURING RECESS INVESTIGATE INDIAN QUESTION THROUGHOUT UNION AS CONCESSION (TO) THE DETRACTORS IN PARLIAMENT. FEAR FURTHER RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION. COMMUNITY REQUEST YOU APPEAL VICEROY PROPOSE ROYAL COMMISSION INDIA REPRESENTING UNION (LOCAL) INDIAN (INTERESTS). CONVENED UNION INDIAN CONFERENCE 4TH AUGUST GREAT SUCCESS. DECIDED UNITED ACTION. MANY OF (THE) ASSOCIATIONS PLEDGE RESIST ANY COST - ASVAT."<sup>110</sup>

The words in parenthesis have been added by me to make the meaning clear. The

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<sup>108</sup> The reference is to the passive resistance campaign of 1913-14.

<sup>109</sup> This was published also in the *Bombay Chronicle*, August 14, 1919, and *Indian Review*, Madras, August 1919.

<sup>110</sup> In July 1919, a number of Indian leaders in the Transvaal signed a covenant pledging civil resistance. The signatories included the officers of the Transvaal British Indian Association: E. I. Asvat, Chairman; N. A. Cama, Vice-Chairman; P.K. Naidu and B. K. Patel, Joint Secretaries.

A Union-wide Conference of Indians resolved on August 4, 1919, to ask for full civil rights and to resort to civil resistance until those rights were granted.

cablegram bears out what I have said in my letter to Sir George Barnes and what I said at the recent meeting at Poona. The restrictions are clear: (1) no further holding of landed property in the Transvaal; (2) no new trade licences within the area affected by the Gold Law and the Townships Act; (3) the present holders and their successors in title to be restricted as to trade to the townships in which they are now trading.

As I have already remarked, this means virtual ruin of the Indian settlers in the Transvaal. The only means of livelihood to the largest number is trade, and the largest number of Indians is to be found probably within the Gold Area. If the Act stands, they must die out in the natural course.

In the cablegram, the word "assent" occurs twice. It says the Bill has been assented to and it refers to a deputation that is to wait on H.E. the Governor-General of South Africa requesting him to withhold assent. The second use of the word "assent" refers probably to a clause in the Letters Patent providing for the vetoing of class legislation. The clause is undoubtedly to be used under exceptional circumstances. No one can deny that the Asiatics Act<sup>111</sup> constitutes a very exceptional circumstance warranting the exercise of the Royal veto.

The most important part of the cablegram, however, is the fact the commission promised by the Union Government is to be appointed as a "concession" to "the detractors" of Indians in the Union Parliament. Unless, therefore, the Government of India take care, there is every likelihood of the commission, like the committee of the South African Assembly, proving to the British Indians a curse instead of a blessing. It is, therefore, not unnatural that the British Indian Association urges that H.E. the Viceroy should propose a Royal Commission upon which both the Union and Indian interests are represented. Nothing can be fairer than the proposal made by Mr. Asvat. I say so because, as a matter of right, no commission is really needed to decide that Indian settlers are entitled to trade in South Africa where they like and hold landed property on the same terms as the European settlers. This is the minimum they can claim. But under the complex constitution of this great Empire justice is and has often to be done in a round-about manner. A wise captain instead of sailing against a headwind, tacks and yet reaches his destination sooner than he otherwise would have. Even so, Mr. Asvat wisely accepts the principle of a commission on a matter that is self-evident, but equally wisely wants a commission that would not prove abortive and that will dare to tell the ruling race in South Africa that, as members in an Empire which has more Coloured people than white, they may not treat their Indian fellow-subjects as helots. Whether the above proposal is accepted or some other is accepted by the Imperial Government, it must be made clear to them that public opinion in India will not tolerate confiscation of the primary rights of the British Indian settlers in South Africa.

M. K. Gandhi

*Young India*, August 16, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 25-27

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<sup>111</sup> Asiatic (Land and Trading) Amendment Act, No. 37 of 1919

## 28. LETTER TO THE *TIMES OF INDIA*, AUGUST 18, 1919<sup>112</sup>

Sir,

No possible exception can be taken to the impartial manner in which your South African correspondent has given a summary of the Indian position in the Transvaal in your issue of the 18th instant. He has put as fairly as it was possible for him to do both sides of the question.

It is not the additional "brown burden on the top of the black one" which agitates the European colonists in South Africa, but the crux of the whole question is, as your correspondent puts it, "that South Africa cannot be run economically with the Indian in it, and the white people who have made the country cannot be expected to commit race suicide." This is not the problem that presents itself to the Boer living on the veldt to whom the Indian trader is a blessing, nor to the European housewife in the big towns of the Transvaal who depends solely upon the Indian vegetable-vendor for the vegetables brought to her door. But the problem presents itself in the manner put by your correspondent to the petty European trader who finds in the thrifty and resourceful Indian a formidable rival, and with his vote, which counts a great deal, and with his influence as a member of the ruling race, he has succeeded in making his own economic problem a race problem for South Africa. In reality, the problem is whether the petty trader for his selfish end is to be allowed to override every consideration of justice, fair play, Imperial policy and all that goes to make a nation good and great.

In support of the gradual but certain squeezing-out process, what has been called the Smuts-Gandhi agreement has been pressed into service. Now that agreement is embodied in two letters and two only of the 30th June, 1914, the first one addressed to me on behalf of General Smuts by Mr. Gorges, Secretary of the Interior, and the second my acknowledgement of it bearing the same date. The agreement, as the letters conclusively show, is an agreement on questions which were the subject of civil - in the correspondence described as passive - resistance. The settlement stipulates only for an extension - never a restriction - of existing rights, and, as it was intended only to cover questions arising out of civil resistance, it left open all the other questions. Hence the reservation in my letter of the 30th June, *viz*:

"As the Minister is aware, some of my countrymen wished me to go further. They are dissatisfied that trade licences, laws of the different Provinces, the Transvaal Gold Law, the Transvaal Law 3 of 1885, have not been altered so as to give them full rights of residence, trade and ownership of land. Some of them are dissatisfied that full interprovincial migration is not permitted, and some are

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<sup>112</sup> This was reproduced also in *Young India*, August 20, 1919; and *The Hindu* and *New India*, August 22, 1919.

dissatisfied that on the marriage question the Relief Bill goes no further than it does."

In this correspondence, there is not a word about the Indian settlers not getting trade licences or (not) holding fixed property in the mining or any other area. And the Indians had a perfect right to apply for and get as many trade licences as they could secure and as much fixed property as they could hold, whether through forming registered companies or through mortgages. After a strenuous fight of eight years it was not likely that I would give away any legal rights, and if I did, the community I had the honour to represent would naturally and quite properly have dismissed me as an unworthy, if not a traitorous, representative.

But there is a third letter, totally irrelevant considered as part of the agreement, which has been used for the curtailment of trade rights. It is my letter of the 7th July addressed to Mr. Gorges. The whole tone of it shows that it is purely a personal letter, setting forth only my individual views about "vested rights in connection with the Gold Law and Township Amendment Act." I have therein stated definitely that I do not wish to restrict the future action of my countrymen and I have simply recorded the definition of "vested rights." I discussed with Sir Benjamin Robertson on the 4th March, 1914, saying that by "vested rights I understand the right of an Indian and his successors to live and trade in the township in which he was living and trading no matter how often he shifts his residence or business from place to place in the same township." This is the definition on which the whole of the theory of evasion of law and breach of faith has been based. Apart from the question of irrelevance of the letter, I claim that it could not be used, even if it could be admitted as part of the agreement, in the manner it has been. As I have already stated on previous occasions, there was a prospect of an adverse interpretation of the Gold Law as to trade licences, and there was the tangible difficulty in getting land or leases of buildings and it was by the most strenuous efforts that Indians were able within Gold Areas to retain their foothold. I was anxious to protect the existing traders and their successors *even though the legal interpretation of the law might be adverse to the Indian claim*. The vested right, therefore, referred to in my letter of the 7th July was a right created in spite of the law. And it was this right that had to be protected in the administration of the then existing laws. Even if, therefore, my said letter can be incorporated in the agreement, by no canon of interpretation that I know can it be said to prevent the Indian *morally* (for that is the meaning of the charge of breach of faith) from getting new trade licences in virtue of the law of the land. Indians openly and in a fair fight gained in their favour a legal decision to the effect that they could obtain trade licences against tender of the licence fee even within the Gold Area. To this they were perfectly morally entitled. There cannot be any question of a legal breach. Their trade rivals would long ago have made short work of any legal breach. Lastly, supposing that the law was adverse to the Indian claim, my definition could not be pleaded to bar any agitation for amendment of the law, for the whole of the settlement, in the nature of it, was of a temporary character; and the Indians, as definitely stated in my letter of the 30th June, "could not be expected to rest content until full civil rights had been conceded." The whole of the plea, therefore, of breach of faith is, I venture to submit, an utterly dishonest

and shameless piece of tactics, which ought not to be allowed to interfere with a proper adjustment of the question.

M. K. Gandhi

*Times of India*, August 19, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 41-43

## 29. LETTER TO THE *TIMES OF INDIA*, AUGUST 29, 1919

Sir,

I know that it can only be by patient efforts that one can hope to remove the ignorance that must necessarily attach to all questions arising a few thousand miles from us. "Eureka" in letter published in your issue of the 28th instant is a case in point.<sup>113</sup> He has raised many issues. I propose to confine myself only to the South African. The question before the public today is not one of emigration but that of the livelihood and status of those who have legally settled in South Africa, and neither Lord Sinha nor H.H. the Maharaja of Bikaner<sup>114</sup> could give away inherent rights of citizens of the Empire, nor did they do any such thing. Indians have settled in South Africa for over 50 years; they are not known to have lowered the standard of living. Will "Eureka" please remember that the first Indian settlers were imported by the Europeans of South Africa? I refer to the introduction of indentured Indians. I said in 1894, as I repeat now, that it was a criminal blunder on the part of the greedy Europeans of Natal to have imported indentured labour from India at miserably low wages when they had 400,000 stalwart Zulus in their midst who would gladly have worked if the employers had not wanted to make enormous profits. Can South Africa, with any right on its side, starve the descendants of the original settlers and the brethren out of existence?

It is purposeless for me to go into the question how and by whom South Africa was won; but let me correct "Eureka" by informing him that it was aid sent from India under the late Sir George White which saved Ladysmith and which probably turned the fortunes of war.<sup>115</sup> Let me further inform "Eureka" that the 10,000 troops that Sir George White<sup>116</sup> took with him included many Indian followers who were just as indispensable for the military operations as any soldier. Nor is this all. When the fate of Ladysmith trembled in the balance, when the late Lieut. Roberts, fighting against heavy odds, lost his guns at the battle of Colenso, I had the honour to be in charge of the ambulance corps of nearly 1,200 Indians, free and indentured, literate and illiterate, drawn from all classes.

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<sup>113</sup> "Eureka" had written advising Gandhiji not to agitate about British Indian rights in South Africa and argued that Indians had practically nothing to complain of as only Europeans had fought for and retained South Africa.

<sup>114</sup> Indian delegates to the Imperial Conference of July 1918

<sup>115</sup> The reference is to the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.

<sup>116</sup> Sir George White was Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Natal.

Some of the men who are now in peril of losing the means of their livelihood had the privilege of bearing the stretcher that carried the dying lieutenant. The corps served too at the reverse of Spion Kop. We were engaged to work without the range of fire, not because we had objected but because the authorities would not risk our lives, as we were not trained for military operations. But Col. Gallway sent the message that, whilst we were not obliged to work under fire, General Buller<sup>117</sup> would be glad if we could remove the wounded that were lying at the Field Hospital at the base of the hill. There was danger of the Boers descending from the hill. Without the slightest hesitation and indeed with gladness for the opportunity, every one of the men with me responded to the call and removed the wounded to the base hospital at Frere Camp, a distance of 24 miles. The wounded included the late General Woodgate and the brave soldiers under him. The English newspapers and the politicians were so enthusiastic about this purely voluntary work of the Indians that even laudatory verses were composed, whose refrain was "We are sons of the Empire after all." Are these Indians of whom these verses were written now to sing "We are helots of the Empire after all," for that is what Indian settlers in South Africa would be totally reduced to if the English and the Indian public of India do not make a great effort to ward off the impending calamity. In my opinion, the case for the European traders of South Africa is so hopelessly bad that it has only to be persistently, truthfully and calmly exposed to the whole of the Empire and it must fall to pieces.

I am, etc.,  
M. K. Gandhi

*Young India*, September 3, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 73-74

### **30. THE LATE MR. DAWOOD MOHAMED<sup>118</sup>**

It has been my misfortune from time to time to report to the public deaths of Indians who have worked for and served India in far-off South Africa. One of the ablest of them, a cable from Mr. Rustomjee tells, just departed this life. His name was Dawood Mohamed.

Mr. Dawood Mohamed rose from the ranks. He never received any English education. I am not sure that he passed through more than two standards in a vernacular school in India. But his versatile ability and perseverance gave him such a wonderful grasp over languages without any book-learning whatsoever that I have known him hold discourses with people in Tamil, Hindi, Creole French, Dutch and English besides his mother-tongue, Gujarati. His native wit made him a popular speaker.

He was as keen a politician as he was a merchant. And when the critical moment for

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<sup>117</sup> General Sir Redvers Henry Buller (1839-1908), Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in South Africa

<sup>118</sup> Letter to the press, August 30, 1919

decision came he threw in his lot with the South African civil resisters, crossed the border and together with other merchants of note presented himself for arrest for crossing the sacred border of the Transvaal. Having carried on extensive business with European business houses, he was well known to many Europeans and owing to his great ability commanded their respect. And I am happy to be able to testify that for him who was used to a luxurious life and who was at the time 50 years old, to have risked imprisonment for the sake of conscience was an act which raised him still further in the estimation of his many European friends rather than otherwise.

It was a privilege for me to find men in South Africa drawn from the commercial class giving freely of their time, their money and even voluntarily risking loss of personal freedom by undergoing imprisonment and property. Mr. Dawood Mohamed was one of the best among these. He was President of the Natal Indian Congress for a number of years and known to Indians all over South Africa. In my humble opinion, though India knew him not, she has every reason to be proud of having produced Dawood Mohamed. Indians in South Africa badly needed his services at the present moment. They are the poorer for Mr. Dawood Mohammed's death and, may I add, poorer also for the death of that brave statesman, General Botha.<sup>119</sup> The duty of India is therefore all the greater to see that the interests of her sons struggling for freedom are fully protected.

I am, etc.,  
(sd.) M.K. Gandhi

Bombay  
30th August, 1919

*Young India*, September 3, 1919

### 31. RETALIATION IS NO SOLUTION

Mr. Montagu's reply to the deputation that waited on him on the South African question is reassuring so far as it goes.<sup>120</sup> It is a matter for great satisfaction that he will secure Indian representation upon the Commission, provided of course, that that representation is equal to that of the anti-Asiatic party and provided further that the Commission has no power to diminish the existing rights of British Indians, and provided further that the Asiatic Bill just passed remains in abeyance and that the Commission is given the power to recommend its withdrawal. The resolution of the managing committee of the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association published in another column runs along the lines suggested by us.

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<sup>119</sup> General Louis Botha, first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (1910-1919), died in 1919.

<sup>120</sup> A deputation of Indians and British friends, led by Sir Surendranath Banerjee, called on E.S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, in London on August 28, 1919, to make representations about the position of Indians in South Africa. Mr. Montagu assured them of his concern and informed them that he had asked that the Indian Government be represented on the Commission by one official and one non-official.

Past promises, considerations of equity and justice, the exemplary conduct of the Indian settlers of South Africa, their contribution to the late South Africa war, at the time of the Zulu rebellion and the European war, make an overwhelming case against any diminution of existing rights. The Commission, in order to be just and effective, can only contemplate the relaxation, if not total removal, of the present restrictions for which justification is only the strong prejudice against Indians on the part of the European traders. But such unreasoning prejudice may be pleaded as a cause in a system of government that is inefficient and corrupt. The Imperial Government to be truly Imperial must have, under certain circumstances, be they ever so rare, powers of effective intervention for the protection of weaker interests. It is therefore not possible for Indian public opinion to accept Mr. Montagu's dictum that an exercise of the veto is politically unfeasible. The veto is not merely a moral check but, in exceptional cases, it must prove a very material and tangible check upon excesses and upon injustice. The Empire to hold together must have some basic principles from which no member dare depart. If Mr. Montagu is convinced, as he apparently is, of the injustice of the Asiatic Act and of its controverting principles of the British Constitution where is the difficulty about vetoing the Act? The utmost that can happen is that South Africa may secede from the Imperial partnership. Surely it were a thousand times better that South Africa should cease to be a member of the Empire than that it should corrupt and undermine the whole of the Imperial fabric. It is infinitely better that the Empire has fewer partners than there are, but all working together in the same upward direction than that it should, by coquetting with legalised confiscation and such other immoralities, sow the seeds of its own disruption. And, after all, selfishness, greed and injustice are handmaidens of cowardice. There is no reason to fear that a wholesome and timely exercise of the Royal veto will create any great stir in South Africa...

But I am free to confess that so long as milder measures are available, the extreme remedy of vetoing ought not to be applied. It is undoubtedly like a strong blister causing great though momentary pain, and, therefore, to be sparingly used. The proposed Commission, if there is a strong Indian representation upon it, should prove effective enough for the purpose to be attained. The thing, therefore, for the time being is to concentrate public opinion upon a strong Commission and a proper safeguarding reference under which it should act.

It was great relief to find Mr. Montagu not falling into the "reciprocity" trap prepared by Sir William Meyer, let me hope in a hasty moment. I am sorry Mr. Banerjee so easily fell into it. It is murdering the language to use so good a word as reciprocity for so bad a cause as the one under notice. If we must go in for a bad thing, we must at least recognise it by its correct name - which is retaliation. Personally, I do not believe in retaliation at all. It always in the end returns with redoubled force on the retaliator. The *Times of India* which is rendering signal service to the cause of our countrymen in South Africa, very rightly points out retaliation miscalled reciprocity can serve no earthly purpose in the present case. "Its main objection is its utter futility," and if we ever embark upon this very unpractical method, it will be hailed with satisfaction by the anti-Asiatic party in South Africa, and we shall be cursed by the hundred and fifty thousand Indians whose very existence is at stake. One may retaliate when the stake is good. It is terrible to think of it



when it is men and women who constitute the stake. What comfort can it be to our countrymen in South Africa for India to be able to send back a steamer-load of cargo from South Africa, to refuse to send to South Africa a few tons of coal and to shut the gates of India in the face of a stray South African tourist as against the banishment - for that is virtually the goal of the anti-Asiatic party - of a hundred and fifty thousand Indian settlers, or at least their reduction to helotry. The issue was stated by the late Sir William Wilson Hunter in clear and unmistakable language in 1896 or '95. Writing on this very question of British Indians in South Africa, he said, are they or not to enjoy the full status of British citizens in His Majesty's Dominions? It cannot be solved by the make-shift of retaliation or reciprocity by whatever term it is recognised. It can only be solved by correct statesmanship and correct conduct on our part.

*Young India*, September 6, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 87-89

### **32. RETALIATION IS NO SOLUTION - II**

The outcome of the deputation which the Honourable Surendranath Banerjee led to the Secretary of State for India on the South African (question) may be regarded on the whole as successful and we can now hope that our fellow-countrymen in that far away land will get justice without having to resort to *satyagraha* by way of civil disobedience. Mr. Montagu has admitted that our case is perfectly just and assured us that the Commission to be appointed in South Africa will have Indian representatives. If the representatives appointed are in truth representatives and if the four conditions laid down by the Imperial Citizenship Association are fulfilled, we shall have no need to worry over the outcome of the Commission. The conditions are: (1) that there should be an equal number of Indian and white representatives; (2) that the Commission should have no power to reduce the existing rights; (3) that the Commission should have the power to recommend the withdrawal of the law just passed for depriving (Indians) of land and trade rights; and (4) that this law should remain in abeyance pending the recommendations of the Commission. The conditions are as necessary as they are reasonable. Our countrymen fear that the Commission has not been appointed to ensure them justice by granting them further rights but to eliminate them from the whole of South Africa, or permit them to stay on only as helots, as has happened in the Transvaal. The best form which popular agitation on this issue can take at present is to secure Indian representation (on the Commission) on these conditions.

We are sorry that Mr. Surendranath Banerjee walked into the trap laid by Sir William Meyer. It was good that Mr. Montagu did not do so too. We trust that Sir William Meyer laid the trap of "reciprocity" in a hasty moment and unintentionally. What it amounts to is that, if in the end our countrymen in South Africa fail to secure justice, we should punish the whites of South Africa. That is, if ever a white tourist happens to come this way, he should be refused entry into India and should be debarred from acquiring land here and the export of a ton or two of coal, if even that much, from India to South Africa should be stopped. Even from a practical point of view, this suggestion

serves no purpose. If there is no discourtesy in saying so, acting on it would be like the barking of dogs at an elephant from behind. The whites of South Africa will welcome it, of course. South Africa's trade with India is so insignificant and South African whites settled in India are so few that this kind of retaliation by us will be pointless.

We shall not only make ourselves ridiculous by advancing such a suggestion but also invite upon ourselves the curses of our countrymen. A hundred and fifty thousand children of India settled there will have to come away, leaving their property behind, or live on merely as helots. What comfort can it be to them that the export of a few tons of coal to South Africa will have been stopped or that a stray white from there will be denied entry into India? The *Times of India*, which has been ably advocating this cause, has also ridiculed Sir William Meyer's suggestion.

If we go deeper, we shall see that any act of retaliation, even if severe enough in comparison with the original wrong, only recoils upon the person who resorts to it. What the hand does but hurts one's own heart.<sup>121</sup> An injustice can never be cured by another in return. Injustice cannot remove injustice. Even if a hundred and fifty thousand whites were settled in India and we could pass against them, and did in fact pass, the same kind of laws as obtain in South Africa, how would that prevent the ruin of the hundred and fifty thousand Indians? The principle of tit for tat is based on the assumption that the other party is deterred from doing injustice when we have the ability and the will to pay him back in his own coin. This does indeed happen sometimes. It is well known, however, that the total result does not advance the cause of justice; for, countless men have acted on the age-old principle of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye, but injustice has not disappeared. Besides, far-sighted writers in the West, too, have been saying that, despite the great advance of science in Europe and the opportunities for education which exist there, hatred and injustice have not diminished. We have direct evidence of this before our very eyes. But we have strayed from the subject. That we can see no meaning in Sir William Meyer's suggestion even from a practical point of view - as a means of retaliation - is sufficient to show that it deserves to be rejected.

Mr. Montagu has stated that an exercise of the veto is politically unfeasible. "Veto" signifies the power retained by the King to disallow a law passed in any Dominion of the British Empire. Mr. Montagu's statement amounts in effect to saying that the Dominion of South Africa is so strong and enjoys such freedom that, if the King's Ministers advised him to disallow the law passed by it and if the King accepted such advice, there would perhaps be a commotion in the Dominion. This means merely that a partner in the British Empire would secede from the partnership. In this Empire even the weakest person should be protected from injustice and if, in the process, any of the partners secede, the result should be wholly welcome. The British Empire cannot - no Empire can - endure if it holds even its weakest subjects as slaves for ever, as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. An Empire that would last has therefore no choice but to abandon those parts of it that always act in opposition to its aims.

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<sup>121</sup> Gujarati saying

As a matter of fact, there is no strong reason to believe that the whites of South Africa will raise an outcry if the veto is used. Injustice, immorality and the like are always cowardly and timid. To start with, such fanatics make a great show of strength and finally yield before the force of justice. The anti-Indian movement in South Africa is based on such rank injustice that, if the Imperial Government were to display even a little strength, it cannot survive. To ensure that the Imperial Government displays such strength, only one thing needs to be done. If we raise a dignified but powerful protest and act likewise with strength on behalf of our countrymen overseas living their lives in difficult conditions, we shall strengthen the hands of the Imperial Government and enable it to secure justice for them.

Though we have shown that the Royal veto can be used effectively, we must confess that it is a weapon which must be used sparingly. We believe, as Mr. Montagu does, that a Royal Commission will secure justice. At the present time, therefore, we must concentrate on efforts to see that everything goes well with the Commission.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, September 7, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 106-09

### **33. TELEGRAM TO SIR GEORGE BARNES, SEPTEMBER 14, 1919**

Ahmedabad,  
September 14, 1919

SIR GEORGE BARNES  
SIMLA

MANY FRIENDS QUESTION MY INTERPRETATION VICEREGAL PROGRAMME<sup>122</sup> MERIT REGARDING SIR BENJAMIN ROBERTSON PROCEEDING SOUTH AFRICA. DOES SIR BENJAMIN'S APPOINTMENT REPLACE MR. MONTAGU'S STATEMENT ABOUT TWO REPRESENTATIVES ON FORTHCOMING SOUTH AFRICAN COMMISSION OR ARE THEY STILL TO BE APPOINTED? IF SO CAN YOU GIVE INDICATION THEIR NAMES. PRAY REPLY.

*GANDHI*

*Collected Works*, Volume 16, page 135

### **34. ON THE VICEROY'S SPEECH**

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<sup>122</sup> Probably "pronouncement"

...His Excellency's pronouncement on this question (South Africa) will not be considered unsatisfactory. The decision to send Sir Benjamin Robertson to present our case is a welcome one. His presence there cannot but have a powerful effect on the whites of South Africa. The cables we have received from that country suggest that the white traders there are still bent on mischief and complain that the new law is not being properly administered. In these circumstances, the presence of a representative of the Indian Government will prove useful on issues of this kind. According to my understanding of His Excellency the Viceroy's pronouncement, the representatives referred to in Mr. Montagu's pronouncement will also be appointed. If these representatives are strong and independent men, I have no doubt that they can be very effective and the injustices from which our countrymen suffer will be very much mitigated.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, September 14, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 141-42

### 35. THE TRANSVAAL ASIATICS

The news received last week from the Transvaal adds fat to the fire. At a Congress of representatives of municipalities in the Transvaal, merchants associations, trade unions and other institutions, a resolution was passed to the effect that the administration of the anti-Asiatic laws was slack and needed tightening up. The Congress has protested against giving citizenship rights to Asiatics. It has, moreover, decided to establish a South Africans' League, in other words, an association of the whites of South Africa. The object of this association will be to acquire the immovable property at present owned by Asiatics after paying them reasonable compensation and to take all possible measures to eliminate skilfully the Asiatics living and doing business in the Transvaal.<sup>123</sup>

Another telegram received from Pretoria is also suggestive of the feelings of the whites. Representatives of municipalities, merchants' associations and other institutions gathered at a mammoth meeting, where the question of the Transvaal Asiatics was discussed.<sup>124</sup> The chairman painted a dark future for South Africa if the problem

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<sup>123</sup> A conference was held in Pretoria, under the auspices of the Anti-Asiatic League, in September 1919, soon after the promulgation of the anti-Asiatic Act, to form an organisation to combat "the Asiatic menace." Participants included representatives of 26 municipalities, 30 Chambers of Commerce, 12 Churches, 9 agricultural societies, 40 unions and other bodies in the Transvaal.

This conference set up a "South Africans' League" - under the chairmanship of L. J. Phillips, attorney in Krugersdorp - and soon branches were formed all over the Transvaal.

The objectives of the Association were reproduced in *Young India*, October 15, 1919.

<sup>124</sup> The reference is probably to the same meeting as in the previous paragraph - the first Congress of the South Africans' League, held in Pretoria.

remained unsolved. The meeting passed a resolution moved by Mr. Munnik<sup>125</sup> to the effect that the ever increasing influence of Asiatics held a serious threat to the economic and social life of the Transvaal whites. Hence immediate legislation to solve the problem was advocated.

The *Cape Times*, severely criticising Mr. Montagu's reply to the deputation which waited on him under the leadership of Mr. Surendranath Banerjee, says that the Secretary of State for India was not well-informed about the difficult and delicate problem in the Transvaal. The paper reminds him that the Government had cast all its weight against the amendment moved by Mr. Collins to the law recently passed in the Transvaal in which he sought to prevent Indians from carrying on trade in any part of the Transvaal. Mr. Montagu should have made it clearer to the deputation that the Union Parliament had very much appreciated India's help to the Empire and should have detailed with greater understanding the difficulties experienced by the Government of South Africa in solving the Indian problem.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, September 14, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 144-45

### **36. LETTER TO U.K. TRIVEDI<sup>126</sup>**

(After October 18, 1919)

Dear Sir,

I have your letter.<sup>127</sup>

I suggest the enclosed cable<sup>128</sup> to Johannesburg. I suggest further that you should address the Commerce and Industry Department drawing attention to the fact that the whole question of disabilities regarding ownership of land and right to trade shall be sifted. The matter is rather delicate. It would be useless to press for opening the whole question, political and commercial, throughout South Africa. As Mr. Shastriar<sup>129</sup> is almost certain to be appointed there is no anxiety regarding the Commission.

Yours faithfully,

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<sup>125</sup> A South African Senator

<sup>126</sup> Uttamlal K. Trivedi, Assistant Secretary, Imperial Citizenship Association

<sup>127</sup> The letter was dated October 18. Enclosed with it was a cable from E. I. Asvat in South Africa seeking Gandhiji's advice.

<sup>128</sup> This is not available.

<sup>129</sup> V. S. Srinivasa Sastri (1869-1946), President of the Servants of India Society, 1915-27 and member of Viceroy's Legislative Council, 1916-20.

### **37. INTERVIEW TO THE ASSOCIATED PRESS OF INDIA, NOVEMBER 1, 1919**

It is a matter of very great regret that Mr. Montagu's message to His Excellency the Viceroy so materially alters the position. I do, however, feel that any agitation insisting upon the appointment on the Commission of Indian representatives may damage our case which is so overwhelmingly strong.<sup>130</sup> If a representative, like Mr. Sastri, is appointed along with Sir Benjamin Robertson to put before the South African Government and the forthcoming Commission the Indian case, it would be the next best thing. In my opinion, our effort should be concentrated upon securing a proper reference to the Commission in the place of the very narrow one, which we are led to believe, is likely to be suggested by the Union Government. The *Times of India* is really rendering a great service in moulding and consolidating public opinion on this question, irrespective of class or race. It is not enough that merely the trade question is referred to the Commission. The whole of the Law 3 of 1885 must come under review, leaving aside, for the time being, the question of the political status. Our goal must be the restoration of full trading and property rights of Indians lawfully settled in South Africa. This is what even Australia has allowed, although it was Australia which led the anti-Asiatic cry. We must also guard against the Commission whittling down any of the rights already being enjoyed by the settlers. By no canon of justice or propriety can the existing rights be taken away from the Indian settlers, but if we do not take care and provide beforehand, there is every danger of such a catastrophe happening. It actually happened with the Select Committee of the Union Parliament whose findings produced the new legislation we so much deplore...

*New India*, November 2, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 270-71

### **38. NOTE OF INTERVIEW ON SOUTH AFRICA<sup>131</sup>**

November 3, 1919

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<sup>130</sup> The reference is to the Asiatic Inquiry Commission appointed by the Union Government in February 1920 to inquire into laws concerning the right of Asiatics to trade and acquire land in the Union. Mr. Montagu indicated that the Commission would not include a member to represent India as had been expected in India.

Sir Benjamin Robertson attended the sittings of the Commission as an observer representing the Government of India.

<sup>131</sup> This is apparently Sir George Barnes' report of the interview he had had with Gandhiji concerning the South African Commission. See below, "Letter to Sir George Barnes, November 7, 1919."

He (Gandhiji) said that he was very sorry that the Union Government were unwilling to allow representatives from India to sit upon the Commission. He said that he was going to do what I had asked him to do in my letter, namely, not to raise an agitation himself on the subject, and to do all he could to repress any agitation raised by others. He told me that he had been interviewed during the last day or two, and he had said that he regarded the arrangement made as second best.

I asked him whether he had any strong views on the point, whether the terms of reference to the Commission ought to be enlarged beyond trading rights, and pointed out to him that the recent effort of the Indians to get an enquiry had resulted in what might be regarded as a restriction of the existing rights. He said that he felt strongly that the enquiry ought to extend to the Law of 1885, and considered that an extension in this direction could not possibly result in a restriction of the existing rights.

I asked him his views on the subject of inter- provincial emigration. He said:

"I would not ask for this, for I know that we shall not get it. Freedom of emigration between the provinces would mean freedom to migrate from the Transvaal into the Orange Free State. The Orange Free State has always prohibited the entry of Indians, and there is hardly any Indian in the whole State."

I further asked him what he felt about movement from one province to another with the intention of returning. A man might, for instance, want to attend the funeral of a relative living over the border. He said:

"I know the South African people, and I fully realise the difficulties which exist. I do not want to fall into the error of asking for what is unwise and what we know we shall not get."

He asked me who was to be the Indian representative before the Commission. I told him that the Union Government had not yet consented to any Indian, but that both the Viceroy and the Secretary of State were entirely at one in wishing for an Indian representative and had urged that one should be received. He asked me whether it was true that Mr. Sastri's name had been suggested by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. I told him that this was true. He said:

"I do not think a better selection could possibly have been made."

Mr. Gandhi said that he hoped that I would send for him at any time I thought he would be useful and said that he was quite willing to leave Amritsar or Lahore, wherever he was, to give help over the South African question.

*Collected Works, Volume 16, pages 280-81*

### **39. LETTER TO SIR GEORGE BARNES, NOVEMBER 7, 1919**

With reference to our conversation, I enclose herewith my note as to the minimum to be included in the reference to the forthcoming South African Commission.

It is assumed for the purpose of this note that General Smuts contemplates referring to the Commission the question of trading rights of Indians in the Transvaal only.

If so, it will not in any way settle the most urgent question.

The new Act deals with and adversely affects the rights of owning land and trading. It is therefore suggested that the question of trading and owning land, i.e. the laws of 1885 and the Townships Act and the Gold Law in so far as the latter two affect the rights of Indians to own land and to trade within the townships or the Gold Areas be referred to the Commission.

It should be clearly understood as between the Union Government and the Government of India that the new Act in so far as it diminishes existing rights should be revised and that the findings of the Commission should not in any way restrict existing rights. The Commission is likely to prove injurious to the existing rights, small as they are, if the above two conditions are not fulfilled.

My proposal should be taken and treated as a whole or rejected altogether.

In making the proposal, I am going against the most moderate public opinion here and against the demands made by the South African Indians' Conference recently held at Johannesburg.<sup>132</sup>

Public opinion here as expressed in the *Times of India* requires the restoration of trading rights and ownership of land throughout the Union and the inter-provincial migration. This means entry into the Orange Free State and the rights to trade and own land there. In the present state of public feeling this may be difficult for General Smuts to achieve even if he himself is willing.

The demand of the Conference is wider still and includes the restoration of the political status and the abolition of all legal disabilities. Though this and this alone must be the goal to be aimed at, I recognise that it is not practical politics to strive for it as an immediate aim.

But, if neither the Indian demand nor the lesser one expressed by the *Times of India* is to be urged, it must be clearly understood that there should be no diminution of the existing status.

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<sup>132</sup> The first national conference of Indians in South Africa was held in August 1919 to protest against Act No. 37 of 1919. Please see footnote to item 27.



The Union Government having already opened the question of trade and ownership of property in the Transvaal, through the Select Committee and then the recent legislation, the Commission can well be asked to entertain both these questions without ruffling the prejudices of the white population. It should be remembered that, at the time of the passage of the recent Act, Indians in the Transvaal had the right to receive licences to trade practically on the same footing as the Europeans and could under the existing law become virtual owners of land by taking mortgages or forming limited liability companies. I contemplate statutory recognition of the right to trade under general sanitary control and the direct ownership of land in the Transvaal. This is not claiming much or more than they have virtually enjoyed.

So far regarding the reference.

There is the unsatisfactory administration of the Immigrants' Restriction Act which can be improved by diplomatic action without troubling the Commission. The points requiring attention are:

1. The movement of the Indian settlers from one province to another not for residing but for ceremonial or business visits or for mere passage to the province of domicile. Full facilities without fee should be granted.
2. The entry of fresh Indians for supplying the needs of the resident population should be placed on a better and more liberal basis.
3. There should be greater liberality in permitting plural wives to visit their husbands without creating any legal rights for them or their issue.
4. Restrictions on passports from India or from the Union require complete overhauling whether regarding identification or otherwise.
5. Men and women of status and students should have freedom to travel to South Africa.

These matters, if they cannot be dealt with diplomatically, should be included in the reference to the forthcoming Commission.

M. K. Gandhi

*Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 288-90

#### **40. SOUTH AFRICAN COMMISSION**

The news about South Africa appearing in the papers is both startling and distressing. We were led by Mr. Montagu's words to believe that the Commission on the rights of Indians, which is to be appointed in South Africa, would have some members to represent us. Mr. Montagu now informs us that his words were misunderstood and that no one will be appointed on the Commission to represent India. However, Sir Benjamin Robertson will

be accompanied by a non-official and the two will present our case. This is disappointing news for us. We think General Smuts did not have his way and it did not become possible to include anyone from India. So we have had to telegraph Mr. Montagu to set the matter right. But we shall not succeed, through agitation, in getting our men appointed on the Commission. Mr. Montagu can insist on justice being done to us, but it is the South African Government alone which can decide the manner of doing it. Hence, we cannot compel it to appoint anybody from here on its Commission. Even then, if an able man like Mr. Shastriar<sup>133</sup> is appointed by the Government, he and Sir Benjamin Robertson together will be able to secure justice.

The more startling news which we have received is that the Commission will investigate only the issue of trading licences. Such a limited inquiry will not serve the purpose. We shall have to carry on a strong agitation about this. The Commission should be given more powers. The Indians in South Africa have demanded that the inquiry should cover all their rights. We think it will be difficult to bring this about. But we can certainly demand that the inquiry should cover rights of trading and ownership of land; these are our minimum rights. What we have to be more vigilant about is lest the Commission should be empowered to recommend deprivation of the existing rights. It should have no power to recommend abrogation of any of the rights which existed at the time of the passing of the new law. Indians have now almost stopped emigrating to South Africa. The system of indentured labour having been discontinued, the resulting increase in the Indian population there has also stopped. Hence the only question that remains is that of the rights of Indians settled there. They must be allowed to trade honestly and to acquire and dispose of land. There is no room for differences of opinion on this point. The whites of South Africa cannot keep the Indians there merely as slaves or coolies.

Fortunately, the good Mr. Andrews<sup>134</sup> has come forward to help our brethren and is proceeding there. The service he has rendered it is impossible to estimate. Wherever he hears the cry of Indians in distress, he runs to their help. Fiji, Ceylon and the Punjab bear witness to this. In South Africa, he is well known both to the whites and the Indians. And so his going there will inspire courage in our brethren and give us hope that justice will be done.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, November 9, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 290-91

## 41. INDIANS ABROAD

South Africa, East Africa and Fiji present today problems for solution and test our capacity for nationalism. Not until we feel for the meanest of our countrymen as each one

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<sup>133</sup> V. S. Srinivasa Sastri

<sup>134</sup> The Reverend C. F. Andrews

of us feels for himself, can we be said to have a consciousness of our nationality. Those of our countrymen who have settled in the different parts of the world look to us for guidance, help and protection.

And just as the spirit of nationality is being tested, so is that of imperialism. If imperialism means anything, it must mean and include the capacity for protecting all interests that belong to it. According to that test, Indians who have settled abroad claim double protection, *viz.*, from us and from the Imperial Government. And yet, both seem so far to have mainly failed in the discharge of their trust...

South Africa is really the most difficult of all. We reproduce in this issue the text of General Smuts' not unsympathetic reply to the Indian deputation that waited on him.<sup>135</sup> Never has a community been engaged in an unequal fight such as our countrymen are in South Africa. Compared to their rivals they are poor. They have no political power and they have been engaged ever since 1880 in protecting the right to exist with self-respect - a right which any civilised Government would not deny even to utter strangers. It speaks volumes for their courage and resourcefulness that they have been able to hold their own in the manner they have.

*Young India*, December 17, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 350-52

## **42. SPEECH AT THE THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, AMRITSAR, DECEMBER 29, 1919**

Gandhiji, in proposing the second resolution said the resolution entrusted to him was a very important one. All the Indians were agreed that India was entitled to responsible government. If that was so, they must render help to their brothers and sisters who were at that time suffering in South Africa.

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<sup>135</sup> General Smuts told the deputation that he was out for fair play and justice for all in the Union. The Indian community ought also to realise that there was a very strong and a powerfully backed up movement afoot to curtail the progress of the Indian community. It would be inadvisable in the interest of the community to rake up all the past matters and have them included in terms of reference of the proposed Commission. It would be better if the trading matter alone is once for all gone into thoroughly. As the Indians are not anxious to acquire any fixed property, that matter should be left out.

He also pointed out that Sir Benjamin Robertson is coming out to watch the interest and assist the Indian community and it would, therefore, be to the interest of the Indians themselves to render all the assistance they can both to Sir Benjamin and the Commission.

He concluded by saying that he was very anxious to be on the best of terms with the Indian Government and those settled in the Union. He would endeavour under his Government to give fair play to all. Being in a great hurry to meet another deputation, he regretted that he could not give the time he desired to the deputation, but the facts will not slip his memory. The Commission may give us a couple of years' rest until another agitation breaks out and we shall see then what could be done. *Young India*, December 24, 1919; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 551-52

Gandhiji traced the introduction of the indenture system to the request of the whites of Natal in South Africa to the Indian Government for Indian labour. That system, he was bound to say, was enormously worse than life in the Indian jails. Sir William Hunter had called it a system of slavery. Under this system their brethren had gone to South Africa. The success of Indians in trade had given rise to those tyrannies under which they were now suffering. Their trade was crushed. It was ruled that indentured labourers could not enter into trade but must live under indenture. It was said that Indians were of dirty habits, and being of a different civilisation from the whitemen's, the latter could not live with them. False charges were laid against them and it was tried to send them back to India.

South Africa was the place where the Indians had fought in order to keep up the honour of their country and twenty thousand men had to go to jail for it. The result was that they were allowed to remain there.

In 1914 several privileges were granted to the Indians. Similar was the case of the Transvaal. The Indians there wanted proprietary rights and rights of trade, but these were denied to them. They wanted the Indian Government to secure those rights for them and to use means to maintain the honour of India... Gandhiji then read the resolution which was as follows:

"(a) This Congress protests against the attempt being made in South Africa and particularly to deprive the Indian settlers of the right of property and trade hitherto enjoyed by them and trusts that the Government of India will secure the repeal of the recently enacted legislation and otherwise ensure the protection of the status of the Indian settlers in South Africa..."

*Report of the Thirty-fourth Session of the Indian National Congress, Amritsar, 1919; Collected Works, Volume 16, pages 356-357*

### **43. LETTER TO SIR GEORGE BARNES, JANUARY 13, 1920**

Dear Sir George Barnes,

I enclose herewith a cablegram I have received from South Africa.<sup>136</sup> You will perhaps easily understand reference to the Krugersdorp case.<sup>137</sup> It means that the partial protection that was attempted to be secured by the new Act has been undone by the latest judgement. The judgement is under appeal, and assuming that the appeal also is decided against us - the verdict cannot be accepted. Courts of law provide no remedy where the law itself is defective. This was forcibly illustrated when a High Court judgement upset the South African practice which recognised Indians' marriages as lawful<sup>138</sup> and you

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<sup>136</sup> This telegram is not available.

<sup>137</sup> *Krugersdorp Municipality v. Dadoo Ltd.* See below, "Letter to the press" (before January 25, 1920)

<sup>138</sup> The reference is to a judgement by Mr. Justice Searle of the Cape Supreme Court on March 14, 1913,

know that the legislation of 1914<sup>139</sup> remedied the mischief created by the judgement in question and I trust that you will see to it and instruct Sir Benjamin Robertson that the right of Indians to hold landed property by forming corporations otherwise is not in any way interfered with.

The second point raised in the cablegram is in connection with the Commission that is now sitting to consider the proposed extension of the power of the municipalities. It does seem strange that one should ever have to dread extension of popular power, but here where the power is sought in order to crush the very life of the unrepresented people, any further extension of such power is really a crime. I hope therefore that Sir Benjamin Robertson will see that any law that may be passed to extend the existing powers of the municipalities of South Africa will duly safeguard the rights of Indians who are totally unrepresented in the municipalities of the Transvaal and the (Orange) Free State and only partially in the Cape and Natal...

*Yours sincerely*

*Collected Works, Volume 16, pages 478-79*

#### **44. LETTER TO THE PRESS, JANUARY 1920<sup>140</sup>**

The following is the extension of a cable received by me from Mr. Asvat, Chairman of the British Indian Association, Transvaal, regarding the *Krugersdorp Municipality v. Dadoo Ltd.*, referred to in the memorandum presented to the Union Premier:

"THE COURT HAS SET ASIDE THE TRANSFERS. IT HELD THAT THE FORMATION OF INDIAN COMPANIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACQUIRING FIXED PROPERTY IS ILLEGAL. IT DECLARED TRANSFERS SO OBTAINED WERE *FRAUDEM LEGIS*, SAYING THAT LEGISLATION CANNOT BE LAUGHED AT (SECTION 130). THE GOLD LAW WAS INTENDED TO PREVENT INDISCRIMINATE MINGLING OF COLOURED (PERSONS AND) EUROPEANS. FURTHER IN THE JUDGEMENT IN POTCHEFSTROOM, UNDER THE LOCAL ORDINANCE 9, 1912, THE MAGISTRATE UPHOLDS THE COUNCIL'S CONTENTION THAT THE ASIATIC'S PRESENCE CAUSES ANNOYANCE AND DETRIMENT TO EUROPEAN COMMERCE AND ON THAT GROUND HOLDS INDIANS AS UNDESIRABLE. BOTH JUDGEMENTS MEAN THE RUINATION OF THE COMMUNITY. APPEALS NOTED. EUROPEANS TENDERING EVIDENCE BEFORE THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION ARE SPECIALISING ON THE INDIAN

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which held that marriages which were not celebrated according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages were invalid.

<sup>139</sup> Indians Relief Act

<sup>140</sup> This letter was sent before January 25, 1920.

QUESTION, URGING COMPLETE AUTONOMY FOR MUNICIPALITIES. MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO THE PROPER QUARTERS IMMEDIATELY. THE ASSOCIATION PRAYS TO HOLD MEETINGS THROUGHOUT INDIA. NEW ACT 37<sup>141</sup> GIVES NO PROTECTION EVEN TO OLD COMPANIES AND TRADERS. THE POSITION IS MOST PRECARIOUS. STRENUOUS ACTION IS IMPERATIVE FOR THE SAKE OF SAVING THE COMMUNITY."

This cablegram cannot fail to disconcert those who have at all studied the South African question, for, as Mr. Asvat says, it is calculated to undo even the little that the new Act was claimed to accomplish. Dadoo, Ltd., is an old-established Indian company in Krugersdorp. It holds extensive landed property in that township, and the meaning of the cablegram is that the transfers registered in the name of the company of landed properties are illegal, because, as the Court seems to have contended, the transaction was in fraud of the law and that legislation could not be laughed at. I wish to say nothing regarding the propriety of the judgement or the reasoning on which it seems to be based.

Thousands of pounds worth of landed property is registered in the names of companies in which Indians enjoy a dominating position. If the judgement stands, everyone of these companies will become dispossessed of the land they have occupied for years, lands which they have acquired openly and under legal advice and which has been registered in the Land Registry Office with the full knowledge of all the circumstances by the registrars, and only last year, when the new disabling Act was passed by the South African Legislature, we were told that the holding of land in this manner, prior to July 31 last, would not be affected by the legislation, and in justification of the measure, we were told by all the speakers in the Union Assembly that the legislation would protect existing companies and mortgages. The judgement in question comes, therefore, as an eye-opener. I venture to submit that, even if the judgement is sound, it evidently frustrates the intention of the Legislature and deprives Indians of rights they have enjoyed without question for years past. I hold that the impending sin must be averted, even if it is to be done by special legislation, as was done in 1914 in connection with the legal recognition of Indian marriages.

The second point raised in the cablegram refers to a magisterial judgement, and it means that Indians as Indians may be declared as undesirable, not on ground of insanitation or immorality, but because they compete with the European traders to their detriment. If this doctrine were to hold good, not a single Indian can engage in any trade whatever in South Africa.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Asiatic (Land and Trading) Act, No. 37 of 1919

<sup>142</sup> A Gujarati version of the letter in *Navajivan*, January 25, 1920, has the following additional paragraph:

"The third point raised in the cable is about the proposed increase in the powers of municipalities. Ordinarily, everyone would welcome such an increase but, looking to what has happened in the present case, in South Africa and the other Colonies, this increase will mean investing the municipalities with powers to prosecute the dependent and disenfranchised classes. In the event, the latter will find the increased powers of the municipalities not to their benefit but to their detriment. In the Transvaal and the Free State, Indians have no political or municipal franchise. They have a measure of franchise in Natal and the Cape, but not sufficient to enable them to influence the working of municipalities

Sir Benjamin Robertson will presently sail for South Africa. His diplomatic talent and his trusteeship will be taxed to the utmost before he secures, not a full status for the Indians in South Africa, but even tolerably respectable footing for them to secure, i.e., the right to trade and own landed property without restriction, save such as are common to all as well in theory as in practice. One can only hope that the Government of India will speak to the Union Government in no uncertain terms on this question, and that the public and the press will strengthen their hands.

*India*, February 27, 1920; *Collected Works*, Volume 16, pages 501-03

#### **45. STATEMENT ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMISSION, FEBRUARY 9, 1920<sup>143</sup>**

I do not think that the Commission is a strong Commission. Certainly it is not an impartial Commission.<sup>144</sup> So far as the terms of reference are concerned, I am not disposed to quarrel with them. Indeed I would have, if it was at all possible, avoided a Commission altogether and obtained relief regarding land and trading by other means. But I am inclined to think that it is possible for Sir Benjamin Robertson to secure the rights of ownership of land and trading which are in imminent danger. The whole situation hinges round the strength that the Government of India through Sir Benjamin Robertson puts forth. It is difficult for me to go further in the absence of any cablegram from South Africa which I expect hourly from our people. It is a matter of great consolation that Mr. Andrews is on the spot.<sup>145</sup> He knows the people and he knows the members of the present South African Ministry and other public men of South Africa.

*The Tribune*, February 10, 1920; *Collected Works*, Volume 17, pages 21-22

#### **46. PRESS STATEMENT ON THE REPATRIATION SCHEME,**

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or to have their wishes respected."

<sup>143</sup> Made to a representative of *The Tribune*

<sup>144</sup> The Asiatics Inquiry Commission, appointed by the South African Government to enquire into the question of Asiatics trading and holding land in South Africa, was composed of four South African whites and was chaired by Sir Johannes Lange.

The Commission sat from March to July 1920 and was "assisted" by Sir Benjamin Robertson who attended as an observer on behalf of the Government of India. It submitted an interim report on May 12, 1920, and a final report on March 3, 1921.

<sup>145</sup> The Reverend C.F. Andrews was in Africa from December 1919 to March 1920.

**JUNE 13, 1920<sup>146</sup>**

With reference to the approval that seems to have been accorded to the scheme of repatriation, said to have been recommended by the South African Commission and accepted by the Union Government, I would respectfully caution the public against accepting the proposed scheme.

The public have not the interim report of the Commission. We do not know the conditions of repatriation. It seems to me therefore that it is most hazardous to venture any opinion at all on a scheme of which we have a most imperfect knowledge. Generally it must be stated that any scheme of State repatriation must be looked upon with the gravest suspicion, especially when the scheme is fathered by those who are uncompromisingly hostile to Indian aspirations. The Indians of South Africa are able to remain in that country because of their domicile. I very much fear that the proposed scheme will be found to involve forfeiture of domicile against acceptance of repatriation money, that is, passage back to India and possibly a trifling sum as pocket-money. I am inclined to think that apart from everything else such considerations will be wholly insufficient for giving away a valuable right. I would hardly call any such repatriation as purely voluntary.

This, however, is one of the many objections that may be advanced against the proposed repatriation. I have no doubt that the best thing is to suspend judgement till we have the full scheme before us for examination. It is to be hoped that the Government of India will take the public fully into its confidence before pronouncing upon the scheme.

*The Hindu*, June 14, 1920; *Collected Works*, Volume 17, page 486

#### **47. LETTER TO THE PRESS ON REPATRIATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS, JULY 1, 1920<sup>147</sup>**

I have just read the interim report of the South African Commission published in *Indian Opinion* recently received. As it reads the report seems to be harmless. Even the word "repatriation" does not occur in it. It is a cautiously-worded document. And as there seems to be no opposition to the recommendation from the resident Indian population, I am not inclined to oppose the proposal of the Commission. At the same time there is no mistaking its intention. Indeed they have not even attempted to conceal it, for they ask His Excellency the Governor of South Africa "to appoint an official well acquainted with the Indian mind and their methods to act in a sympathetic manner and lay before the Indians the advantages of immediately returning to India". The case for the scheme is that the Indians are anxious to return and that the scheme satisfies that anxiety

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<sup>146</sup> This statement was released from Bombay in regard to press reports concerning the recommendation by the Asiatics Inquiry Commission, in its interim report, that immediate steps be taken to initiate a scheme to encourage and assist Indians who were prepared to return to India.

<sup>147</sup> Released through the Associated Press of India



whereas the anxiety seems to be all on the part of the Commission and their return is to be stimulated by placing its advantages before our sorely tried countrymen. The working of the scheme will, however, require ceaseless watching. There should be no compulsion of any kind whatsoever and no forfeiture of rights of domicile. I was pleased to notice absence of any reference to such forfeiture in the interim report. One however never knows what undertaking may not be taken from the poor returning Indians against the grant of free passage. If the scheme is benevolently intended to relieve the present distress the Union Government will simply facilitate the return of those who are unable to support themselves in South Africa, without bargaining for the forfeiture of domicile. To insist upon the loss of that valuable right would be to take a mean advantage of the distressful condition of some of our countrymen in South Africa.

*Young India*, July 7, 1920; *Collected Works*, Volume 18, pages 2-3

#### **48. LETTER TO THE PRESS ON SOUTH AFRICAN COURT'S JUDGEMENT, JULY 11, 1920**

I have received the following cablegram from Johannesburg:

"IN *DADOO VERSUS KRUGERSDORP MUNICIPALITY* THE LEGALITY OF ASIATIC COMPANIES OWNING FIXED PROPERTY APPELLATE COURT UPHELD APPEAL. JUSTICES ROSE-INNES, SOLOMON, MAARSDORP, JUTA AND DE VILLIERS COMPOSED THE BENCH. JUSTICE DE VILLIERS ONLY DISSENTED."

This cablegram means relief for our harassed countrymen in South Africa. It would be remembered that the High Court of the Transvaal had decided against Indian companies holding fixed properties as being fraudulent of law.<sup>148</sup> The appellate court has evidently taken a different view and sustained the Indian contention that the transactions of the Asiatic companies were perfectly legal.

*Bombay Chronicle*, July 12, 1920; *Collected Works*, Volume 18, page 37

#### **49. UNCANNY**

There is something uncanny about the repatriation scheme of South Africa. I had never dreamt that the interim report had the slightest connection with the Indians Relief Act of 1914. I have now read the full text of that Act and had a discussion with Mr. Andrews also. Till the latter drew my attention to the fact, I had even forgotten that there was a section in the Act itself regarding the granting of free passages against forfeiture of

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<sup>148</sup> Please see item 44 above.

domicile.<sup>149</sup> The Government communiqué<sup>150</sup> confirms Mr. Andrews's information. What puzzles me is the fact that it has been found at all necessary to have an interim report in order to enforce the free passage section of the Relief Act. That section takes the place of the several sections of different Acts of the Natal legislation repealed by the Act. These sections provided for the grant of free passage to those who were under liability to pay the £3 tax, if the latter wanted to escape the payment of the tax or re-indenture. The section in question though designed to affect these people was made generally applicable. But the debate in the Assembly made perfectly clear the scope of the section. The contention at the time was that those who paid the £3 tax really did not become domiciled, and if after they ceased to pay the tax, they wanted to take advantage of the free passage section, they should forfeit the right of domicile which was at that time considered to be an equitable settlement of the very hotly debated question of the removal of a tax which had been in vogue for nearly twenty years. The interim report somewhat alters the scope of the section, but I am personally not afraid because the section requires a written application for a free passage which is a difficult thing to obtain from any Indian in Natal, and it can only happen in the case of those indentured Indians who having become free are at the present moment unable to support themselves. Not many Indians are likely to take advantage of the section and forfeit their domicile; at the same time I cannot help feeling that an illegitimate use is being attempted to be made of the section that was designed not to meet cases of poverty but to meet cases of doubtful domicile, i.e., cases in which it was open to the anti-Asiatic party to argue that domicile had not been acquired. Today six years after the repeal of the tax every Indian under liability to pay that tax has acquired statutory domicile. It is against my idea of right that a Government should take advantage of distress of men and seek to deprive them of a precious right. It would be better not to issue the scheme under unequal conditions. However I derive satisfaction from the fact that in spite of the machinery that is being set up not many Indians would take the doubtful advantage of the scheme.

*Young India*, July 14, 1920; *Collected Works*, Volume 18, pages 46-47

## 50. REPORT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMISSION

Despite the mission of Sir Benjamin Robertson, the South African Commission has delivered an adverse finding.<sup>151</sup> Commissions, Lord Morley<sup>152</sup> has often said, serve no useful purpose. They raise false hopes, and, for the time being, divert public attention from matters they are appointed to deal with. They give time for passions to cool down. But they rarely do justice. Indeed, it is notorious that Commissions avoid abstract justice.

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<sup>149</sup> Section 6 of the Indians Relief Act authorised the Minister, in his discretion, to pay passage to India for any Indian not entitled to it under Natal Law of 1891 if the latter gave a written undertaking - on behalf of himself, his wife and minor children - abandoning rights of domicile or residence in the Union.

<sup>150</sup> Reproduced in *Young India*, July 14, 1920

<sup>151</sup> The Asiatic Inquiry Commission, in its report of March 3, 1921, rejected allegations of "Asiatic menace," but made a series of recommendations which were detrimental to the Indians in South Africa. Union of South Africa. *Report of the Asiatic Inquiry Commission* (G.G. 4-21), 1921.

<sup>152</sup> John Morley, Viscount Morley of Blackburn (1838-1923); Secretary of State for India, 1905-10

They offer, or effect, compromises. But the South African Commission has offered, or effected, no compromise. It has delivered the Indian in the hands of his white rival in trade. It has reaffirmed the principle of white supremacy, as Mr. Andrews often puts it. The principle has almost become a passion and a religion. In 1901, the late Sir Pherozeshah<sup>153</sup> rated me for "wasting my time," as he put it, on South Africa. During the *satyagraha* campaign, he was the last, as he said himself, to be enthused. And when he was enthused, it was not the justice of the cause (which he never doubted) but it was the incarceration of Mrs. Gandhi<sup>154</sup> which roused his chivalrous spirit, and threw him into the struggle. He used to say that I should return to India and work for the freedom of the whole of India, rather than for a handful of Indians in South Africa.

I thought then, as I think even now, that whilst the uncrowned king of the Presidency of Bombay was right about concentrating on India's freedom, he was wrong in thinking that I should have withdrawn from South Africa. We dare not neglect our countrymen abroad. The battle of India's freedom involves the protection of the rights of the least of our countrymen, no matter where they might be situated. But at the present moment, I must invite our countrymen in South Africa to carry on their battle bravely and single-handed, and help us here in the best way they can. India's fate must be decided one way or the other (and so far as I know only one way) during this year. We shall be better able to protect them then than now.

The South African problem bears the same character as the problem at home. We too are fighting the religion of white supremacy... Either that supremacy must go in its entirety, or those of us who recognise the tubercular nature of the disease must perish in the attempt to combat it. The Government of India can, if they wish, put up an energetic and open fight against the proposed breach of faith which the Commission implies. The spirit of the settlement of 1914 was that the position of the Indian all over South Africa must be levelled up, not a single right then existing should be in any way endangered. The Commission has not only put its *imprimatur* on the encroachments already made on existing rights, but it has itself suggested further and egregious curtailment thereof. Between free nations such an authoritative pronouncement would lead to an open rupture. The Report of the Commission can only spur my non-co-operation spirit to further effort.

*Young India*, April 6, 1921; *Collected Works*, Volume 19, pages 528-29

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<sup>153</sup> Sir Pherozeshah Mehta (1848-1915), prominent public leader in Bombay

<sup>154</sup> Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi (1869-1944) was arrested during the last phase of the *satyagraha* in 1913 and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

## ***PART III***

**1924-1927**

### **Editors' Note**

Arrested at Sabarmati in March, 1922, on a charge of sedition Gandhiji was sentenced to six years in jail. He had spent two years out of the six in the Yeravda prison house at Poona when he was stricken with appendicitis necessitating emergency surgery. The Government decided to release him prematurely. While in jail, Gandhiji dictated to Indulal Yajnik the major part of *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhiji's gripping account of the campaign conducted by him in that country which had culminated successfully in the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement and the Indians Relief Act, 1914.

Gandhiji observed in the conclusion to the book:

"When one considers the painful contrast between the happy ending of the Satyagraha struggle and the present condition of the Indians in South Africa, one feels for a moment as if all this suffering had gone for nothing, or is inclined to question the efficacy of Satyagraha as a solvent of the problems of mankind. Let us here consider this point for a little while. There is a law of nature that a thing can be retained by the same means by which it has been acquired. A thing acquired by violence can be retained by violence alone, while one acquired by truth can be retained only by truth.

"The Indians in South Africa, therefore, can ensure their safety today if they can wield the weapon of Satyagraha. There are no such miraculous properties in Satyagraha, that a thing acquired by truth could be retained even when truth was given up. It would not be desirable even if it was possible. If therefore the position of Indians in South Africa has now suffered deterioration, that argues the absence of Satyagrahis among them.

"There is no question here of finding fault with the present generation of South African Indians, but of merely stating the facts of the case."

The period 1924-1927 was one of setbacks for the struggle, both in India and in South Africa.

The "moderate" elements in the Indian National Congress dissociated themselves from Gandhiji's programme of non-co-operation, while the formidable unity between Hindus and Muslims forged in the wake of "the Punjab wrong" and "the Khilafat wrong" came unstuck. Communal riots disfigured the country in various places and Gandhiji withdrew substantially from political work. But his interest in South African affairs, however, continued unabated.

Gandhiji was informed in February 1924 that a "Class Areas Bill" had been introduced by the Government of General Smuts in the Union Parliament in Cape Town. To be applied in all four provinces, it would enable the South African Government to segregate all domiciled Indians and other Asiatics, both for residence and trade. This was in flagrant violation of the Smuts-Gandhi Settlement of 1914.

In a statement to the Press on February 14, 1924 - from the hospital where he was recovering - he stressed the responsibility of the Imperial Government to insist on the observance of the 1914 agreement. He pointed out that the situation had arisen because of the "original flaw" in the South African Constitution which denied franchise to Indians and the natives of the soil, and made the government dependent solely upon the will of the Europeans. The Imperial Government which had permitted this was, therefore, honour bound to prevent untoward results arising from it. (Item 51). In another statement on March 23, 1924, Gandhiji warned: "Let there be no mistake that unless India can make an effort adequate to the situation, the Bill will be carried through..." (Item 56). At the same time, in a letter to P.K. Naidu, Gandhiji suggested *satyagraha* by the Indian people if it becomes necessary. (Item 57). In an interview to Associated Press in April, he warned again that the Bill's effect "must be to ruin the Indian settlers." (Item 59).

News came in August 1924 that the Natal Boroughs Ordinance, 1924, had deprived Indians of municipal franchise in Natal. Urging Delhi to act swiftly, Gandhiji wrote in *Young India*: "If the Government of India move, for very shame, to protect them (Indians in South Africa) against impending spoliation, it can do so with effect." (Item 62).

But he told the Indian community that they could expect little help from the Indian public, except for newspaper articles. The Indian Government set no store by public opinion in India. But, he added, if they show the spirit of sacrifice as they had shown in the past, India and the world would be with them. (Items 66-67).

Fortunately, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, a close associate of Gandhiji, was able to visit South Africa to provide encouragement to the Indian community during this critical time. She met many leaders of opinion in the country and suggested a round table conference to discuss the position of Indians in South Africa.

There was then a short respite as the Smuts Government dissolved the Parliament and called general elections, but they resulted in a Government led by General Hertzog, which was even more decidedly anti-Asiatic.

In April 1925, the Secretary of the British Indian Association, Johannesburg, cabled Gandhiji about a Bill restricting Indian trade to within six miles of the Transvaal municipal or township areas. Profoundly disturbed, Gandhiji said (*Young India*, April 30, 1925):

"If extermination of the Asiatic is the goal, the honest course would be to bring in an expatriation bill and challenge the Indian Government to do its worst." (Item 71).

Amod Bhayat, one of the founding members of the Natal Indian Congress, cabled to Gandhiji in July 1925 about the introduction in Parliament by the Hertzog Government of the "Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provisions) Bill," which was more draconian than the Class Areas Bill.

Gandhiji declared that this Bill was "an indication of the determination of the Union Government to starve the Indians out of South Africa." (Item 73). In another significant comment made in *Young India* (November 26, 1925), he described the South African Indian question as "the question of the hour," "a question of life and death" for the Indians settled in South Africa. (Item 75).

The South African Indian Congress sent a deputation to India, led by Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman, to seek support from the Government, the Congress and the people in this grave crisis. They attended the Kanpur Congress session that December. In a resolution, moved by Gandhiji, the Congress declared:

"The proposed legislation known as the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provisions) Bill is a breach of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914 in that it is racial in character and is calculated not only to make the position of settlers much worse than it was in 1911 but is designed to make the residence in that country of any self-respecting Indian impossible... The Congress heartily endorses the suggestion that a Round Table Conference containing among others proper Indian representatives should be called to settle the question." (Items 79-80).

Gandhiji also asked for a withholding of the Royal assent to the Bill. He urged the Viceroy, Lord Reading, on January 28, 1926, "not merely to secure a postponement of the consideration of the measure but to insist upon at least a reversion to the position of 1914." (Item 83).

The Indians in South Africa, he felt, should offer satyagraha if necessary and if they had the will and courage, but at the proper time. "That time is not yet," he said. "They must, as they are doing, exhaust every diplomatic remedy..." (Item 88).

The 'diplomatic remedies' met with partial success. Prodded, doubtless, by the Government of India and the Imperial Government, the South African authorities announced in April 1926 that a Round Table Conference would be called and consideration of the Bill postponed until then. But while giving in to reason on the Areas Reservation Bill which was to affect Asiatics, the South African authorities went ahead, in May 1926, to pass the Mines and Works Amendment Act (Colour Bar Bill) which directly and shamelessly discriminated against the non-Europeans, mainly South Africa's "Native" population. Gandhiji saw the broader significance of this Act. He warned that "the Europeans of South Africa if they persist in their arrogant policy will have sown the seeds of their own destruction." (Item 86).

Deploring the passing of the Colour Bar Bill, Gandhiji issued a statement on May 14, 1926: "One had wished that the spirit of justice that actuated the Union Government to

postpone the passing of one Bill (Class Areas Bill) would induce them not to force the passage of the other..." (Item 99). On July 22, 1926, he was more forthright. "I do not conceive the possibility of justice being done to Indians if none is rendered to the natives of the soil. Justice to them is not to be expected if injustice is done to the Natives..." (Item 105).

And in November 1926, as the Round Table Conference prepared to meet, Gandhiji cast a long gaze into the future. The Areas Reservation Bill, he said, "may be shelved for ever but if the spirit animating it survives, the position of the settlers will, in no wise, be better than if the Bill had been passed." (Item 110).

Yet notwithstanding all his misgivings about the white rulers of South Africa, Gandhiji wanted the Indian settlers to play fair. He cautioned them against breaches of conduct at the time of the Round Table Conference. "In order to ensure a peaceful atmosphere at the Conference, all that is necessary is for us not to impute motives, not to exaggerate and not to use harsh language in discussing subjects..." (Item 101).

When the results of the Cape Town Conference were announced in a joint communiqué on February 1927, Gandhiji was persuaded that they represented an "honourable compromise." "It is not the best that could be conceived," he wrote, "but it is the best that was possible." (Item 121). The dropping of the Areas Reservation Bill gave another respite to the Indian community.

But Gandhiji had serious reservations on the provisions on "repatriation" of Indians from South Africa and on other aspects of the Cape Town agreement. At the next session of the Congress in Madras, in December 1927, he moved a resolution proclaiming that the Congress "cannot be satisfied till the status of the (Indian) settlers is brought on par with that of the enfranchised inhabitants of the Union..." (Item 133).

## **51. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS ON ANTI-INDIAN CAMPAIGN IN SOUTH AFRICA, FEBRUARY 14, 1924<sup>155</sup>**

As one expected to understand the situation created in South Africa by the anti-Asiatic movement now going on there, and especially the Class Areas Bill now under consideration by the Union Parliament, I deem it my duty to place my opinion on the situation before the public.<sup>156</sup>

The anti-Asiatic agitation on the part of Europeans in South Africa is no new thing. It is almost as old as the first settlement of unindentured Indians in South Africa, and is

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<sup>155</sup> This statement was published generally in the Indian press.

<sup>156</sup> The Class Areas Bill sought to deprive the Indians of their right to trade, residence and ownership of land, and to impose more stringent restrictions on Indian immigration.

principally due to trade jealousy on the part of white retail traders. As in other parts of the world so in South Africa, interested men, if they sufficiently persist, find no difficulty in gathering the support round them of those who are not so interested, but who do not think for themselves. The present agitation, I remember, was begun as early as 1921, and the Class Areas Bill is, no doubt, one result of that agitation.

Before dealing with the nature and effect of the Bill, it is necessary to point out that it is in breach of the compromise of 1914 arrived at between the Union Government and the Indian community of South Africa. But it was a compromise to which both the Indian Government and the Imperial Government were as much party as the Union Government and Indian community, because the compromise was arrived at with the knowledge and concurrence of the Imperial and the Indian Governments. The latter even sent Sir Benjamin Robertson as a representative, technically to watch the course of the Commission that was appointed by the Union Government to inquire into the Indian position, but in reality to negotiate a settlement. The main terms of the compromise were settled before Sir Benjamin Robertson, who represented the Indian Government, returned to India.

In accordance with that compromise, no further anti- Asiatic legislation was to be passed by the Union Government. The understanding at the time was that the legal position of the Indian would be gradually improved and that the then existing anti-Asiatic legislation would, in time to come, be repealed. The contrary has, however, happened. The public may remember that the first attempt to break the spirit of the compromise was made when, in the Transvaal, an attempt was made to enforce the existing legislation adversely to the Indians and contrary to the practice that prevailed at the time of the compromise. The Class Areas Bill, however, goes much further in restricting Indian liberty.

Whatever may be the other implications of the compromise, this much cannot be disputed by any party, that the settlement of 1914 pledged the Union Government not to put further restrictions upon the Indian liberty, and apart from the general powers of disallowance vested in His Majesty under the Letter of Instructions addressed to the Governor-General of South Africa, the Imperial Government if they would be true to their trust are bound, at any cost, to insist upon the observance of the terms of the compromise referred to by me.

We in India may not ignore the difficulties of the Union Government which is dependent for its existence solely upon the will of the Europeans of South Africa expressed through their elected representatives to the exclusion of Indians and the natives of soil. This unwarranted exclusion is the original flaw in the South African constitution, as it is to be found in the constitutions of most of the self-governing Colonies which have their native populations and Indian populations. As the Imperial Government permitted the flaw, it is in honour bound to prevent untoward results arising from it. South Africa and Kenya will presently show what moral worth there is in the Imperial system. Pressure of public opinion may, and probably will, bring about temporary relief in both the places; but it will be only temporary. It can merely postpone the final act in the tragedy unless some unforeseen radical change, either in England or in India, takes place.



And now for the Bill itself. Unlike the Natal Municipal Franchise Bill, which happily the Union Governor-General has in effect vetoed and which applied only to Natal, the Class Areas Bill is designed to apply to all the four provinces. It enables the Government to segregate all the domiciled Indians and other Asiatics alike for residence and trade. It is, therefore, an extension, in a modified manner, of the location system devised as early as 1885 by the late Transvaal Government.<sup>157</sup>

Let me say in a few words what the segregation may mean. The Indian Location in Pretoria, where, in spite of the Law of 1885, not a single Indian has been as yet compelled to remove, is situated far away from the town itself and entirely outside the beat of the buyer, whether English, Dutch or Native. The only trade possible in such locations is trade among themselves. Segregation, therefore, carried out to the full means nothing less than compulsory repatriation without any compensation. It is true that the Bill appears to preserve to a certain extent the existing rights. But that reservation is of little consequence to the Indian settlers. I do not wish to burden this note by citing illustrations from my South African experience to show how such reservations have, in practice, proved almost useless.

Finally, let it be remembered that, when Indian emigration to South Africa was unrestricted, the fear of the Europeans was expressed to be that South Africa might be swamped by India's millions. All the South African statesmen then used to say that South Africa could easily digest a small Indian population and could even give it a liberal treatment, but that the European settlers could never rest content so long as the possibility of swamping remained. Now that the so-called fear of swamping has been removed, practically since 1897, the cry is raised for segregation, and if that is accomplished, the next step will be compulsory repatriation. If the segregated Indians do not voluntarily retire, the fact is that the more accommodating the European settlers of South Africa find the Imperial trustees to be, the more grasping they become in their anti-Asiatic demands.

*Young India*, February 21, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 23, pages 205-08

## **52. LETTER TO A. A. PAUL, MARCH 15, 1924<sup>158</sup>**

Dear Mr. Paul,

...The Indian community of South Africa includes people from all provinces and represents Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. There are many South

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<sup>157</sup> Indians and Africans were forced to reside in certain areas which were known as "locations."

<sup>158</sup> A. A. Paul was General Secretary of the Student Christian Association of India, Burma and Ceylon, with headquarters in Madras.

Africa-born Indians who are Christians and are highly educated and therefore naturally very sensitive about self-respect. The restrictive legislation of South Africa applies to them although South Africa is their home and although the majority of them never expect to see India at all. It is not known here that rightly or wrongly these young men and women have adopted European customs, manners, dress, etc., but neither their Christianity nor their education nor their Europeanisation has saved them from the bar sinister. I mention this fact not to show that they should have a special or separate treatment (they would themselves object to any such distinction), but to emphasise the fact that the restrictive legislation in South Africa is predominantly racial in character. The economic aspect occupies a subordinate position.

The Indian claim is exceedingly simple and reasonable. They have voluntarily accepted administrative restriction of Indian immigration and, as a matter of fact, hardly any Indian who has not previously resided in South Africa and practically made it his home is admitted. In exchange for this voluntary self-denial, the domiciled community claims equality of treatment. This position has been always regarded by the thoughtful Europeans of South Africa as eminently reasonable, and in 1914, an agreement was arrived at between the South African Government and the Indian community to which both the Imperial and the Indian Governments were party, whereby it was understood that no further restrictive legislation should be passed and that the position of the domiciled Indians would be steadily and progressively ameliorated. The local Indian community, therefore, has a double grievance in respect of the present anti-Indian agitation in South Africa.

The vast majority of Europeans in South Africa are nominally Christian. I have the privilege of claiming many of them, especially the missionaries, as my life-long friends. What is wanted is for the real Christians to dare to stand for truth and justice. There is unfortunately too much of expedience even amongst some of the best of them. They think that standing for truth in the face of prejudice will impair their usefulness for service. I have always dissented from this view, and my humble opinion based upon extensive experience is that such an attitude is a concession, although totally unconscious, to Satan...

Yours truly,

*Collected Works*, Volume 23, pages 256-57

### **53. CABLE TO MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU, MARCH 1924<sup>159</sup>**

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<sup>159</sup> This cable was sent before March 16, 1924.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), poetess, a leader of the Indian National Congress and a close associate of Gandhiji, was in South Africa at the time. She had been invited by the Indian community in South Africa while she was in Nairobi to preside over the East African Indian Congress.

PRAY TELL GENERAL SMUTS AND RESPONSIBLE EUROPEANS THAT THE CLASS AREAS BILL IS A POOR RECOMPENSE FOR THE LOCAL INDIANS' EXEMPLARY SELF-RESTRAINT THROUGHOUT THE INTERESTED CAMPAIGN AGAINST THEM. EUROPEANS SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THE LOCAL INDIANS VOLUNTARILY SUBMITTED TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRICTION OF FURTHER INDIAN IMMIGRATION. REMIND THE UNION GOVERNMENT OF THE ASSURANCE GIVEN GOKHALE THAT NO FURTHER DISABLING LEGISLATION WILL BE PASSED. ALSO THE COMPACT OF 1914. NOTHING SINCE DONE BY THE LOCAL INDIANS DESERVES THE PROPOSED TREATMENT. ACCEPTANCE OF CLASS AREAS BILL IS TANTAMOUNT TO POLITICAL AND CIVIL SUICIDE. I TRUST YOUR WINSOME ELOQUENCE WILL DISARM OPPOSITION AND MAKE THE LOT OF YOUR COUNTRYMEN EASIER FOR YOUR PRESENCE.

*Collected Works, Volume 23, pages 258-59*

#### **54. INTERVIEW TO THE *TIMES OF INDIA*, MARCH 20, 1924**

Gandhiji gave an interesting explanation of the South African Government's decision to omit the Cape Province from the operation of the Class Areas Bill. He said:

This is merely an instance of selfishness on the part, principally, of the Dutch population. Nearly all the house-work in the Cape is done by Malay women, and if the Segregation Act came into force, these Malay women would be affected by it.<sup>160</sup> This would mean depriving a major part of the white population of its domestic help, which would give no end of inconvenience. Consequently, as the Indian population of the Cape is small - about 10,000 in all - the Cape people decided that they are not worth worrying about as far as segregation is concerned in view of the difficulties which segregation would bring in its train.

*Times of India, March 21, 1924; Collected Works, Volume 23, page 287*

#### **55. MESSAGE TO EUROPEANS IN SOUTH AFRICA<sup>161</sup>**

If you continue to oppress us, we shall leave your Empire and, if we do, where will your Empire be then?

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<sup>160</sup> Please see next item indicating that Malays would be exempted.

<sup>161</sup> Mrs. Sarojini Naidu quoted this in the course of a speech at a gathering in Cape Town on March 22, 1924.

## 56. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, MARCH 23, 1924<sup>162</sup>

Bombay  
March 23, 1924

The following cablegram has been received from Cape Town signed by Mr. Pather,<sup>163</sup> General Secretary, South African Indian Congress:

"SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY SUBMITS NOTWITHSTANDING STRONGEST PROTESTS UNION GOVERNMENT DETERMINED CARRYING THROUGH CLASS AREAS BILL VIOLATING PLEDGES GIVEN. BILL INDEFENSIBLE. FOREIGNERS, ALSO EURO-AFRICANS, MALAYS AND NATIVES BEING EXEMPTED. BILL WILL APPLY ONLY TO INDIANS. EURO-AFRICANS, MALAYS AND NATIVES ASSEMBLED IN THOUSANDS CAPE TOWN ASSURED MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU OF SUPPORT TO INDIANS IN OPPOSITION TO BILL. INDIANS WILL NEVER SUBMIT SEGREGATION. INFORM INDIA. PLEASE TAKE SUCH ACTION AS YOU THINK BEST. MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU HAS MADE DEEP IMPRESSION AND WON MANY HEARTS. MRS. NAIDU DEFERRED LEAVING SOUTH AFRICA UNTIL 30TH APRIL OWING GREAT DEMAND ON HER IN INTEREST OF THE CAUSE."<sup>164</sup>

This is startling news, almost too bad even for South Africa to be believed. I have already endeavoured to show why the Cape was to be excluded from the operation of the measure. If the information cabled by Reuter as to the exclusion of the Cape is correct, there is something wrong in the foregoing cable, or the information contained in it is applicable to the other three Provinces only, namely, Orangia, Transvaal and Natal. The position will be that, so far as the Cape is concerned, the Cape Indians will still remain

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<sup>162</sup> This was published generally in the Indian press. *Young India* reproduced it under the title "The Class Areas Bill."

<sup>163</sup> V. S. C. Pather

<sup>164</sup> Mrs. Sarojini Naidu travelled all over South Africa, creating a great impression on all sections of the population and providing encouragement to the Indians. In the course of her tour she suggested a round-table conference to bring about reconciliation between South Africa and India - and this proposal was endorsed by the South African Indian Congress which elected her its President that year.

Mrs. Naidu's tour was also significant for her support for the unity of the oppressed people in South Africa.

exempted from the operation of the measure, whereas in the other Provinces the measure will apply only to Indians.

There is no difficulty about understanding the exemptions, because the idea of segregation of Natives and Malays in the extreme sense is new. Every European household has Natives of South Africa as domestic servants. Malays, as I have shown in a previous communication, are a negligible quantity except in the Cape. We have, therefore, the naked truth before us that the Bill in question is aimed merely at Indians and that it connotes not only segregation but indirect expulsion.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's visit to South Africa and her inspiring presence there will undoubtedly steel the hearts of the Indian settlers for further effort. Her presence is also bringing Europeans and Indians on the same platform. Let India, however, not be lulled into a sense of false security because of the commanding presence of Mrs. Naidu in the midst of the sorely-tried Indian settlers.

After all, the cultured Europeans of South Africa are gentlemen, and I have little doubt that Mrs. Naidu is receiving all the attention that is due to her for her many and matchless gifts, but the South African Europeans have also a fixed and determined anti-Indian policy. General Smuts is a finished diplomat. On due occasions he can speak honeyed words, but he knows his mind, and let there be no mistake that unless India can make an effort adequate to the situation, the Bill will be carried through the Union Parliament in spite of Mrs. Naidu's resourcefulness.

M. K. Gandhi

*Young India*, March 27, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 23, pages 300-01

## **57. LETTER TO P. K. NAIDU, MARCH 28, 1924**

Post Andheri,  
March 23, 1924

My dear Naidu,<sup>165</sup>

I was delighted to see your writing after such a long time.

I am watching the course of events in South Africa with the greatest attention and anxiety. If any one person can possibly influence the course of events in our favour, it is certainly Mrs. Naidu<sup>166</sup>. She has a wonderful charm of manner and is tireless in her duty. She is staying up to the end of this month and probably longer still. I only hope that if, in

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<sup>165</sup> A passive resister and associate of Gandhiji in South Africa. Please see item 63.

<sup>166</sup> Mrs. Sarojini Naidu

spite of all the efforts, the Class Areas Bill does become law, you will be able to persuade our people to get up *satyagraha* if it becomes necessary. At the same time, I would say, do not launch it unless you are absolutely certain that you will be able to carry the thing through. Do please keep me posted with all the particulars, sending me cuttings.

Yours sincerely,

*Collected Works*, Volume 23, page 329

### **58. LETTER TO A. CHRISTOPHER, MARCH 28, 1924**

Post Andheri,  
March 28, 1924

My dear Christopher,<sup>167</sup>

I was so glad to see your familiar writing after so many years.

I am anxiously and closely watching the events in South Africa and will do all that is possible for an ailing man to do. I know that the presence of Mrs. Naidu is a source of great joy and strength to you. Do please keep me well informed of the progress of events, sending me all the cuttings and other documents that you may think I should see. You have asked me to send a cablegram about unity amongst our people. I think it will serve no useful purpose. Your letter is dated 11th February. It is now 28th of March. All that I infer from the cablegrams being received about Mrs. Naidu's progress in South Africa goes to show that you are presenting a united front. Why should I therefore assume disunion when everything points to the contrary...

Yours sincerely,

*Collected Works*, Volume 23, page 331

### **59. INTERVIEW TO THE ASSOCIATED PRESS OF INDIA, APRIL 1924<sup>168</sup>**

I have carefully read Mr. Duncan's speech delivered by him at the second reading of the Class Areas Bill in the Union Assembly.<sup>169</sup> I have not before me the letters

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<sup>167</sup> Albert Christopher, who actively participated in the Great March of 1913, later became an advocate and took a lead in forming the South African Indian Congress. He was a prominent leader of the Indian community for many years.

<sup>168</sup> The interview was given in Bombay on or before April 6, 1924.

<sup>169</sup> Patrick Duncan, member of the South African Cabinet; Governor-General in 1927.

exchanged between General Smuts and myself.<sup>170</sup> I have sent for the file of the *Indian Opinion* which I have at *Satyagraha Ashram*, Sabarmati. It contains the text of the two letters, but for my purpose I do not really need them. I am surprised at Mr. Duncan's assertion. The two letters do not form the whole of the agreement. It is necessary to remember that the Indian struggle commenced with the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907, which was vetoed as an Ordinance and passed, almost word for word, by the first responsible legislature of the Transvaal. Finally, in 1914, the struggle reached its climax and embraced all the four provinces of the Union. "Vested rights" has been a phrase requiring interpretation from time to time. My contention is that the whole tenor of the agreement pledged the Union Government not only not to curtail vested rights, but gradually to remove the restrictions that existed in 1914.

I have already cited Sir Benjamin Robertson and Mr. Andrews as my witnesses in support of my contention. I have asked Mr. Andrews, who was present at the negotiations that were going on between General Smuts and myself, and he completely supports me.<sup>171</sup> The Indian struggle extending over a long period of eight years could not have been undertaken so that, after a full and honourable settlement, it was open to the Union Government to take away the rights already possessed by the Indians.

The whole of Mr. Duncan's speech is a curious exhibition of inconsistency and refusal to do the right thing. As the speech itself shows, the Class Areas Bill is introduced not because it is necessary for the conservation of European predominance, but because interested Europeans are clamouring for it. Mr. Duncan himself admits that the Indian population is gradually decreasing, because immigration has ceased. His distinction between segregation and separation is, to say the least, hypocritical. And in spite of his statement to the contrary, I venture to state that, whatever the idea underlying the Bill may be, its effect must be to ruin the Indian settlers.

*The Hindu*, April 7, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 23, pages 375-76

## 60. MY OFFER

*Shrimati* Sarojini's splendid work in South Africa has told. Letters received by me from South Africa show that her presence has brought fresh courage to the Indian settlers. Mr. Duncan's fruitless efforts to justify an unjustifiable measure show also that the Europeans of South Africa have felt the force of her wonderful work. Mr. Duncan's assertion that the agreement of 1914 did not bind the Union Government (not?) to take away vested rights, as the Class Areas Bill admittedly does, ought to carry with it the understanding that, if such an agreement can be proved, the Bill will not be proceeded with. Even though a non-co-operator, I beg to make the proposal that, if the Government of India

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<sup>170</sup> On June 30, 1914

<sup>171</sup> For the statement of the Reverend C.F. Andrews substantiating the position taken by Gandhiji, see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 23, Appendix XII.

receive an undertaking from the Union Government that, if the agreement can be proved to the satisfaction of an impartial tribunal, they will suspend the Bill pending such an enquiry, I shall be prepared to appear before such a tribunal to prove the agreement. Nor is precedent wanting for such a course. When the interpretation of the Transvaal Law 3 of 1885 and the propriety of its enactment in spite of the London Convention were in dispute, the matter was referred to arbitration by the Imperial and the Transvaal Governments.<sup>172</sup>

*Young India*, April 10, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 23, pages 400-01

## 61. NOTES ON SOUTH AFRICA

For the present at least the Indians (in South Africa) appear to have been saved from the sword, hitherto hanging over their heads, in the form of confining their residence to the scavengers' location. *Smt.* Sarojini's efforts appear to have succeeded in an unexpected manner. General Smuts has announced his decision to dissolve Parliament and to hold fresh elections as he felt that public opinion did not back the Union Government of South Africa. Hence the new Bills which were to be passed by the present Parliament have been postponed, at least for the present.<sup>173</sup> But it is not at all likely that members of the new Parliament will be inclined to do justice to Indians. It will not at all be surprising if their attitude towards the Indians in South Africa is harder even than that of the present members. Still, we should rest satisfied, for the time being at least, as "he who survives a crisis may live up to the age of a hundred years."

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, April 13, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 23, pages 425-26

## 62. NOTE ON NATAL INDIANS

It is a pathetic cable from the Natal Indians protesting against the passing of the Ordinance disenfranchising Natal Indians from voting at municipal elections.<sup>174</sup> This fight commenced in 1894. It was finally decided in favour of the Indian settlers. The then Natal Government admitted that it would be most unjust to deprive the Indian taxpayer of

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<sup>172</sup> Please see above, footnote under item 25.

<sup>173</sup> The Smuts Governments did not press the Class Areas Bill, pending the general election in June 1924. General Smuts was defeated in the elections and a new Government was formed by General J. B. M. Hertzog, leader of the Nationalist Party which had advocated expulsion of Indians from South Africa.

<sup>174</sup> Indians were deprived of the municipal franchise in the Natal by the Natal Boroughs Ordinance, 1924, and the Natal Township Franchise Ordinance, 1925.



the municipal franchise. The Indian settler submitted to the virtual deprivation of the political franchise. But no past promises or undertakings bind governments when they wish to change policies or principles. We have seen this illustrated often enough in the history of Indians in South Africa. Almost every assurance given to them has been violated on due occasion. Our bewildered countrymen make a pathetic appeal to the nation for help. Little do they know that we are powerless to give them real assistance. Sympathy they have. Newspaper articles they will have, but I fear that beyond that they are likely to get very little. If the Government of India move, for very shame, to protect them against impending spoliation, it can do so with effect. I say "impending," for the Ordinance requires the sanction of the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa. He has once refused to sanction such an Ordinance. If he exercises his prerogative, he can save the Indians the insult that the Ordinance implies. Every letter received by me from South Africa during Mrs. Naidu's stay there showed the high hopes our people built on the brilliant mission of Mrs. Naidu. But the South African Europeans can be courteous and yet carry out their determination, though it may be, as this is, totally unjust. They have learnt under General Smuts the art of being sweetly unjust. The ultimate remedy lies with our countrymen themselves.

*Young India*, August 21, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 25, page 17

### **63. LOSS OF A COMRADE: P. K. NAIDU**

We in India know nothing of our South African heroes. They are unknown to fame like

Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast  
The little tyrant of his fields withstood.

I have just received a cable from Johannesburg announcing the death of P. K. Naidu from pneumonia. He was one of the truest of Indians and the stoutest of hearts. He suffered the hardships of a prison life many times. His wife followed suit. He was ready for all work. He got ready on an hour's notice to take charge of a party of deportees who were banished by General Smuts to India. He counted no cost too dear for the sake of his country's freedom. His death at the present moment, for our countrymen in South Africa, is a tremendous loss. He was capable single-handed of hurling defiance against the mighty South African Government. Indeed only a few weeks ago I had a letter from him describing his plan of campaign. Alas! cruel Nature had planned otherwise. Naidu is dead; his work will live for ever. P. K. Naidu was a fair English scholar. He knew Hindi, Telugu, French and Zulu. He was self-taught. He had a powerful build. He was no mean pugilist. But he had learnt the secret of non-violence. He was therefore able to control himself under the gravest provocation. He was a born toiler. He never refused any work. He was an expert barber and, because he would not become a clerk, he had chosen to be a barber and carried on a haircutting saloon. When, at Tolstoy Farm, we took to sandal

making, he became a finished sandal-maker. He was a true soldier. He knew how to obey. I tender my humble condolences to Mrs. Naidu and our countrymen in South Africa.

*Young India*, September 25, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 25, pages 210-11

#### **64. MESSAGE TO TRANSVAAL INDIANS, OCTOBER 20, 1924<sup>175</sup>**

Hope that Indians of Transvaal as other parts of Union will see struggle through for honourable existence in South Africa at the cost of suffering, no matter how great.

*Collected Works*, Volume 25, page 244

#### **65. THE LATE PARSEE RUSTOMJEE**

With the passing away of Parsee Rustomjee... India has lost a true soldier. So far as I am concerned, I have lost a true friend. I have come across few men like Parsee Rustomjee. He had had hardly any education. He knew a little English and his knowledge of Gujarati was not much. He was not too fond of reading. Right from his youth he was in business. Through sheer hard work he had risen from the status of a common clerk to that of a big businessman. Despite this, he had a keen common sense and great generosity and he was so tolerant that, although he was an orthodox Parsi, he had the same affection for Hindus, Muslims and Christians. I have never seen anyone going round for funds return empty-handed from him. His loyalty to his friends was so staunch that many gave him their power of attorney. I have seen many prominent Muslim businessmen name Parsee Rustomjee their representative in preference to their own relations. No poor Parsi was sent away from Rustomjee's shop. He was as sparing towards himself as he was generous towards others. Luxuries had no place in his life. He spent money after great hesitation on himself and his family. He continued to live in great simplicity till the end. Parsee Rustomjee's shop was the only place where Gokhale, Andrews, Sarojini Devi and such others stayed. The minutest detail did not escape his eyes. Who else but he could be given the responsibility of packing Gokhale's forty-five packages consisting of innumerable addresses of welcome and such other things, making a list of these and loading them on the steamer?

By making a trust in the name of his dearly loved wife Jerbai after her death, he gave away the larger part of his wealth in charity. He has not pampered his children at all but has rather brought them up in simplicity and left them an inheritance sufficient only to prevent them from starving. He has remembered all his relations in making his will.

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<sup>175</sup> This message was given in response to a letter from Ismail Ahmed, who was proceeding to the Transvaal from Surat.

He took part in public affairs with the same degree of precision and firmness described above. At the time of *satyagraha*, Parsee Rustomjee was the first among the businessmen of Natal who were prepared to sacrifice their all. It was his way not to give up a task once he had undertaken it, whatever the risks involved. He had to serve a longer sentence in prison than expected, but this did not frighten him. The struggle continued for eight years; many staunch warriors fell. Rustomjee, however, did not waver. He made his son Sorabjee also plunge into the struggle.

I first made the acquaintance of this good Indian in 1893. At first I was not greatly impressed by him. However, as I got more and more involved in public work, I learnt more and more to value the gemlike qualities in Parsee Rustomjee. He was my client, my colleague in public work and finally he became my friend. He did not hesitate to come to me and describe his faults like a child. He astounded me by his faith in me. When the whites attacked me in 1897, Rustomjee's house sheltered me and my sons. The whites had threatened to burn down his house and property. That threat, however, did not deter him in the least. He continued the relationship thus built up in Africa till the time of his death. He continued to send money here too for public work. He was to have come here in December at the time of the Congress session. God, however, willed otherwise. *Sheth* Rustomjee's death is a great loss to the Indians in South Africa. Sorabji Adajania passed away, after that Ahmed Mohamed Cachalia died, some time back P. K. Naidu, and now Parsee Rustomjee has departed. There are hardly any Indian workers of their calibre left in South Africa now. As God is the friend of the helpless, He will look after the Indians in South Africa. But the void created by Parsee Rustomjee's death will never be filled.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, November 30, 1924; *Collected Works*, Volume 25, pages 372-74

## 66. INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The serpentine coil round the Indian settlers of South Africa is daily tightening. Now in Natal they are deprived even of the municipal franchise. This was said to have been protected. When the attempt was made to take away from them the political franchise, the Natal Government declared that they had no design upon the enjoyment by Indians of the municipal franchise. But no promise made to a weak party is sacred in the estimation of modern governments. Each party must be able to defend its rights by its own inherent strength. The Government of India's vaunted trusteeship fails at the critical moment. I know that the settlers look to us for help and protection. But they should know that they can have little help from India for the present. She herself is engaged in a life and death struggle. Years ago the late Sir Phirozeshah<sup>176</sup> prophesied that India would be of little help to the Indians overseas, so long as she had not acquired the ability to assert herself. The late Pestonji Padsha was even disgusted with me for going to South Africa. He thought every Indian worker going out of India was so much economic waste. I think his

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<sup>176</sup> Sir Phirozeshah Mehta

clear brain partially failed Mr. Padsha. My residence in South Africa was not an economic waste of power. But is there not much truth underlying Mr. Padsha's burning desire first to secure India's freedom? Till we have acquired it, we must send our countrymen across the seas such comfort as newspaper and other sympathy can give them.

*Young India*, December 26, 1924

## 67. THE VICEREGAL PRONOUNCEMENT

The Viceregal answer to the deputation that waited on His Excellency was sympathetic but non-committal.<sup>177</sup> It betrays unnecessary consideration for the difficulties of the Union Government. It is just for one Government to appreciate the difficulties of another but the performance might easily be overdone. The Union Government observed no delicacy when it had to make its choice. The Indian Government has had many an occasion to make such a choice. Each time, except once, it has surrendered. The exception was made by Lord Hardinge<sup>178</sup> who hurled defiance at the Government of South Africa and ranged himself on the side of Indians in South Africa. There were reasons for it. The Indians were fighting by direct action. The method was new. They had proved their capacity for resistance and suffering and yet they were demonstrably and wholly non-violent. But at the present moment Indians of South Africa are leaderless. With Sorabji,<sup>179</sup> Cachalia,<sup>180</sup> P. K. Naidu<sup>181</sup> and now Rustomjee<sup>182</sup> gone, they do not know what they should do or can do. There is ample scope for non-violent action. But it requires thinking out and vigorous working out. That seems hardly possible at the present moment. I have, however, great hope of one or two young men who are resident in South Africa. Not the least among them is Sorabjee, the brave son of the brave Rustomjee. Young Sorabjee is himself a seasoned soldier in *satyagraha*. He has been to prison. He organised the wonderful receptions that were given in Natal to Sarojini Devi. Let our countrymen in South Africa realise that they must work out their own salvation. Even heaven helps only those who help themselves. They will find that if they show their original grit and spirit and sacrifice, they will have the people of India, the Government of India and the world helping and fighting for them.

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<sup>177</sup> A deputation led by Sir Dinshaw Petit met the Viceroy on January 25, 1925, to draw his attention to the disabilities of Indians in South Africa.

<sup>178</sup> Viceroy of India, 1910-16

<sup>179</sup> Sorabji Shapurji Adajania. Parsi public worker and passive resister who suffered imprisonment and deportation during the *satyagraha* campaign in South Africa. Please see item 15 above.

<sup>180</sup> A. M. Cachalia, Chairman, Transvaal British Indian Association, who served several terms of imprisonment in the *satyagraha*. Please see item 18 above.

<sup>181</sup> P.K. Naidu, *satyagrahi*, who suffered imprisonment and deportation. Secretary of the Transvaal British Indian Association. Please see item 63 above.

<sup>182</sup> Parsee Rustomjee, a businessmen who served several terms of imprisonment in the *satyagraha*. Please see item 65 above.

There is a passage in the Viceregal pronouncement which needs supplementing. His Excellency says,

"it is stated in your address that the municipal franchise was solemnly assured to Indians by the Natal Government when in 1896 Indians were deprived of the Parliamentary franchise. But you have not indicated the exact nature of the assurance. My Government are making the necessary enquiries to verify the position."

The statement made by the deputation is substantially correct. It was, however, not in 1896 but probably in 1894 that the assurance was given. I am writing from memory. The facts are these. It was in 1894 that the first disfranchising Bill was passed by the Natal Assembly. Whilst it was passing through the Assembly a petition was presented to it on behalf of Indians wherein it was stated that the Indians enjoyed in India the municipal and indirectly even the political franchise. Fear was also expressed that the deprivation of the political franchise was likely to be a prelude to that of the municipal franchise. It was in answer to this petition that the late Sir John Robinson, the Premier of Natal, and the late Mr. Escombe,<sup>183</sup> the Attorney-General, gave the assurance that there was no intention to go further and deprive the Indians of the municipal franchise at a future date. The disenfranchising Bill was disallowed by the superior Government but another, non-racial in character, was passed. The assurance referred to by me was several times repeated by Mr. Escombe who had charge of all the Bills and who was virtually the dictator of Natal's policy whilst he was in office.

*Young India*, February 5, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 26, pages 71-72

## 68. THE BAR SINISTER

General Smuts has at last spoken out on the proposed extension of the Colour Bar in South African legislation. The reader will remember the cablegram received sometime ago that the Union Government was seeking to put the ban on Asiatics being employed in the mines. Speaking on and against that legislation General Smuts is reported to have said:

"In opposing the Colour Bar Bill in the Union Assembly, General Smuts declared that the Bill sought to give the Government power by regulation to apportion work in mines and works between whites on the one hand, and Natives and Asiatics on the other, which he thought was a very serious matter. He felt that the Bill was not honest dealing and it was his deliberate opinion that there was only one guarantee of the security of white civilisation, namely, honest justice between man and man in this country. (Hear, hear!) Turning to the Bill, as it affected Asiatics, he said that in the days of his negotiation with Mr. Gandhi the position

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<sup>183</sup> Sir Harry Escombe (1838-1899). Leading advocate in Natal. Premier of Natal in 1897.

which the latter took up, and which had been taken up at subsequent conferences in London, was an appeal not to dishonour Indians. We recognise, said Mr. Gandhi, there is a difference between you and us and that distinctions must be made, but don't cast a stigma on us in the laws of your country, but in this Bill they were doing the very thing they were asked to avoid. They were gathering on their heads the hatred of the whole of Asia from one side to the other. In conclusion, he suggested that the matter should be seriously considered, whether they should not discharge the order for the second reading of the Bill, and see whether some way out of the difficulty could not be found."

General Smuts has correctly given the substance of my conversation with him. My point was that whilst administrative difference there was bound to be so long as human nature remained what it was and so long as there was a conflict between European culture and the Indian, a legal recognition of the difference in the shape of the introduction of the Bar Sinister in the laws of the country was an intolerable burden. The settlement of 1914 chiefly consisted in the vindication of the Indian position. With General Smuts' opposition we may hope that the Bill will now be dropped.

But let us not deceive ourselves. The Natal Disfranchising Bill recently passed is an extension of the "Bar Sinister." General Smuts' opposition therefore means only a protest against the bar being introduced even in the matter of employment, not against the bar altogether. However I tender my congratulations to General Smuts on his plain speech at the risk of still further weakening his political position in his country. We may not be satisfied till the South African statute-book is purged of all legal inequality as between whites and Asiatics or better still as between white and coloured people.

*Young India*, March 5, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 26, pages 221-22

## **69. SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

"Things are clearly going from bad to worse in South Africa and there is no telling where they will end. In two separate measures, which have been put forward by the Government in power, Asiatics are discriminated against and classed with Native, as contrasted with the Coloured people. It is somewhat difficult for those who have never been to South Africa to understand clearly what such discrimination means. What has to be realised is that the great bulk of the Native population is entirely uneducated. On the other hand, the Coloured people (i.e., those who have a slight mixture of European blood in their veins) are on the whole a fairly literate community. It appears that the policy of the new Government, under General Hertzog is to depress still further the Asiatic and to raise the status of the Coloured people.

"A further measure is scheduled, whereby South African citizenship will be confined to the pure white population, which has been born and bred in South Africa. An Englishman coming out straight from England will not have his citizenship in South Africa as an inherent right on account of his English birth

and origin. He will have to take out naturalisation papers in South Africa. Leading newspapers in South Africa suggest that a compact has been made between the Labour Party (which relies chiefly on the British labour vote) and the Nationalist Party (which relies chiefly on the Dutch vote) on the understanding that the Nationalists will support a strong anti-Asiatic policy provided that the Labourites will support strong burgher policy.

"In addition to this, we have the further news that a new segregation measure, of even more drastic character than the late Class Areas Bill, is already being prepared. It will be remembered that the Municipal Franchise Act for Natal, depriving Indians in future municipal franchise, has now been passed and sanctioned by the Governor-General. If a racial Segregation Act is also passed, it will be difficult to see what will still remain of the vested rights, which were to be strictly observed under the Smuts- Gandhi Agreement of 1914.

"In the Transvaal, a picketing system and a boycott of all Indian trade has again been started. This time, in the present inflamed atmosphere - it has met with some measure of success. The repatriation of Indians in Natal by means of Government recruiters is still proceeding. I have personally cross-examined those in Madras who have returned. They have told me that they have been unable to find employment in India. They are therefore now to be found, after great misery and privation, entering the emigration depot for Malaya, asking to be sent out of India to the rubber plantations of the Federated Malaya States. Truly the whole situation of Indians in South Africa has reached the lowest point where even stout hearts may find it difficult to look forward to the future with hope. There is one redeeming feature, however, which continually meets us in every fresh information that reaches us in India. The Hindu-Muslim problem out there does not exist. In face of common suffering Indians are one people - one in heart and soul as well as one in Indian birth."<sup>184</sup>

In view of the foregoing gloomy study of the situation in South Africa, the remarks of General Smuts quoted last week in these columns derive an added interest. The picketing referred to by Mr. Andrews is nothing but veiled coercion. If with all the elaborate precautions it did not remain peaceful everywhere in India in 1921, how less likely it is to be peaceful in South Africa, only those who know its white population can realise.

*Young India*, March 12, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 26, pages 276-77

## **70. INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

General Smuts deserves credit for supporting the cause of the Indians in South Africa. But this by itself will not remove their hardship. Their plight is becoming more

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<sup>184</sup> The foregoing article was contributed by the Reverend C. F. Andrews.

and more pitiable. European traders are out to destroy completely the Indians' business, the very means of their existence. They are, therefore, now ready openly to attack the trade interests of Indians settled in the Transvaal. India is not in a position to help them. Government has given up all pretence of decency. It sets no store by public opinion in this country. No matter what the result of voting in the Legislative Assembly is, the Government goes its own way. Public opinion in India is of course in favour of their countrymen in South Africa. Whatever is possible will certainly be done here. But I feel it my duty to warn the Indians living in South Africa or other foreign countries that they must in the last resort rely on their own strength. The saying, "One cannot go to heaven except by giving up one's life" fully applies to their situation.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, April 5, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 26, pages 472-73

## 71. TRANSVAAL INDIANS

Here is a cable from the Secretary, British Indian Association, Johannesburg:

"MR. COLLINS, OPPOSITION MEMBER ERMELO, INTRODUCED IN THE ASSEMBLY A BILL PROHIBITING THE GRANT OR RENEWAL OF TRADING OR BUSINESS LICENCES WITHIN SIX MILES TRANSVAAL MUNICIPAL OR TOWNSHIP AREA TO ANY ASIATIC WHEREIN HE IS NOT OWNER OF FIXED PROPERTY, ALSO TO ANY ASIATIC COMPANY CORPORATE OR OTHERWISE. BILL IF PASSED WILL GROSSLY VIOLATE SMUTS-GANDHI AGREEMENT RESPECTING VESTED RIGHTS AND SPELL TOTAL ANNIHILATION AND FINAL EXTERMINATION OF INDIANS. ASSOCIATION EMPHATICALLY PROTESTS AGAINST ITS PASSAGE AND URGES YOU ADOPT MEANS FOR ITS WITHDRAWAL. H. E. THE VICEROY HAS BEEN CABLED."

The cable was received sometime ago but owing to my incessant travelling it has remained unattended to till now. I offer my apologies to the Association. The matter, however, is not stale nor beyond help. This measure is after the style of what General Hertzog introduced and which General Smuts so energetically opposed. In appealing to me, the Association has relied on a broken reed. I can but give publicity to the grievance and hope that the appeal to the Viceroy will not prove fruitless. His Excellency can at least vindicate the position of Indian settlers overseas if he can do nothing else. The proposed Bill is a manifest breach of the Smuts-Gandhi agreement of 1914. It is dishonest to mention Asiatic owners of fixed property in the Transvaal, for it is known to everyone that they cannot become owners of fixed property except in Locations and that they are denied the right of owning fixed property even in Locations. Everyone knows, moreover, that to confine Asiatic trade to Locations is to kill that trade. If extermination of the Asiatic is the goal, the honest course would be to bring in an expatriation bill and challenge the Indian Government to do its worst.



## 72. PARIAS OF THE EMPIRE

Lest we forget our status and proper place in the imperial economy, we receive a constant reminder now from England and now from South Africa, or some such place, of what we are... Mr. Malan, the Union Minister in South Africa, tells us that there shall be no equality between Europeans and Indians, and that therefore if he will not kill out the Indian settler, he will squeeze him out of South Africa and will reduce him to such a state that he cannot even think of equality. The Ghetto is his proper place, and menial labour his proper sphere of action. We must be, and remain, a suppressed class of the world.

To mention this evil is not to get rid of it... What to do is the question. Pherozezshah Mehta disapproved even of my going to South Africa. He said that nothing was to be done in South Africa until we had vindicated our position in India. Lokamanya<sup>185</sup> said much the same thing. "Seek ye first *Swaraj* and everything will be added unto you" was his refrain. But *Swaraj* is a result of the sum total of India's energy. The order of the day is work from without and work from within. It is a long drawn out agony, but there is no new birth without the necessary pains of labour. We must pass through this inevitable life-giving, life-sustaining discipline, fiery though it is.

Our countrymen in South Africa must do the very best they can without flinching. If they have the old spirit of resistance and cohesion in them, and if they think that the moment has arrived, they must take up the cross of suffering. They must be sole judges of their fitness and of the psychological moment for taking the plunge. They must know that public opinion of India is with them. But they will also realise that it is an opinion which is powerless to help them. They must therefore rely upon their own strength and capacity for enduring hardships and in the innate justice of their cause.

*Young India*, August 6, 1925

## 73. THE AREAS RESERVATION BILL

The following cable has been received by me from Mr. Amod Bhayat,<sup>186</sup> President of a mass meeting of Indians held in Durban:

"THE ASIATIC BILL<sup>187</sup> IN THE UNION PARLIAMENT IS FAR

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<sup>185</sup> Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Indian leader

<sup>186</sup> Amod Bhayat (1859-1931). A founding member of the Natal Indian Congress and leader of the Indian community. A businessman in Pietermaritzburg.

<sup>187</sup> The Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill, was introduced in the Union Parliament in July 1925. Dr. D. F. Malan, the Minister of the

REACHING IN ITS RESULTS. IT IS INEQUITOUS AND DISASTROUS TO INDIAN INTERESTS AND IS DELIBERATE VIOLATION OF GANDHI-SMUTS UNDERSTANDING TO RECOGNISE VESTED INTERESTS. THE BILL PROVIDES FOR ALLOCATING RESIDENTIAL AND TRADING AREAS ONLY WITHIN WHICH INDIANS MAY BUY AND LEASE PROPERTY. IN RURAL DISTRICTS INDIANS WILL BE CONFINED TO THIRTY MILES FROM THE COASTLINE WHEREIN AREAS MAY BE DEFINED. THE RESULT WILL BE THAT THE BUSINESS OF THOUSANDS OF INDIANS MUST CEASE ON THE EXPIRY OF PRESENT LEASES. IT AMOUNTS TO COMPULSORY SEGREGATION, DELIBERATE DEPRIVATION OF INDIAN PROPERTY. ULTIMATE AIM IS APPARENTLY REPATRIATION AND CONFISCATION OF RIGHTS. THE RIGHT OF *BONA FIDE* INDIANS TO ENTER THE UNION IS SERIOUSLY JEOPARDISED. MANY PROVISIONS OF THE BILL WILL ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO DECLARE INDIANS AS PROHIBITED IMMIGRANTS AND DOMICILE RIGHTS WILL BE PRACTICALLY FORFEITED. MERE ABSENCE OVER THREE YEARS CAUSES FORFEITURE. THE WIVES AND CHILDREN OF DOMICILED INDIANS CANNOT ENTER THE UNION AFTER FIVE YEARS FROM AUGUST 1925. THOUSANDS EX-INDENTURED INDIANS WHO ARE NOW FOR THIRTY YEARS HERE AND THEIR DESCENDANTS MAY BE DECLARED PROHIBITED IMMIGRANTS AND CANNOT CLAIM DOMICILE. SOUTH AFRICAN BORN INDIANS DOMICILED IN ONE PROVINCE OF THE UNION MUST RETURN TO THE PROVINCE OF THEIR BIRTH, AND THERE ALSO INTO SEGREGATED AREAS. INDIANS BORN HERE COULD ALSO BE DECLARED PROHIBITED IMMIGRANTS IF UNSUITABLE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNION. SUCH PROHIBITED INDIANS WILL LOSE ALL PROPERTY AND VESTED RIGHTS IN THE UNION AND BE DRIVEN AWAY. PROTEST MASS MEETING NATAL INDIANS BEEN CALLED FOR 31ST IN DURBAN. WE RELY UPON YOU FOR CREATING STRONG INFLUENTIAL PUBLIC OPINION SO THAT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT MAY BE AROUSED INTO DETERMINED ACTION TO PROTECT US. AFFRONT TO INDIAN NATION MUST BE MET WITH DIGNIFIED PROTESTS FROM INDIA. THE INSULT IS GRATUITOUS AND WE RESENT SAME IN A MOST STRENUOUS AND EMPHATIC MANNER. WE IMPLORE YOU TO PRESS INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO GIVE IMMEDIATE PUBLIC EXPRESSION TO ITS ATTITUDE AS SUPINENESS

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Interior, told the Parliament:

"I must say that the Bill frankly starts from the general supposition that the Indian, as a race in this country, is an alien element in the population, and that no solution of this question will be acceptable to the country unless it results in a very considerable reduction of the Indian population in this country... The method which this Bill will propose will be the application of pressure to supplement... the inducement which is held out to Indians to leave the country."

MAY BE MISUNDERSTOOD BY ALL CONCERNED."

Although it has been published in the press, it can bear repetition here. I have also received a copy of the *Gazette* containing the full text of the Bill. It is a long Bill divided into three chapters, containing 27 sections and a schedule. It occupies 9 foolscap sides closely printed. I do not print the Bill, as without the aid of previous enactments with which it deals and which it modifies or repeals, it is not capable of being understood by the reader. Suffice it to observe here that the cablegram faithfully summarises the restrictions sought to be imposed by the Bill. It reduces the position of the resident Indian population to such an extent that, without the Union Government having to pay any compensation whatsoever, there will be no Indian settlers in South Africa within a few years' time. If the provisions of the Bill are applied with enough stringency, there will be powers given to the administration to freeze out every Indian, no matter what the step may be, in the land of his adoption and even of his birth, for the Bill makes no distinction between Indians born in South Africa and domiciled. The safeguards provided by the Bill are all illusory and can be rendered perfectly nugatory. That the Bill has not yet become law is a matter of little comfort. The Bill is an indication of the determination of the Union Government to starve the Indians out of South Africa. Mr. Malan has made no secret of it. It is a matter of time when every Indian will have left South Africa. Let the reader remember, or know, that the Chinese labourers who were imported for developing the gold mines of Johannesburg, were summarily repatriated when the Government had made up its mind. The Chinese had no voice. So it will be with the Indians unless the Government of India choose to do its duty. Mr. Bhayat has made a pathetic appeal to us here. So far as public opinion is concerned, it is unanimously for the Indian settlers. Unfortunately for them, it is at present ineffective. Such as it is, it will certainly be mobilised for the purpose of preventing the impending spoliation of our countrymen in South Africa in total disregard of the agreement of 1914, which was designed to guarantee the then existing rights of the Indian residents in South Africa.

*Young India*, September 3, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 28, pages 149-150

## 74. ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

The All India Congress Committee has passed a resolution to the effect that meetings should be held at all places on the 11th of October to extend our moral support to the Indians in South Africa in the impending calamity that threatens them. People belonging to all parties should be invited to these meetings. As there is no difference of opinion on this matter, we can hope that persons belonging to all parties will attend. Even an expression of our feelings will strengthen the spirit of the Indians of South Africa. These meetings will help the Indian Government if it wishes to do something, and, in any case, we shall have done our best. I, therefore, hope that meetings will be held at all places and that people will attend in large numbers. No one with any political consciousness can be altogether ignorant of the problem in South Africa.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Prayers, meetings, demonstrations and *hartals* were held all over India on October 11.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, October 4, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 28, page 291

## 75. INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA - I

The departure of C.F. Andrews for South Africa, the impending departure of the Government of India deputation and impending arrival of a deputation to India headed by Dr. Abdurahman<sup>189</sup> make the South African question the question of the hour. For the Indian settlers it is a question of life and death. The Union Government seem to be determined to put an end to Indian existence in South Africa not by straightforward means of forcible expulsion but by the dishonest process of squeezing. The proposed legislation particularly deprives them of all the honourable avenues of earning and by so doing it seeks to deprive them of every shred of self-respect. The Union Government will cease to be troubled about the Indian question when they have ceased to be troubled by the presence in their midst of self-respecting and independent Indians and have to deal only with labourers, waiters, cooks and the like. They want a few servants, they do not want equals, fellow farmers or fellow traders.

The answer therefore returned by the Union Government to the Indian deputation that waited on them is not surprising.<sup>190</sup> They have avowed their determination to

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1925, with the participation of various political parties.

The *Indian Review* (October 1925) has the following message by Gandhiji to the protest meetings:

"Happily the question of British Indians in South Africa is not a party question. India must be able to avert the calamity that threatens to overtake our countrymen in that sub-continent. The proposed legislation is a manifest breach of the settlement of 1914. My experience of the Indian question in South Africa is one of a series of breaches of promises and declarations, which have been proved from official records. The proposed legislation is, in effect, the confiscation of almost every right that British Indians possess. Their sole crime consists in being good traders and not being Europeans. There can be no compromise in this matter - no repatriation, even when euphemistically described, as voluntary. Let me, however, say that retaliation will be no remedy, because there can be no effective retaliation. The only remedy is diplomatic pressure. Lord Hardinge applied it successfully. Will the present Government repeat that performance?"

<sup>189</sup> Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman (Abdul Rahman), (1870-1940), a well-known doctor in Cape Town. He was President of the African Political Organisation, a member of the Cape Legislative Council and a member of the Cape Town municipality for many years. He played a prominent role in politics, as a leader of the Coloured people, and advocated the unity of all the oppressed black people.

He was a grandson of a freed slave and was partly of Indian ancestry.

Gandhiji had known him in South Africa.

<sup>190</sup> A deputation of the South African Indian Congress, led by Advocate James W. Godfrey, met the Minister of the Interior, Dr. D.F. Malan, on November 16, 1925.

proceed with the proposed legislation. They will only consider "constructive suggestions" in details. They have not made up their minds about a round table conference.

I expect a great deal from Mr. Andrews's presence in South Africa if the settlers show firmness and cohesion among themselves. The Government of India deputation can do much if they have instructions not to yield on fundamentals.<sup>191</sup> No repatriation and no curtailment, at the very least, of rights existing at the time of the Settlement of 1914. The proposed legislation is a deprivation of these rights.

Anyone who knows anything of the condition of South Africa knows that there is no real active opposition on the part of the mass of the European population to the presence of the Indian settlers. If there was, the overwhelmingly large European population would without legislative aid make it impossible for the Indian settler to remain in South Africa. Nor is the original population of South Africa hostile to the settlers. It is because the general European and Native population is not only not ill-disposed towards the Indian settler but willingly and freely deals with him that he can at all live there. The proposed legislation is an attempt to interfere with the free mercantile intercourse between Europeans and Natives on the one hand and Indians on the other. If therefore the Government of India take up a firm attitude the Union Government's case must fall to pieces. The legitimate fear of being swamped by India's millions having been removed in 1914 the Union Government were in honour bound to grant and guarantee to the resident Indian population full rights of inter- migration,<sup>192</sup> trade and ownership of land...

*Young India*, November 26, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 276-278

## **76. INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA - II**

The problem of Indians in South Africa is attracting increasing public attention, for, while Mr. Andrews will be soon leaving for South Africa, the emissaries of the Government would have been able to leave for that country before this appears in print and, from the other side, the representatives of the Indians there will shortly be here. Public attention, therefore, is bound to be drawn to this problem.

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<sup>191</sup> A Government of India delegation, led by Sir G. F. Paddison, Labour Commissioner of Madras, visited South Africa in December 1925 to investigate the economic position and general condition of the Indians in South Africa. Syed Raza Ali and Sir Devprasad Sarvadhikari were the other members of the delegation and G.S. Bajpai was Secretary. The delegation appeared before the Select Committee of the South African Parliament considering the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill, and requested deferring action on the measure until it was considered by a conference of the representatives of the Governments of South Africa and India.

<sup>192</sup> Free movement between provinces of South Africa. Indians were not allowed to cross provincial boundaries without permit and were not allowed to live in the Orange Free State.

A sword is hanging over the heads of the Indian settlers in South Africa. The Government there does not have the courage to forcibly expel the Indians in a direct and straightforward manner, but is planning indirectly to make them leave South Africa by harassing them. If any of the Indians remain behind, there would be a handful employed in various capacities, whose presence the whites desire, such as, for instance, the farm labourers, cooks and bearers. The rest, independent Indians, businessmen and others, who have a sense of self-respect and cherish it, would not continue to live there even for an hour under the conditions which Government wishes to create, for under the new Bill it seeks to deprive these Indians of all their present rights in regard to ownership of land, trade and interprovincial movement. Indians would have nothing to fear if a judicial settlement of the problem were sought. There will be no need, then, for any emissary from here to proceed to South Africa or any representative from there to come here. Any unbiased judge would rule in favour of the Indians, with costs.

However, they wish to follow the law of the sword, of brute force. They do not wish to respect the principle of equal rights for all, their principle is that might is right. The British Government will tolerate even injustice perpetrated by the Government of South Africa; at the most it will plead with the Union Government for a little mitigation of it, and, if the request is not heeded, it will remain quiet. If South Africa is in the British Empire, it is through the grace of the whites. While in the case of India even experienced Englishmen believe that she is held in the Empire by the sword of the latter, and that is on the whole true. If the whites of South Africa chose they could leave the British Empire right now. The slaves in India, however much they might like to, cannot leave the Empire without the consent of the British Government. This being the true position, the Indians, in South Africa, too, can remain there only through the goodwill of the government there. India, who is herself a prisoner, can give only as much help to the Indian prisoners in South Africa as one prisoner can give to another. Under such unhappy conditions, every Indian must depend on his own determined effort to win his own freedom. Only if the Indians in South Africa can put forward such an effort, can they act, though slaves, as if they were free, can they hope to be delivered. How long can one live on the goodwill of others? Goodwill cannot be assured through documents. Once it vanishes, even documents which may have been signed are trampled under foot. Nevertheless, India must do all she can. It is our duty to welcome the representatives from South Africa who are due to arrive and help them to the best of our ability. To discharge this duty is the least we can do.

The guests who will be arriving include Dr. Abdurahman, who is a well-known Malay doctor from Cape Town. He has Indian blood too. The second member is James Godfrey,<sup>193</sup> a barrister and son of an Indian Christian school teacher. The third member is Sorabjee, the brave son of the late Parsee Rustomjee. He is a tried soldier and has been to prison. Those who have read *Satyagraha in South Africa* will be familiar with his name.<sup>194</sup> I pray that their visit and their efforts may meet with success.

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<sup>193</sup> Advocate James W. Godfrey, Vice-President of the South African Indian Congress. He had appeared for Gandhiji in the trial in South Africa in November 1913.

<sup>194</sup> Sorabjee Rustomjee was a leader of the Natal Indian Congress.

(From Gujarati)

*Navajivan*, November 29, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 288-289

## 77. DEPUTATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN CONGRESS

Here is the full list of the deputation that is coming from South Africa and is due to reach here on the 12th instant.

1. Dr. Abdurahman
2. Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee
3. *Sjt.* B.S. Pather
4. *Seth* G. Mirza
5. *Seth* Amod Bhayat
6. Mr. James Godfrey
7. *Seth* Haji Esmail
8. *Sjt.* Bhawani Dayal<sup>195</sup>

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Gandhiji had written in *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter XLVI, in connection with the strike of Indian workers in 1913:

"One incident deserves to be placed on record. Many labourers came out in Verulam and would not return in spite of all the efforts of the authorities. General Lukin was present on the scene with his soldiers and was about to order his men to open fire. Brave Sorabjee, son of the late Parsee Rustomjee then hardly 18 years of age, had reached here from Durban. He seized the reins of the General's horse and exclaimed, 'You must not order firing. I undertake to induce my people peacefully to return to work.' General Lukin was charmed with the young man's courage and gave him time to try his method of love. Sorabjee reasoned with the labourers who came round and returned to their work. Thus a number of murders were prevented by the presence of mind, valour and loving kindness of one young man."

<sup>195</sup> The names of third and fourth delegates are not accurate: they should be "V.S.C. Pather" and "A.A. Mirza."

V. S. C. Pather was treasurer of the South African Indian Congress.

A. A. Mirza was secretary of the Transvaal British Indian Association.

Amod Bhayat (or Bayat) (1859-1931), a businessman in Pietermaritzburg, was a founding member of the Natal Indian Congress.

Pandit Bhawani Dayal was Vice-President of the Natal Indian Congress. He had served imprisonment in the *Satyagraha* of 1913, as did his wife and child. He edited the Hindi section of *Indian Opinion* for some time in 1914. Writer, editor and public worker, he became a *Sannyasi* in 1927 and changed his name to Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi. He

This is a representative deputation of persons well known in South Africa. They can speak for the different groups and interests among our countrymen in South Africa. Dr. Abdurahman, the head of the deputation, is South African born, as for that matter are some others. The worthy doctor is popularly known as a Malay doctor. But he has Indian blood in him. The Malays are an integral part of the South African community. They are without exception *Mussalmans*. Malay women freely marry Indian *Mussalmans*. The unions are happy and the children born of such mixtures are some of them highly educated. Dr. Abdurahman belongs to that distinguished category. He received his medical training in Scotland and is a successful practitioner in Cape Town. He was a member of the old Cape Legislative Council and also a prominent Corporator. But even he has not been unexposed to the colour prejudice.

The deputation is assured of a warm welcome and a patient hearing. The question of Indians overseas is happily not a party question. It is a question on which Anglo-Indian opinion too has ranged itself on the side of Indians. The cause itself is supremely just. The question is, therefore, merely of India's ability to vindicate justice. If the Government of India remains firm and is backed by the Imperial Government, the Union Government cannot but yield to the decisive pressure from the Centre. But there is the fear of South Africa "cutting the painter." Imperialists alone know the value of keeping unwilling partners tied up in a knot which may snap under the slightest strain. This excessive anxiety to hold together forces that are mutually disruptive has degraded imperial politics to the formula of exploitation of African and Asiatic races, to the exclusion, if possible, of other European Powers from the spoils of exploitation. Great Britain's policy in the matter of the treatment of Indian settlers in the Dominions is an acid test of her intentions. Will she dare to do the right in spite of the pressure from the Union Government? The South African deputation is coming for an answer to that question.

*Young India*, December 10, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 304-305

## 78. THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUZZLE

The more one reads the papers brought with them by the Indian deputation from South Africa, the more insoluble the puzzle appears to be. Dr. Malan thinks that his proposed Bill<sup>196</sup> does not constitute any violation of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914. Mr. James Godfrey who led the deputation that waited on him,<sup>197</sup> and who is now in India as one of the members of the deputation successfully combated the view. Now that Agreement finally closed all the questions that were the subject matter of *satyagraha*

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went to prison in the Civil Disobedience Movement in India in 1931.

<sup>196</sup> Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill, 1925

<sup>197</sup> Advocate James Godfrey led the deputation of the South African Indian Congress to the Minister of the Interior, Dr. D. F. Malan, on November 16, 1925.



or passive resistance as it was known at the time. The struggle was intended to close once for all the door against legislation based upon racial or colour distinctions. That central fact was brought out not once but again and again during the six years that the struggle lasted. A time was reached when both the late General Botha and General Smuts were ready to concede almost every material point, provided what they called the sentimental objection against race distinction was waived by the Indian community. From that time, i.e. from 1908 the struggle chiefly centred round that one "sentimental" objection and General Botha had declared that on that point no South African Government could yield an inch; and he said that in further prosecuting the struggle the Indian community would be "kicking against pricks." Surely then it was the essence of the Agreement that no race-distinction should be made in any legislation affecting the Indian community. Dr. Malan's Bill on the other hand breathes through every line of it the racial spirit.

In my humble opinion, therefore, the Bill is a clear breach of that Agreement in this respect. Moreover, the struggle was one against the imposition of further disabilities upon Indians. The Settlement was to be an augury of a better future for the Indian community. It is so stated in the correspondence. What could be the meaning of the Settlement? Where was any security for the Indian residents against further encroachments upon their status, if new restrictions could be imposed at the sweet will of the government of the day? Let there be no mistake that the Settlement was wrung from an unwilling government after eight years' hard and prolonged struggle involving sufferings of thousands of Indians and death of a good few. What could be the value of a settlement which closes matters in dispute only to reopen them the very next day? Were the existing laws to be administered with punctilious regard for existing rights, only to attack the latter with new laws? Yet such is the meaning of Dr. Malan's contention and interpretation of the Agreement. There is, however, some consolation even in the Minister's tragic contention in that he does not repudiate the Settlement, but says this Bill is not a breach of it. One would therefore suppose that if it could be proved that the Bill was in breach of the Agreement it would have to go.

What then is to be done when parties to an agreement differ as to its interpretation? Everybody knows the usual remedy, but let me quote two South African precedents. There were about the year of 1893 certain matters in dispute between the Government of the South African (Transvaal) Republic and the British Government regarding the status of British Indian settlers in the Transvaal. Among these was the question of the interpretation of Law 3 of 1895. All these matters were referred to arbitration by mutual consent, and Chief Justice Melins de Villiers of the then Orange Free State was appointed sole arbitrator. The second precedent is a question of interpretation of the Treaty of Vereeniging between the Transvaal Government represented by General Botha and the British Government. I think it was the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman who laid down that the interpretation of the weaker party, i.e., the Transvaal Government, put upon the Treaty should be accepted, and without arbitration and without further ado General Botha's interpretation was accepted as against Lord Kitchener's by the British Government. Will Dr. Malan follow either precedent, or will he say after the style of the giant in the story of the giant and the dwarf that his contention must be always right?

Anyway the Indian deputation has a strong case for arbitration, seeing that Dr. Malan accepts the Settlement of 1914.

In their able statements for the Viceroy they have made out an overwhelming case. Perhaps naturally they have not discussed the disabilities ennumerated there in terms of the Settlement of 1914, having been summarily told by Dr. Malan that his proposed legislation is not in breach of the Agreement. But it is a case not to be easily abandoned. Theirs is undoubtedly a difficult task. Here is a stubborn Government determined upon going on with its highly racial legislation. All European parties seem to be in agreement on this one question. General Smuts, Mr. Andrews tells us, has thrown his weight on the Government side. It does not surprise me because he has always chosen to sail with the wind. No statesman has perhaps shown so much contempt for past promises and declarations as General Smuts - a trait in him which has earned for him the title of "Slim Janny." But right is clearly on the Indian side and if they have also a fixed determination not to yield an inch of ground on matters of principle, they must win.

Dr. Malan wanted James Godfrey to accept the principle of the measure, and to discuss matters of detail, to make, what he was pleased to call, constructive proposals. I am glad to note that he resolutely declined to fall into the trap. The deputation will have all the aid that India, weak as she is, can give them. They will have the support of all the parties. Let them take heart and fight on.

*Young India*, December 24, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 345-347

#### 79. SPEECH AT THE SUBJECTS COMMITTEE MEETING AT THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, KANPUR, DECEMBER 25, 1925

Gandhiji moved:

"The Congress extends its cordial welcome to the South African Indian Congress deputation and assures the Indian settlers of South Africa of its full support in their struggle against the consolidated forces which threaten their very existence in that sub-continent.

"This Congress is emphatically of the opinion that the proposed legislation known as the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill is a breach of the Smuts- Gandhi Agreement of 1914 in that it is racial in character and is calculated not only to make the position of settlers much worse than it was in 1914, but is designed to make the residence in that country of any self-respecting Indian impossible. In the opinion of the Congress, if the interpretation of the said Agreement, as put upon it on behalf of the settlers, is not accepted by the Union Government, it should be decided by reference to arbitration as was done in 1893 in connection with matters affecting the Indian

settlers of the Transvaal and in matters arising from the administration of Law 3 of 1885.

"The Congress heartily endorses the suggestion that a round table conference containing among others proper Indian representatives should be called to settle the question and trusts that the Dominion Government will accept that reasonable suggestion. In the event of the proposed round table conference and the proposal regarding arbitration failing, the Congress is of the opinion that the Imperial Government should withhold Royal assent to the Bill, should it pass through the Union Parliament."

Gandhiji acknowledged that Pandit Benarsidas was one of the few workers in the cause of Indians overseas, but said he had been led away by overzeal.<sup>198</sup> The Congress had done all it possibly could in the past. They were not capable of doing much. His resolution had been drafted after a three hour discussion with the South African deputation. It told the world the utmost limit to which the Congress could go. As regards financial help, the Imperial Citizenship Association had ample public funds for the purpose. He himself had supplied funds to Pandit Benarsidas.

As regards the objection of another speaker who had urged the deletion of the sentence asking the British Government to withhold assent, Gandhiji asked, if they deleted it, what consolation would it be to South African Indians?... He wished he could do without it, but they could not. He asked the members of the Committee to believe that he knew every iota of the feeling in South Africa; if he had felt that his visit to South Africa would be of help he would have gone there.

*The resolution was passed by acclamation.*

*The Leader*, December 28, 1925; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 354-355.

#### 80. SPEECH AT THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, KANPUR, DECEMBER 26, 1925

In his Hindi speech on the resolution about the situation in South Africa, Gandhiji said that the Areas Reservation Bill, if passed into law, would compel every

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<sup>198</sup> Pandit Benarsidas Chaturvedi, one of the members, held that the Congress had shown culpable negligence regarding the plight of Indians overseas. He wanted the various leaders to organise a big agitation for support and help; otherwise the promise of "full support" made in the resolution was meaningless. He also deplored the mentality created among the masses that the cause of Indians abroad could not be helped till they got *swaraj*.

Mr. Chaturvedi, a writer and public worker, espoused the cause of Indians overseas, and received a small grant from the Indian National Congress for his work.

Indian with any sense of self-respect to leave South Africa. It was worse than repatriation inasmuch as it was legalised expulsion without any compensation to be given to those expelled. It symbolised the determination of the white race to root out the Asiatics from South Africa. Not even the tallest amongst the Indians - doctors, barristers like Mr. James Godfrey, one of the members of the deputation who was born and bred up there and who is visiting India for the first time - were to be suffered to stay there. The resolution suggested three solutions of the question - arbitration, round table conference and, failing both, the Government of India asking the Imperial Government to exercise the right of veto. It asked Indians to stand by their countrymen in the hour of their trial and to render them full help. If they decided on *satyagraha*, the Indians should render them all material help in their power. Fain would he start a *satyagraha* campaign in India on this tremendous issue, but the atmosphere was against him. If the Hindus and *Mussalmans* could convince him that they were united for a peaceful campaign of *satyagraha*, if they could convince him that they had forgotten their differences in the dark hour of the Hindus and *Mussalmans* in South Africa, he would readily gird up his loins and get ready for the fight. Until then, the fight had to be carried on by the Indians over there, and India had to rest content with rendering them all help in her power.

In order that Dr. Abdurahman may understand his feelings in the matter, and in order also that his word of warning may reach the ears of the South African statesmen, Gandhiji expressed himself at length in English thus:

*Shrimati* Sarojini Devi<sup>199</sup> and friends,

I do not know if you have received copies of the resolution that is in my hand; in that case, I want to spare you the trouble of listening to the resolution and save some portion of the nation's time. This is how the resolution reads:<sup>200</sup> ...

This is the resolution which I have not only the greatest pleasure in submitting to you for approval but I consider it a rare privilege that I am authorised by Sarojini Devi to place it before you. She has introduced me to you as a South African. She might have added, "by adoption." Though born in India, I was adopted by South Africa, and you will discover that when Dr. Rahman, the leader of the deputation - to which you will extend your cordial welcome - comes on this platform, he will tell you that Indians of South Africa claim that they have given me to you. I accept that claim. It is perfectly true that whatever service I have been able to render - it may be disservice - to India, comes from South Africa. If it is disservice it is not their fault, it is through my limitations.

I propose to place before you facts in support of the statement made here that the Bill, which is hanging like the sword of Damocles over the heads of our countrymen in South Africa, is designed not merely to heap greater wrongs upon their heads, but virtually to expel them from South Africa.

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<sup>199</sup> Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, President of the Congress

<sup>200</sup> For the text of the resolution, please see the previous item.

### ***Lord Reading's reply***

Such is admittedly the meaning of the Bill. It is admitted by the Europeans of South Africa and it is not denied by the Union Government itself. If such is the result, you can imagine how keenly the Indians in South Africa must feel. Imagine for one moment that an Expulsion Bill is to be passed in the next session of the Assembly, expelling one hundred thousand Indians from India. What should we do or how should we behave under such a crisis? It is under such circumstances that you have the deputation in your midst. It comes here for support from the people of India, from the Congress, from the Viceroy, the Government of India and through it the Imperial Government itself.

Lord Reading<sup>201</sup> has given them a long reply, and I wish I could have said also a satisfactory reply. The reply His excellency has given is as unsatisfactory as it is long and if that was all the comfort that Lord Reading proposed to give to the members of the deputation, he could have said that in a few words and spared them, and spared this land, the humiliating spectacle of a great Government confessing its inability to render proper redress to those who for no fault of their own and who, as many South African Europeans would admit, for their very virtues, are now in danger of being expelled from South Africa. To some of them South Africa is a land of their birth. It was no comfort to those friends of ours, it is no comfort to us, to be told that the Indian Government has always reserved to itself the right of making representations to the South African Government - the right of petitioning. That is to say, a mighty Government, a Government which is supposed to hold the destiny of 300 million people in the hollow of its hand - that Government confesses its powerlessness! And why? Because South Africa enjoys Dominion Status, because South Africa threatens to "cut the painter" if the Indian and Imperial Governments intervene in any of the steps that the Government of South Africa may take.

### ***"Domestic Policy"***

Lord Reading has told the deputation that the Indian Government or Imperial Government may not interfere with the domestic policy of a colony enjoying Dominion Status. What is the meaning of "domestic policy" when that policy is calculated to bring ruin upon the homes of thousands of Indian settlers domiciled there, and whom they deny the common rights of humanity? Well, what would be the case if instead of Indians they happened to be Europeans or Englishmen?

Let me quote a precedent. Do you know why the great Boer War took place? It took place in order to protect the Europeans in South Africa who were domiciled there, "*Uitlanders*" as they were described by the Transvaal Republican

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<sup>201</sup> Lord Reading (Rufus Daniel Isaacs) (1860-1935), Viceroy of India, 1921-26. He received the South African deputation on December 19, 1925.

Government. The late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain claimed for the British Government that even though the Transvaal was an independent Government he declined to admit that this was purely a domestic question. He claimed to protect the rights of the "*Uitlanders*" of the Transvaal, and that was why the great Boer War took place.

### *Conflict of civilisations*

Lord Lansdowne, in justification of the war, said that it made his blood boil when he thought of the disabilities of Indians in the Transvaal.<sup>202</sup> He held that one of the potent causes of the Boer War was the disabilities of Indians in South Africa, or more accurately Indians of the Transvaal. Where are those declarations today? Why does not the British Government go to war against the Union Government when the life, honour and livelihood of one hundred and fifty thousand Indians are at stake?

Nobody questions the description I have given to you of the effects of this legislation. Nobody questions the ever-growing grievances of the British Indians in South Africa. If you have seen a beautiful little pamphlet published by Bishop Fisher who went only a few months ago to South Africa, you will find that there he gives a summary of the wrongs that are being heaped upon the South African Indians.<sup>203</sup> The Bishop has come to the impartial conclusion that for these wrongs the Indians are not to blame. It is the jealousy and the insolence of the European trader that is responsible for these wrongs. He gives his testimony that Indians have deserved better at the hands of Europeans of South Africa. If justice counts, if Right rules this world, it would be impossible to bring this Bill and unnecessary for me to waste your precious time and for the deputation to waste their money.

But evidently Right does not count. Might is Right. The Europeans of South Africa have chosen to heap this wrong upon our countrymen, and for what purpose? "Conflict of the two civilisations." It is not my expression. It is that of General Smuts. He cannot put up with it. Europeans of South Africa consider that they will be overwhelmed by the East if they allow hordes to pour down into South Africa from India. But how could we corrupt their civilisation? Is it because

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<sup>202</sup> Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of State for War and former Viceroy of India, said in the House of Lords on behalf of the British Government:

"A considerable number of Queen's Indian subjects are to be found in the Transvaal and among the many misdeeds of the South African Republic I do not know that any fills me with more indignation than its treatment of these Indians."

<sup>203</sup> Bishop Fisher of Calcutta visited South Africa and several other African territories, and wrote an article in the *National Christian Council Review* of January 1926 on the position of Indians in South Africa. He argued against the proposed anti-Asiatic legislation.

The article was reprinted as a pamphlet.

we live as thrifty men and women? Because we are not ashamed to hawk vegetables and fruits and bring them to the very doors of the South African farmers? The South African farms are not two or three *bighas*,<sup>204</sup> but hundreds of acres belonging to one man who is the sole undisputed owner of them. You understand what great service the Indian hawkers are rendering these South African, European or Boer farmers. That is the conflict.

### *Peril of Islam*

Someone has said (I do not know where, but only recently) that Europeans in South Africa dread the advent of Islam - Islam that civilised Spain, Islam that took the torchlight to Morocco and preached to the world the Gospel of Brotherhood. The Europeans of South Africa dread the advent of Islam, for they are afraid of the fact that if the Native races embrace Islam they may claim equality with the white races. They may well dread it. If brotherhood is a sin, if it is equality of Coloured races that they dread, then that dread is well founded. For I have seen that any Zulu embracing Christianity does not *ipso facto* come on a level with all Christians, whilst immediately he embraces Islam, he drinks from the same cup and eats from the same dish as a *Mussalman*. That is what they dread. The thing is they want to become lords of the universe. They want to appropriate the land for themselves. The Kaiser, though dwnthrodden, fears an Asiatic federation and speaks even from his exile that it is a danger which Europeans should guard themselves against. That is the conflict of civilisations and that is why Lord Reading is powerless to intervene in their domestic policy.

Such are the tremendous consequences of the struggle which this resolution describes as unequal and it is in that unequal struggle that this Congress is called upon to take its due share. I want to make an appeal, if my voice can go as far as South Africa, to the statesmen that are ruling the destiny of South African Indians.

### *The bright side*

I have so far given you only the dark side of South African Europeans. Let me also say that I claim among them some of my most precious friends and I have enjoyed from individual South African Europeans the greatest kindness and the greatest hospitality. I claim the privilege of having been a close friend of that great poetess and philanthropist and that most self-effacing woman - Olive Schreiner. She was a friend of the Indians equally with the Natives of South Africa. She knew no distinctions between white and black races. She loved the Indian, the Zulu and the Bantu as her own children. She would prefer to accept the hospitality of a South African Native in his humble hut. What she gave away with her right hand her left hand never knew. Such precious men and women have also been born and bred in South Africa.

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<sup>204</sup> A *bigha* is equivalent to two-thirds of an acre.

### *A warning*

I can give you many more such names. I claim also to know General Smuts, though I may not claim to be his friend. He was party to the Agreement on behalf of his Government with me on behalf of the Indians. He it was who said that the British Indians in South Africa had deserved that settlement. It was he who said that that was a final settlement and that Indians should not threaten passive resistance and that the European settlers in South Africa should allow rest to the Indian community.

But hardly had I turned my back from South Africa than a series of wrongs began to be heaped upon them. Where is the plighted word of General Smuts? General Smuts will go one of these days the same way that every human being has to go, but his words and deeds shall remain after him. He is not a mere individual. He spoke the right thing in his representative capacity. He claims to be a Christian and every one of the members of the South African Government makes the same claim. Before they open their Parliament they read the common prayer from the Bible and a South African divine opens the proceedings with a prayer that goes up to God, not the God of white men, not the God of the Negro, not of the *Mussalman*, not of the Hindu, but the God of all, the God of the Universe.

I say this from my place of position, and knowing my responsibility to its fullest extent, that they will deny their Bible, they will deny their God, if they hesitate for one moment, if they fail to render the elementary justice that is due to the Indians of South Africa.<sup>205</sup>

*Young India*, January 7, 1926, and *The Report of the Indian National Congress, Fortieth Session, Cawnpore, 1925; Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 357-362

## **81. NOTES ON SOUTH AFRICA**

### *Andrews' activities*

Mr. C.F. Andrews has been incessantly active ever since his arrival in South Africa. Besides sending cables to the press, he sent regular cablegrams at Kanpur during the Congress Week. In one of them he says:

"GENERAL SMUTS DECLARED AT THE IMPERIAL CABINET IN 1917 FOLLOWING CONCERNING DOMICILED INDIANS: IF ANY QUESTION PROVES DIFFICULT OF TREATMENT, WE CAN DISCUSS IT IN A FRIENDLY WAY, AT THIS COUNCIL CHAMBER OF EMPIRE AND TRY

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<sup>205</sup> The resolution was seconded by Maulana Mohamad Ali and was carried unanimously.



TO FIND IN CONSULTATION A SOLUTION AND I AM SURE WE SHALL EVER FIND IT."

The cable then proceeds,

"SEEING GENERAL SMUTS MADE THIS OFFER, MIGHT IT JUSTIFY DEMANDING SUSPENSION BILL PENDING IMPERIAL CONSULTATION?"

Many other things will justify suspension and many other remedies too would be justified to kill the Bill.<sup>206</sup> But who will do it? Is the Imperial Government willing and anxious to try all the remedies possible to secure redress of the grave injustice which is impending? Will the Government of India force the hands of the Imperial Government? Can we force the hands of the Government of India?

Of the Congress resolution as cabled by Reuter, Mr. Andrews says:

"EVERYONE DELIGHTED CONGRESS ATTITUDE."

In yet another he says Bishop Palmer let him preach before his congregation on the Indian question and that the impression created was satisfactory.<sup>207</sup> The same cable also intimates that the Auxiliary European Committee that was formed at the time of the passive resistance movement<sup>208</sup> is being resuscitated. Thus everything that a single human being can do to prevent the perpetration of the wrong is being done by Mr. Andrews in far-off South Africa.

### ***Bishop Fisher's pamphlet***

It will be remembered that Bishop Fisher of the American Mission recently visited South Africa. He contributed his impressions to the *National Christian Council Review*. The Associated Press, Calcutta, has published it in pamphlet form at two annas. The statement is a marvellous condensation of the history of the Indian question in South Africa. In his preface the Bishop says:

"Its accuracy is vouched for, whilst the unjust humiliations to which Indians are subjected are understated rather than exaggerated."

I commend this pamphlet to everyone interested in this difficult problem.

*Young India*, January 7, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 385-386

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<sup>206</sup> Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill, then before the South African Parliament

<sup>207</sup> The Very Reverend W. A. Palmer, Anglican Dean of Johannesburg, sympathised with the Indian cause.

<sup>208</sup> The Committee of European Sympathisers

## **82. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS ON SMUTS-GANDHI AGREEMENT, JANUARY 21, 1926<sup>209</sup>**

Mr. Andrews sent me a cable inviting me to make a statement on the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement as it has given rise to a controversy in South Africa. I observe too that two South African divines have supported my contention.

Let it be remembered that the Agreement is a matter of record. It closed a struggle that had lasted for close on eight years and covered many intermediate and interlocutory arrangements and agreements. Let it be also noted that the Government of India was not unconcerned with the Agreement. It supplemented the Indian Relief measure<sup>210</sup> that was almost simultaneously passed. As is common in all such arrangements, the correspondence between the parties is previously seen and approved by them. So was this correspondence mutually seen and accepted. My letter to General Smuts refers to disabilities not covered by the Relief Act and expresses the hope that even those disabilities which were not then dealt with would be removed in the course of time. It is not to be supposed that after eight years of solid suffering, the Indian settlers were satisfied with an arrangement that might lead, not to a further amelioration of their status, but to their further degradation, ultimately resulting in extinction.

But I do not wish to labour the point. There is the Indian offer, the Congress offer to go to arbitration on the point. Let the Government of India ascertain for themselves the meaning of the Agreement and invite the Union Government to accept the principle of arbitration.

It is not for the first time that the South African Ministers have repudiated the arrangements and promises made by themselves. They repudiated the promise made to Mr. Gokhale about the £3 tax which, as a point of honour was added to the objects of the passive resistance struggle and which ultimately the Union Government had to repeal. So it is the old trick now repeated. It is a matter of honour for India to insist upon the fulfilment of the Agreement of 1914.

*The Hindu*, January 22, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 424-425

## **83. THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUESTION**

I am sorry to say that Lord Reading's pronouncement on the acute position that has arisen in South Africa does not inspire me with hope. He may by some diplomatic stroke secure postponement of consideration of the Bill during the present session of the Union

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<sup>209</sup> Released by the Associated Press of India from Bombay

<sup>210</sup> Indians Relief Act, 1914

Parliament. But the grim fact that stares us in the face is that, as the recent cablegram shows, action is being taken already in South Africa as if the Bill had become the law of the land, and renewals of licences are being refused. The principle of the measure is itself wrong. What appears to me Lord Reading is after is that he will secure some trifling alteration in the details but nothing in the substance of the Bill, the substance being the curtailment of the rights of the resident Indian population as they existed at the Settlement of 1914.

The fulcrum of that Settlement of that long struggle was no more disabilities, but the steady improvement in the position of the resident population, after the fear of unrestricted immigration of Indians had been removed for all time. That fear was removed, not merely in 1914 but when Natal passed its Immigration Law and the Cape followed suit. There never was a large Indian population in the Transvaal. The Indian population in the Orange Free State was never anything to speak of. But under a popular government once you excite feelings you are bound to satisfy them in some shape or other. All the South African statesmen had excited the feelings of the people, which to be accurate they themselves shared without having studied the question. The Government having however allayed the fear by passing a very strict immigration restriction measure, the resident Indian population had every right to hope that their position would steadily improve in process of time. But evidently such was not to be the case and the history since 1914 is a history of a series of attacks upon the Indian position.

If Lord Reading means to do his duty he has not merely to secure a postponement of the consideration of the measure but to insist upon at least a reversion to the position of 1914, bad as even that position would be. Let it not be said when the result of his negotiations is known that Lord Reading had secured nothing which might be considered substantial relief from the point of view of the settlers themselves.

*Young India*, January 28, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, page 431

## **84. INDEFATIGABLE MR. ANDREWS**

Whatever the fate of the anti-Indian measure of the Union Government, there is no doubt that Mr. Andrews's contribution to the solution of the problem will rank as the highest. His tireless energy, ceaseless watchfulness and gentle persuasive powers have brought us within hope of success. He himself though despondent in the beginning stages now holds out hope that the Bill is likely to be shelved at least for this session. He has been enlisting the sympathy of the clergy and drawing from them emphatic pronouncement against the measure.<sup>211</sup> He has been quietly interviewing editors and public men. Thus he has shaken even South African European opinion that had ranged itself in favour of the measure. His deep study of the question has enabled him to show to the satisfaction of several leaders

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<sup>211</sup> South African Indians observed February 23, 1926, as a day of humiliation and prayer. At several places, bishops conducted the prayers and expressed sympathy with the cause of the Indians. P.S. Joshi, *The Tyranny of Colour*, 1942, page 119.

of public opinion in South Africa that the measure is a manifest breach of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement. He has also brought together scattered Indian forces to focus themselves upon attacking the Bill. Mr. Andrews has thus made a very substantial addition to his many services to India and humanity. No single living Englishman has done so much as Mr. Andrews to sweeten the relations between Englishmen and Indians. His one hope is to establish an indissoluble bond between the two peoples, a bond based upon mutual respect and absolute equality. May his dream be realised.

*Young India*, February 4, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 29, pages 439-440.

## 85. NOTES ON SOUTH AFRICA

### *Breach of faith*

The threatened Asiatic Bill is a breach of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement regarding the whole of South Africa, and it is a breach of faith also as regards Natal as brought out by Mr. Andrews in one of his letters to the press in South Africa and reproduced in *Indian Opinion* just to hand. The following is the apposite extract:

"The Natal Government brought out under contract, from the year 1860 onwards, the vast majority of Indians who landed in South Africa. It was agreed between the two Governments, before they left India, that if they fulfilled their five years' labour contract on the sugar plantations they should be given certain rights in Natal, including those of domicile together with open purchase of land and immovable property. The Natal Government, in its eagerness to get this indentured Indian labour, also agreed that Indian traders should be allowed to accompany the labourers as free Indians.

"These Indian labourers purchased those rights at a great cost. For the five years' indenture was accompanied by such grave moral evils, that it has now been entirely abandoned as a vicious labour system. The Natal Government, up to quite recent times, has endeavoured to observe faithfully its side of the contract. Section 148 of the South Africa Act makes it clear that agreements made by the Natal Colonial Government devolve upon the Union. (*Year Book*, p.74)"

### *Economic Fallacy*

The same letter thus disposes of the economic argument often brought against the Indian settler:

"The Indian question itself is by no means so serious from an economic standpoint as most people in South Africa have been led to think. Indeed, in reality the solution has

been already obtained, because the Indian competition is a diminishing and not an increasing factor. Yet even in a city like Durban, where Indians are most numerous of all, the net increase in the value of properties held by Indians between 1921 and 1925 was only in round figures a quarter of a million while that of Europeans was four millions. Yet the Indian and European populations in Durban and suburbs are in the proportions of four to five. I have already stated, and would state again, that the census of 1921 showed a European increase of 39.8 percent, while the Indian increase was only 6.1 percent. Every year Indians in large numbers are leaving the country never to return. No more are allowed to come in. The Indian men in the Union are greater in number than the women. Therefore the birth-rate is not likely to be a high one. The whole number of Indians in the Union was only 161,000 in 1921. If there happen to be cases where Indian shops are increasing in number, I have seen with my own eyes other places where the decrease is equally marked. What cause is there, then, for any economic fear? The problem is easily able to solve itself, if only time is allowed; and in the increasing prosperity (which is certain to come with the improvement of trade) the shortage of labour will everywhere soon be felt and the majority of Indians, who still do useful and steady industrial and agricultural work, will all be needed. It seems indeed almost an absurd thing, at such a time, to be driving such a valuable labour asset out of the country."

Mr. Andrews could have added that in the other parts of South Africa the Indian position is infinitely worse than in Durban. In the major part of the Union he is landless and is dependent purely on the goodwill of his European landlord. His only crime is that besides being a labourer he dares to engage in trade and eke out an honest living. Dispassionately examined, the cry against the Asiatic has no foundation save in an insensate colour prejudice and petty trade jealousy.

*Young India*, February 11, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 1-2

## **86. ABUSE OF POWER**

Protests in India notwithstanding, the Union Parliament has passed the anti-colour legislation.<sup>212</sup> This does not so materially affect Indian settlers as the natives of the soil. They and Asiatics are virtually debarred by this legislation from doing any work on the mines which Europeans can or will do. It is an unnecessary affront put upon Indians. For there are very few working on the mines. So far as the Natives are concerned the legislation not only reduces their legal status but it also affects the material interest of thousands working on the mines. No wonder General Smuts uttered a grave note of warning against the legislation and likened it to a fire-brand thrown in a haystack. The Bill is a challenge to the Natives. Illiterate though they may be, they are as proud and sensitive as any people on earth. In their helplessness they may be unable to answer the challenge but there is no doubt that the Europeans of South Africa if they persist in their arrogant policy will have sown the seeds of their own destruction. It is stated that the

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<sup>212</sup> The Mines and Works Amendment Act, 1926

Senate will reject the measure when it comes before it. It ought to. But the same cable tells us that the existing Government have a majority in the combined Houses which they propose to use in order to carry out their purpose. If this temper continues, the anti-Asiatic measure which is agitating India at the present moment is not likely to be postponed as Mr. Andrews hopes it will. These measures really hang together and represent the settled policy of the present Union Government on the question of colour. Only the strongest attitude on the part of the Government of India can bring about a reconsideration of that policy.

*Young India*, February 11, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, page 6

#### 87. INTERVIEW WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPUTATION, FEBRUARY 14, 1926

Messrs Godfrey, Pather, Mirza and Bhayat of the South African Indian deputation, arrived in Ahmedabad on February 13, 1926, and saw Gandhiji the next morning at his *Satyagraha Ashram*. They discussed with him, for full three hours, the South African situation.

Gandhiji expressed his firm opinion that salvation was only possible if Indians in South Africa had faith in themselves, and a powerful spirit of self-sacrifice. He felt sure that even South Africa would have to submit to world opinion. Gandhiji expressed his willingness to go to South Africa if a necessity arose, but reserved to himself the right to be the judge of that necessity.

*The Hindu*, February 15, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, page 17

### 88. THE TOPIC OF THE HOUR

By the time this is before the public the majority of the South African delegation will be on the waters on their way back to South Africa. Before sailing, Messrs Amod Bhayat, James Godfrey, Pather and Mirza paid me a visit and discussed the situation as it is developing from day to day. They expressed themselves satisfied with the splendid welcome extended to them wherever they went and the support received from all parties in India not excluding European Associations. But they were not, I am glad to say, deceived into any false sense of security by the support. They realised that India was willing but not equally able to help.

The Colour Bar Bill is making steady progress. On principle, it is just as bad as the Asiatic measure and therefore just as open to objection as the latter. Its progress evidences the Union Government's intention and determination about the Asiatic Bill. It is becoming daily clearer that the Union Government intend if possible to stiffen the measure rather than relax it. The proposed amendment of Section 10 gives no relief worth

the name and the inclusion of the Cape has roused against the Bill even a section of the South African press so much that one paper goes so far as to insinuate that it is probably out of spite against Dr. Abdurahman's doings in India that the South African Government seek to include the Cape in the scope of the Bill. Let us hope that whatever else that Government may be guilty of, it is not guilty of the littleness ascribed to it. Be that as it may, there is no doubt about the mind of that Government.

It is this root-and-branch policy that the Indian settlers have to face and combat. They can do so successfully, if they have a strong backing from the Imperial and the Indian Governments. This they will not have. The Indian Government is a shadow of the Imperial. The latter is neither feared nor respected by the present Union Government. On the contrary it fears the Union Government lest South Africa may secede from the Imperial partnership. It is the case of the tail wagging the dog. The Imperial Government would never assert itself against South Africa unless there was fear of losing India. The apparent collapse of non-co-operation has given the Imperial Government a new hope about India's helplessness. At the crucial moment therefore the weight of authority will be thrown on the side of South Africa unless the unexpected happens this side of the Indian Ocean. The ultimate passing of the Bill, even though it may be postponed for the present session, is thus assured.

What are then our countrymen in South Africa to do? There is nothing in the world like self-help. The world helps those who help themselves. Self-help in this case, as perhaps in every other, means self-suffering, self-suffering means *satyagraha*. When their honour is at stake, when their rights are being taken away, when their livelihood is threatened, they have the right and it becomes their duty to offer *satyagraha*. They offered it during 1907 and 1914 and won the support even of the Government of India, indeed the recognition of the Europeans and the Government of South Africa. They can do likewise again if they have the will and the courage to suffer for the common good.

That time is not yet. They must, as they are doing, exhaust every diplomatic remedy. They must await the result of the negotiations the Government of India are carrying on with the Union Government. And when they have explored and tried every other available channel and failed to find a way out, the case for *satyagraha* is complete. Then it would be cowardice to flinch. And victory is a certainty. No power on earth can make a person do a thing against his will. *Satyagraha* is a direct result of the recognition of this great Law and is independent of numbers participating in it.

Terms of *satyagraha* are imperative, admitting of no exception. There should be no violence in any shape or form. There must be an irreducible minimum - a minimum that would command itself to any reasonable and impartial judge. We may be justly entitled to many things but *satyagraha* is offered for things without which self-respect, or which is the same thing, honourable existence, is impossible.

They must count the cost. *Satyagraha* cannot be offered in bravado or as a mere trial. It is a measure of the depth of one's feeling. It is therefore offered because it becomes irresistible. No price is too dear to pay for it, i.e. truth. Success comes when it is least

expected. It is undertaken not from a belief in human aid but it is based upon an unquenchable faith in God and His justice. And God is both gentle and hard. He tries us through and through to the last suffering point but he is so gentle as never to test us to the breaking point.

*Young India*, February 18, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 24-25

## 89. FROM BAD TO WORSE

*The Hindu* of Madras has the full text of the proposed amendment of the tenth section of the South African Asiatic Bill. I reproduce below the proposed amendment and the original section in parallel columns:

SECTION	ORIGINAL SEC. 10, SUB-SEC. 2:	THE AMENDED
<p>the date not the 1925, class within take renew, immovable property or, Cape of</p>	<p>The Governor-General may by proclamation in the  <i>Gazette</i> declare that from and after a date to be specified therein no member of any race indicated therein shall acquire immovable property or the lease of immovable property in the province of Natal, save in the coast belt as provided in sub-section (2) of this section: Provided that nothing in this section contained shall be deemed to</p>	<p>The Governor-General may  by proclamation in  <i>Gazette</i> declare that from after a therein specified being earlier than first day of August no person of any indicated in such a proclamation, shall firstly, anywhere the Union hire or over, or as lessee the lease of any exceeding 5 years, secondly, in the</p>



<p>in area or class trading</p>	<p>prohibit a renewal of a lease of immovable property held under written lease at the commencement of this Act.</p>	<p>Good Hope and Natal, acquire any immovable property save for residential purposes class residential for any purpose in residential and area.</p>
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A glance even by a lay reader at the original section and the amendment would clearly show that the amendment is infinitely worse than the original. There is not therefore even an attempt at any compromise, but a defiance of Indian opinion, indeed even of the Government of India. This attitude of the Union Government is in keeping with the furious agitation which has been engineered against the Asiatics in South Africa.

*Young India*, February 18, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 30-31

## **90. TELEGRAM TO SORABJEE RUSTOMJEE, FEBRUARY 24, 1926**

YOUR WIRE<sup>213</sup> MY OPINION SUBJECT PROTEST AND PRESSING ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE. COMMUNITY SHOULD OFFER EVIDENCE ON PRINCIPLE.

*Collected Works*, Volume 30, page 41

## **91. OUR HUMILIATION**

Dr. Malan's proposal and its final acceptance by the Viceroy make up a bitter cup

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<sup>213</sup> Mr. Rustomjee, then in Delhi, had sent the following telegram:

"PANDIT MOTILAL NEHRU, MAULANA MOHAMAD ALI, MRS. SAROJIINI NAIDU SEND FOLLOWING CABLE. 'SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY SHOULD NOT APPEAR BEFORE SELECT COMMITTEE AS PARTY OR OFFER EVIDENCE ON THEIR OWN BEHALF BUT SHOULD HELP GOVERNMENT OF INDIA DEPUTATION IF ASKED IN FORMULATING INDIAN CASE ON QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE AND PROCURING SUCH EVIDENCE AS NECESSARY TO ELUCIDATE PRINCIPLE ALONE AVOIDING ALL DISCUSSION OR EVIDENCE ON DETAILS AND STANDING FIRMLY ON ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.' DO YOU APPROVE OF THIS? PLEASE REPLY IMMEDIATELY - SORABJEE SAVOY HOTEL."

of humiliation for the nation. The Union Government has given a Select Committee that will take evidence on the principle as well as the details of the Asiatic Bill. Dr. Malan has hedged it in with four conditions: that the Paddison Deputation should be the only party to give evidence before this Committee on behalf of the Government of India; that there should be no other deputation, no "agitator" - this is Dr. Malan's own expression - sent from India to supplement that evidence; that the Select Committee should report on or before the 1st of March and that the Bill should be taken up for final disposal during the present session of the Union Parliament.

In my opinion, not one of these conditions could be accepted by a free nation. The Paddison Deputation went only to collect facts, and not to negotiate. A far more important deputation would have gone if it had to negotiate and tender evidence. It is insulting to impose a condition that no other deputation should proceed to South Africa. It is still more insulting to insinuate that the Government of India could ever send an agitator to South Africa. The patronising language used by Dr. Malan regarding the Paddison Deputation only adds injury to insult. The condition that the Select Committee should report before the 1st of March makes it hardly possible for the Government of India or the Indian settlers to collect and marshall all the evidence that can be tendered to show that the principle of the measure is contrary to the settlement of 1914.

The announcement, side by side with that of the appointment of the Select Committee, that the Bill is to be proceeded with during the current session of the Union Parliament, shows that the Union Government has made up its mind regarding what it intends to do and that the appointment of the Select Committee is merely an eye-wash designed to save the face of the Government of India and to hoodwink the world into believing that the Union Government wishes to do nothing unfair. From this so-called concession of the Union Government, therefore, I have no hope of any satisfaction for the doomed settlers. That Government is conscious of its strength and is bent on using all that strength against the settlers. It seems clear that the Government of India will accept the finding of the Select Committee and leave the settlers to their own fate. India in her present state will probably be able to do nothing more than registering another more strong, emphatic and unanimous protest against the action of the Union Government. What then will the settlers do? It is a question that they alone can answer.

*Young India*, February 25, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 45-46

## **92. LETTER TO MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU, MARCH 9, 1926**

Dear Mirabai,

I enclose herewith a copy of cable received from Johannesburg.<sup>214</sup> I telegraphed

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<sup>214</sup> Please see footnote to the next item.

the substance to Sorabjee<sup>215</sup> but I thought you should have the full text. I have replied "Await decision Committee, Delhi." This reply I have sent in continuation of my assurance to Sorabjee that I shall not give any advice to the settlers in South Africa contrary to what the Committee that seems to have been formed there may say or do.

My own opinion however remains unchanged that we are being ourselves in the wrong by absolutely refusing to give evidence even on the principle of the Bill. I have heard the objection namely that our people will not be able to stand the fire of cross-examination and that there is no Indian of sufficient calibre and experience in South Africa who can give evidence. The obvious answer is that no Indian need give evidence. As you will see the Select Committee has asked for a written representation which can be prepared and the Solicitor who may be engaged on our behalf may submit himself for cross-examination. I know the difficulty of selecting such a Solicitor or Counsel, but it is not an impossible task. Adam Alexander would not make a bad representative. He is a fairly conscientious man and his sympathies are with us. It is possible to think of others who can also give evidence without compromising or selling the community. What I want to say is that though nothing may come out of the Select Committee, we should not leave it open to them to say that although we were given the opportunity we did not even lead evidence. Let it not be said that in 1914 I boycotted the Solomon Commission. I did so for the simple reason that the community had taken the solemn resolution that if the Government did not widen the terms of the Commission and appoint a representative on behalf of the community on the Commission it would be boycotted. Hence the adherence to the resolution. Even so it could be recalled that before even the Commission sat, I had come to an understanding with General Smuts that the Asiatic Act would be repealed and that General Smuts would require from the Commission a finding that would enable him to offer us an honourable settlement. This is a matter partly of record...

Yours sincerely

*Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 89-90

### **93. TELEGRAM TO A. I. KAJEE, MARCH 1926<sup>216</sup>**

Sabarmati  
(On or after March 10, 1926)

KAJEE

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<sup>215</sup> Sorabjee Rustomjee

<sup>216</sup> Mr. Kajee, honorary general secretary of the South African Indian Congress, had sent the following cable to Gandhiji on March 8, 1926:

"PLEASE REPLY MY CABLE TWENTY FIRST FEBRUARY REGARDING  
GIVING EVIDENCE SELECT COMMITTEE. CONFERENCE MEETING FOURTEENTH  
JOHANNESBURG."

SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN CONGRESS  
DURBAN

SENT OPINION DELHI COMMITTEE WEEK AGO

GANDHI

*Collected Works*, Volume 30, page 91

### 94. ANDREWS'S AGONY

The reader will like to share with me the following letter from Charlie Andrews, that noble-hearted Englishman who fights our battles whether in or outside India with a selflessness and devotion difficult to equal, impossible to surpass, often in the midst of misunderstanding. We shall probably never know what solace and strength his presence has meant to our countrymen in South Africa, in their hour of need. Here is his letter dated Cape Town, 23rd February, without the alteration or removal of a single word:<sup>217</sup>

"This has been a long-drawn agony such as I have never experienced hitherto, with its rises and falls, its hopes and crushing disappointments. There seemed to be for a time one of those sudden resolutions when all doors seemed open and it appeared possible that again there might be a relenting and a realising just as there was in 1914. I had two very long talks - one with General Hertzog and one with Malan, both of them extremely earnest and I felt sincere. It even seemed to me that their fundamental position was shaken and that there would be at least a long postponement...

"But now it has all gone back again. The reaction began with the Colour Bar Bill. Nothing could have been more spiritually degrading than the scenes in Parliament - each side charging the other with hypocrisy...

"The scene at the First Reading was significant. Smuts and Smartt and Drummond Chaplin stayed away. The rest went almost frivolously to a Division - 81 to 10 - the latter merely being a handful of Cape members who have Coloured voters to care for.

"It is a strange South Africa today. All the liberal element which you and I knew so well in 1914 seems to have vanished...

"Manilal has been working so well and he has been feeling it all the more deeply than anyone else."

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<sup>217</sup> Only excerpts are reproduced here.

I do not share Mr. Andrews's gloomy forecast, not that I believe in the Imperial Government or the Government of India doing anything heroic. But I believe in the ultimate triumph of truth when it is embodied in brave souls and in the ability and willingness of Indian settlers to render a good account of themselves when the supreme moment comes. They have but to be prepared for voluntary and ennobling suffering in order to win. Compulsory and degrading suffering is provided for them in the laws against which they are fighting. Theirs is the choice.

*Young India*, March 11, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 91-92

### **95. LETTER TO MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU, MARCH 24, 1926**

I had your telegram but no acknowledgement of my letters. You would not want me to recommend in the pages of *Young India* which I may not myself approve of. This proposed collection for South Africa is, in my opinion, a mistake. I cannot understand the purpose. The fifty thousand rupees granted by the Imperial Citizenship Association surely ought to be enough and, necessity being shown, a further grant can be had from the Association. And as long as there is money in the Association for such purposes as the South African, I think it is wrong to ask the public to pay anything. Nor in my opinion is the position in any way changed from what it was at Kanpur<sup>218</sup> when I gave my opinion against an all-India collection. I would gladly write if you or Sorabjee can convince me...

Yours,

*Collected Works*, Volume 30, page 164

### **96. STATEMENT ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN PROBLEM, APRIL 24, 1926<sup>219</sup>**

The news from South Africa is certainly welcome. It enables Indian settlers to have a breathing time and upon this happy result all parties, the Union Government, the Government of India and the settlers may congratulate themselves. In my opinion the real credit belongs to Mr. C. F. Andrews without whose incessant energy, prayerful watchfulness and detailed study of the situation, combined with rare faith in the cause he was espousing, this happy result could not have been obtained.

If the Union Government's proviso is honestly meant, its acceptance by the Government of India does not much matter. The Union Government is undoubtedly

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<sup>218</sup> At the session of the Indian National Congress held at Kanpur in December 1925

<sup>219</sup> Gandhiji issued this statement to the Associated Press of India on the announcement regarding acceptance by the Union Government of the offer of the Government of India for a conference to arrive at an amicable solution of the Indian problem.

entitled to safeguard what they call Western standard of life by just and legitimate means and the only just and legitimate means that can be accepted are sanitary and economic laws. Thus, for instance, Indian lawyers must compete with European lawyers on equal terms and so far as I am aware no Indian lawyer does otherwise. But I have discovered that there is discrimination used against them. I believe the Paddison Deputation, which, in spite of my non-co-operation I am free to confess, has deserved well, made the discovery that even in the Supreme Court clerks who appear before the Registrar on business must not be wearers of any but white skin. If that is called safeguarding Western standards of life by just and legitimate means the proviso is dangerous. But I am an optimist. I shall take the proviso at its face value and if the Government of India will insist upon its being strictly interpreted all will be well. I hope that neither the Government of India nor the public will relax their watchfulness if a final and honourable settlement is to be secured.

Now that there is to be a conference, India has the right to hope that all questions that arise out of the Bill will be examined and dealt with in a just manner. The Indian settlers have nothing to fear from a most searching enquiry into the question and I make bold to say that at the end of the enquiry it will be found that the only crime that can be proved against them is that they are Asiatics and have a skin which has all shades of colour.

The economic question was laid at rest when in 1914 all fear of unrestricted emigration from India to South Africa was absolutely laid at rest. The figures produced before the Select Committee have conclusively proved that the numerical strength of Indian settlers is on the decrease whereas that of the white settlers is on the increase. There is no comparison between the insignificant value of Indian holdings and the extraordinary increase in the value of European holdings. Indian trade licences everywhere are also dwindling.

If only South African statesmen will face facts squarely it will be found that there is no case against the Indian settlers. But at the present moment I want neither to anticipate nor to criticise. I have nothing but a feeling of relief and thankfulness. I tender my congratulations to General Hertzog and Dr. Malan upon their having risen to the occasion.

*Forward, April 25, 1926; Collected Works, Volume 30, pages 349-50*

## **97. THE GOOD SAMARITAN**

I received the following cablegram from the Secretary, South African Indian Congress, Durban, before the decision of the South African Government was known:.

"CONGRESS MEETING ASSEMBLED TO TENDER YOU GRATEFUL THANKS FOR SENDING MR. ANDREWS TO SOUTH AFRICA, WHO NOBLY AND STRENUOUSLY WORKED BRINGING GREAT CHANGE FEELING BOTH COMMUNITIES. MAY HE ENJOY LONG LIFE, CONTINUE HIS NOBLE WORK CAUSE OF HUMANITY."

I have withheld from the public similar cablegrams received during Mr. Andrews' strenuous tour in South Africa but I felt I could no longer withhold the foregoing especially in view of the results attained. I am aware that the services of this selfless Englishman have not been always properly understood. He is no diplomat and therefore he sends cablegrams faithfully recording his opinion and feelings from day to day. He is therefore at times despondent, at times optimistic, but if one were patiently to collect all the cablegrams that he has been sending during the past few months, one could trace in them all a never-to-be-missed ring of hope when to the sceptic there was no ground for hope. His last cable to me on the eve of his departure from South Africa told me not to lose hope because he was hopeful. If he had faith in the righteousness of the Indian cause, he had faith also in the South African statesmen. Andrews is a humanitarian, pure and simple, and therefore he trusts everybody. The whole world is free to deceive him and he would still say "Humanity! With all they faults I love thee still." And this love of his enables him to surmount all barriers and cut his way straight to the hearts of people. He made himself heard in South Africa where, perhaps, others would have been hissed. He paved the way for the Paddison Deputation.

The mention of the Paddison Deputation enables me to add the testimony I have received from South Africa to the one that *Sjt. C. Rajagopalachariar* gave in favour of Mr. Paddison when the deputation left. This is what a correspondent has written from South Africa:

"He is an Englishman by birth and an Indian in outlook. In fact, I see no difference between him and Mr. Andrews. It is a surprise that men of his talents should have risen no higher than the Labour Commissionership of Madras. Whether his strong Indian sympathies are responsible for this is more than I know at present."

All accounts received by me show that the members of the deputation discharged their trust faithfully and well. But even this deputation could not have done half as well as they did, without spade work that was done by Andrews and the incessant toil put by him into it.

*Young India*, April 29, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 378-79

## **98. RESOLUTION OF THE ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE, MAY 5, 1926<sup>220</sup>**

The All India Congress Committee congratulates the Government of India and the Union Government upon the postponement of the Class Areas Reservation Bill<sup>221</sup> pend-

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<sup>220</sup> The All India Congress Committee, which met at Ahmedabad on May 5, 1926, passed this resolution which was prepared by Gandhiji and moved by S. Satyamurthi.

<sup>221</sup> Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill.

ing the deliberations of a Conference between the two Governments.

The All India Congress Committee further congratulates the South African Indian Deputation and the Indian settlers on the happy result of their efforts.

The All India Congress Committee tenders its respectful thanks to Mr. C. F. Andrews for his great sacrifices and for his energy and undying hope and faith, without which the result, so far achieved, would have been impossible.

The All India Congress Committee, while noting the results of the Government of India's negotiations so far, warns the public against slackening the efforts on behalf of the Indian settlers of South Africa, and hopes that they will not rest until the position of the settlers is placed on an honourable and satisfactory basis.

The President is authorised to send the message of congratulation to the Union Government.

*Indian Review*, May 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, page 410

## **99. STATEMENT ON THE COLOUR BAR BILL, MAY 14, 1926**

(Gandhiji who arrived in Bombay on Friday morning was met on the train by an Associated Press representative who showed him a message from Cape Town that the Colour Bar Bill had been passed. Gandhiji received the news with pain and said:)

I am sorry to learn the news that the Bill has been passed by the joint session of the two Houses of the Union Parliament. I had hoped with Mr. Andrews that better counsels would prevail and that the Bill would be rejected. Theoretically speaking, this Colour Bar Bill is worse than the Class Areas Reservation Bill over which there is to be a round table conference. One had wished that the spirit of justice that actuated the Union Government to postpone the passing of one Bill would induce them not to force the passage of the other. The acrimonious debate that took place over the passage of the Colour Bar Bill makes one suspicious as to the fate of Class Areas Reservation Bill. The duty of the Governor-General of South Africa, in my opinion, is quite clear. His assent to this cruel Bill should be refused especially in view of the fact that General Smuts, backed, as he was, by many other South African leaders, put up such a strong opposition against it. The Colour Bar Bill, if it becomes a law of the Union, will set up the whole of the native population of South Africa against the white settlers. I regard it as an act of suicide on their part.

*Bombay Chronicle*, May 15, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 445-46

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Gandhiji refers to it, in short, as "Class Areas Reservation Bill" or "Class Areas Bill" as it was essentially the same as the Class Areas Bill of 1924.



## 100. LETTER TO A. I. KAJEE, MAY 30, 1926

Dear friend,

I have your letter of the 24th April last with all the enclosures mentioned therein. I have also your cable just received. I have had long talks with Mr. Andrews who is, even as I am writing this here at the *Ashram*, living with me. The victory is great but much work still remains to be done, in fact more than has been done already, because the work hitherto done was one of necessary destruction; the work of construction must now begin.

You have raised three points in your cable. So far as I can see there will be no direct participation by the Congress in the Round Table Conference. But the Congress must have a hearing. The Conference itself, I imagine, will be between the representatives of the two Governments. But Mr. Andrews and others are watching carefully and whatever can be done will certainly be done. If any step has to be taken on your side, you will be duly advised.

It is a very good idea to hold the annual Congress in Johannesburg. Your resolutions must concentrate on fundamental points to be dealt with by the Conference and should be plain. Your resolutions should be moderate, firm, brief, telling and to the point.

After the Colour Bar Bill I have expressed myself in the strongest terms. All parties have also taken action. Mr. Andrews has seen the Viceroy but I very much fear that the Bill itself will receive the Royal assent. What will happen is that at least for the time being it will not be applied to Indian settlers and may never be applied at any time if we are strong, united and moderate.

Yours sincerely,

*Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 509-10

## 101. THE BAR SINISTER

Lord Birkenhead<sup>222</sup> has spoken on the Colour Bar Bill of South Africa and he has blessed it. I hold to my opinion that as a piece of racial legislation it is worse than the Class Areas Reservation Bill which awaits discussion at the forthcoming Conference. It may not be put into operation against Asiatics for the time being or at all. It may not be enforced harshly against the Native population. But the objection against that measure is based upon a fundamental principle and upon the vast possibilities of mischief it contains. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Indian settlers are agitated and that Mr. Andrews has spoken strongly upon it. The settlers must continue their agitation against the Bill with

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<sup>222</sup> Secretary of State for India, 1924-28

vigour and prepare their case for presentation to the Conference. No presentation can avoid reference to the Colour Bar Bill. For the one reflects the policy of the other. The Colour Bar Bill is an indication of the designs of the Union Government in respect of the Natives and Indian settlers. And the Class Areas Reservation Bill must be examined in the light of the Government policy on the Colour Bar Bill. The postponement of the former does not mean any change of policy. It may well mean only postponement of the agony. It is therefore necessary for all who are interested in this thorny question not to relax vigilance. What has been done hitherto was work of destruction. The more difficult task of construction has now begun. Much will depend upon the attitude of the Government of India. They control the situation if the settlers are weak. When the latter are strong they can mould their own destiny.

But I am sorry to note that the Hon. Syed Raza Ali considers that there should be no protest in India against the Colour Bar Bill.<sup>223</sup> Though he commences his statement by saying that it is not a legislative measure against Indians "he is forced to admit that the Union Government will under the Bill have the power to extend such prohibition to our people if it deems it necessary." Why is he then surprised at Mr. Andrews' opposition? The Syed Saheb should also know that the Indian settlers in South Africa are much agitated over the Bill. In a cable just received, the Secretary of the South African Indian Congress says: "Trust strong action taken by you on Colour Bar Bill which has not yet received the Royal assent." Mr. Andrews is bound to object to this inhuman legislation which is principally aimed at Natives of South Africa, if he may be expected to raise his voice on behalf of us Indians. He has merged himself in us as a citizen of the world, not for any special virtues of our own. But the reason for his intervention is not the point at issue. The point at issue raised by the Syed Saheb is whether we here should oppose the Bill or not. Well, we have always opposed it. And there is no burden on us, now that the Conference is agreed upon, not to oppose the Bill. There was - could be - no tacit understanding not to oppose it. We may distinguish, as we have distinguished, between the two measures. The Colour Bar Bill is not so deadly in its effect against us as the Class Areas Reservation Bill. And therefore it was that greater stress was put upon the latter by the Indian deputation and the public. But the opposition to the former cannot be abated because the latter has been postponed.

Nor are the honesty and good intentions of General Hertzog relevant to the discussion. General Hertzog is not the autocrat of South Africa. He is no permanent head. He may find himself tomorrow in the same place that General Smuts occupies today. It is only the written undertaking of the Government that can be taken into account, though we have found to our cost that even written undertakings may be thrown on the scrapheap when occasion requires the performance. The coming Conference cannot be endangered because we oppose a measure which it is our duty to oppose. In order to ensure a peaceful atmosphere at the Conference all that is necessary is for us not to impute motives, not to exaggerate and not to use harsh language in discussing subjects, however painful they

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<sup>223</sup> Syed Raza Ali, a member of the Paddison deputation, was reported to have told the press that in its practical effects on Indians, the Colour Bar Bill was not one-hundredth as dangerous as the Areas Reservation Bill.

may be. To go beyond is to surrender the right of free and just criticism and judgement. To do so would be to pay a price out of all proportion to the result sought to be achieved.

*Young India*, June 3, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 517-19

## **102. INTERVIEW ON THE COLOUR BAR BILL, JUNE 8, 1926**

(Interviewed in Ahmedabad regarding the recent communiqué of the Government of India on the Colour Bar Bill, Mahatma Gandhi said:)

The assurance given in the *communiqué* in my opinion takes us no further than we were before it. The Union Government have indeed repeatedly said that they have no present intention of extending the scope of the Bill beyond the position that existed prior to the judgement in *Rex v. Hildick Smith*.<sup>224</sup> Opponents of the Bill, however, attack it on the principle that the enabling powers under it go much beyond the position anterior to the judgement and that it can be made applicable not merely to the natives of the soil but to Indians also. Nor is it possible to derive any comfort from the fact that when the scope of the Regulations to be framed thereunder is extended, all parties in the Union will be enabled to make representations. The Bill does not take away the right of petition, and one knows by this time the fate of the representations by parties without power to enforce their will. I wonder if this assurance means that the party without the Union, namely the Government of India, will have no right of representation.

*Bombay Chronicle*, June 9, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, page 545

## **103. VALUELESS ASSURANCE**

The Union Government have, the Government of India tell the public in a communiqué, given the assurance that

"there is no present intention on the part of the Union Government of extending the regulations beyond the position as it existed prior to the judgement of the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court in the case, *Rex v. Hildick Smith*, when it was held that certain regulations with reference to mines and works, which have actually been in force in South Africa since 1911 and in certain provinces for many years before that date, were not valid under the sections of the Act in terms of which they were promulgated."

The communiqué further states:

"that the Government of India have also been assured that should any

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<sup>224</sup> In that case, the Transvaal Provincial Court declared the regulations under the Mines and Works Act, 1911, invalid.

such extension of the scope of these regulations be contemplated in future, every reasonable opportunity will be given to all parties in the Union interested in the matter to make representations."

I hold these two assurances to be simple camouflage. For the Union Government, in reply to questions in the Union House of Assembly, have been repeatedly saying the same thing that they have now told the Government of India, namely, that they had no present intention of exceeding the scope of the regulations beyond the position that existed prior to the judgement in question. The sting of the new Bill lies in its enabling powers. It is like the sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of both the Natives of South Africa and the Indian settlers, for, it can be made applicable to the latter precisely as to the former. The Bill is, therefore, as insulting as it can possibly be made. Only it does not affect the material interests of the Indians as much as the Class Areas Bill, not because of any goodwill on the part of the Union Government, but because Indians as a rule do not take to labour, skilled or unskilled, of the kind contemplated under the Colour Bar Bill. They are better touched materially through their trade and through restriction of residential rights. And this is sought to be accomplished by the Class Areas Bill which is to be considered by the Round Table Conference. The Colour Bar Bill shows the mentality of the Union Government and as the *Times of India* correspondent very properly says, in effect the acceptance by the Union Government of the proposal for a Round Table Conference is a mere courteous gesture. It is not to be interpreted to mean a change in the Union Government's angle of vision. And this deduction is further strengthened by the later information that in adumbrating his Native policy, General Hertzog has made it clear that, whilst he is prepared to allow limited representation in the Union Parliament to the Natives and to the Coloured people, he will not allow any whatsoever to the Indian. The result which the *Times of India* correspondent rightly deduces is that the Indian, in the estimation of General Hertzog, stands infinitely lower than the Native. In fact, he is to be tolerated till he can be effaced from South Africa as a necessary evil. The Colour Bar Bill therefore cannot be isolated from the different Acts of the Union Government. It forms part of its settled policy and furnishes the key to it.

Nor is the second assurance given by the Union Government of the slightest value. Is it any new right that they have conceded when they say that when the scope of the regulations is extended every reasonable opportunity will be given to all parties in the Union, interested in the matter, to make representations especially when it is known to them that representations of Indians carry no voting force behind them? And, if the qualifying phrase in the *communiqué* means that parties outside the Union, that is, the Government of India or the Imperial Government will not be allowed even to make representations, surely the assurance is worse than useless, because, it is a restriction of which the announcement has been made and not a concession.

*Young India*, June 10, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 30, pages 554-56

## 104. SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION

If anything is needed to emphasise the meaning of the warning issued by Mr. Andrews and myself, here is an extract from a South African letter:

"I feel that through the passage of the Colour Bar Bill the Government is not keeping its word with the Indian Government and the community, especially when on the top of this comes the Natal Provincial Educational Ordinance which, if passed, will mean the negation of educational rights we have, little as they are at present. In the direction of economics we see joint Councils raised under the Union Conciliation Act of 1921 in industries like furniture, printing, building etc. - in which thousands of Indians are involved, without the Indian employees and employers being allowed to become members of the Trade Unions or Masters' Union who negotiate on behalf of the employees and employers and who go to make up the joint Councils which prepare the schedules of wages and other benefits; or, either allowed a voice in the joint Councils. Of course we have no objection to legislation aimed at bettering the conditions of workers, but at the same time what we do object to is that it is not fair to Indian employees and employers that schedules of wages be prepared which they have to abide by in which they have had no voice, and the effect of it all is the annihilation of both the Indian employer and employees."

It shows as clearly as day-light which way the wind is blowing. The Class Areas Bill, because so much opposition was raised against it, has been postponed but the policy underlying it is being pursued by the Union Government in a thousand other ways as instanced by the correspondent. It is impossible therefore to be too watchful about the way things are shaping in South Africa.

*Young India*, June 17, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 31, page 10

## 105. THAT ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

So it has been announced that the forthcoming Conference on the position of Indians in South Africa is to take place in Cape Town<sup>225</sup> and that a Commission from South Africa is likely to visit India in order to study Indian conditions. The Commission is to include Dr. Malan, the present Secretary for the Interior and Mr. Duncan, an ex-Secretary.<sup>226</sup>

This is all to the good.

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<sup>225</sup> After repeated messages by the Government of India, the South African Government agreed to a round table conference to consider the best means to maintain white civilisation in South Africa and voluntary repatriation of Indians from South Africa.

<sup>226</sup> Should be "Minister" and "ex-Minister" instead of "Secretary" and "ex-Secretary." For the composition of the South African Government delegation to India, please see footnote to item 107.

It is good that the Conference is to take place in South Africa. The Union Government being a wholly responsible government must have in all its undertakings the backing of public opinion in a sense in which the Indian Government has never felt itself under the necessity of having. Moreover no public opinion needs to be created in India in favour of the Indian claim. It is there already. In South Africa, too much cannot be done to educate European opinion on the absolute justice of the Indian claim. If, therefore, the Union Government means well and the selection of Indian representatives is wisely made, apart from the value of its deliberations, the Conference can be a means of directing European opinion in the right channel.

It is well also that a Commission from South Africa is to visit India. It will gather impressions which only a personal visit can make. No amount of reading literature or meeting representatives can possibly make up for local inspection and seeing the people themselves face to face.

It is well also that the Commission is to include top men who are supposed to have studied the question. Our case is so just that the more it is studied, the better it is for us. We have nothing to lose by the closest examinations and the widest publicity. The more South Africans visit us, the better for us. The greatest stumbling-block in the way of a settlement is the ignorance, on the Indian question, of the best among South Africans. They merely know the demand of the interested white traders. They know little of the Indian side. If the Conference results in a serious study of the question, the bogey of an Indian invasion or even the competition of those Indians who are already settled there will disappear in a moment.

There is the other side to the picture. General Hertzog's<sup>227</sup> speeches are disturbing. I do not conceive the possibility of justice being done to Indians, if none is rendered to the natives of the soil. The mentality is the same in respect of Indians as of the Natives. Indeed, it is much worse regarding Indians. Natives, it is said, have a claim upon the consideration of the whites; Indians are mere interlopers. Of course, it is forgotten that Indians were enticed in the first instance to go to South Africa to labour for the whites and that they were promised permanent settlement under advantageous terms. The point, however, just now is not what they were promised, but what is the mentality of the whites towards the Indian settlers. And it being one of greater hostility towards them, justice to them is not to be expected if injustice is done to the Natives. To reduce it to the lowest terms, the wish to see justice done to the Natives is based upon selfish considerations. If we go a little deeper, we shall discover that justice can never be purchased at the expense of another. When the seer prayed "may all people be happy," he intuitively perceived a scientific truth.

*Young India*, July 22, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pages 181-82

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<sup>227</sup> General J. B. M. Hertzog (1866-1942), Prime Minister of South Africa, 1924-39.

## 106. THE COLOUR BAR BILL<sup>228</sup>

The following letter from the Department Mines and Industries, South Africa, to the local Indian Congress is the finish to the Colour Bar Bill:

"With reference to your telegram dated the 14th instant addressed to His Excellency the Governor- General regarding the Mines and Works Act Amendment Bill, I am directed to inform you that it is the intention of the Government in due course to consider the issue of regulations to restore at all events the *status quo* as it existed before the Courts declared certain regulations *ultra vires*. This is necessary in the interests of health and safety.

"There is no present intention of extending the regulations beyond the position as it existed prior to the Court's judgement. Should any such extension be contemplated in the future every reasonable opportunity will be given to all parties in the Union interested in the matter to make representations.

"In the circumstances no good purpose would appear to be served by granting the interview proposed."

It means no relief to the community except that no drastic measures are to be immediately taken. It contains no guarantee that no such steps will be taken in future. On the contrary, the community has been gently prepared for its enforcement. As I have remarked before, a bad law is bad, whether it is immediately enforced or hung like the sword of Damocles over the heads of those affected by it.

*Young India*, August 26, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 31, page 332

## 107. MESSAGE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPUTATION, SEPTEMBER 15, 1926

The Ashram,  
Sabarmati,  
September 15, 1926

I join the chorus of welcome to the South African deputation that is coming on behalf of the Union Government.<sup>229</sup> Let us show to them all the goodwill that we are

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<sup>228</sup> The Mines and Works Amendment Act, 1926, commonly known as the Colour Bar Act, prohibited Africans and Indians from skilled occupations in the mines involving the handling of machinery.

<sup>229</sup> A South African Government delegation, led by F. W. Beyers, Minister of Mines and Industry, arrived in India on September 19, 1926. It included: Patrick Duncan, former Minister of the Interior, A. C. Fordam, J. S. Marwick, G. Reyburn, O. S. Vermoolen, W. H. Rood and T. R. Hartshone.

capable of showing. But let us not also build castles in the air. The deputation is but a part of the Conference that is to be held in December. They are coming with no authority for action. They are coming merely to gain impressions. The solution of the difficult problem that faces the statesmen of South Africa and India depends upon a multiplicity of circumstances. The coming of the deputation is one such circumstance which we must use in the best manner possible. Let us put the deputation in the position of seeing all the sides of the picture. In other words, they should be enabled to see the truth, the real truth, and nothing but the truth. The case for the Indian settlers in South Africa rests upon purest justice. An impartial study of the question therefore on the part of the South African statesmen that are coming can only do the cause good.

M. K. Gandhi

*Bombay Chronicle*, September 18, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pages 406-07

108. LETTER TO LAKSHMIDAS R. TAIRSEE, SEPTEMBER 24, 1926

The Ashram,  
Sabarmati,  
September 24, 1926

*Bhaishri* Lakshmidas,

I have to reply to two letters from you, one about the boycott of British goods and the other concerning the deputation from South Africa...

We are the people who wanted representatives from South Africa to visit this country. The Indian residents in South Africa also wanted that we should extend a welcome even to an enemy if we have invited him to our tent. The Conference has been arranged because of the agitation here, and these gentlemen are here in connection with it. It is our clear duty to extend a welcome to them. By doing so, we strengthen our position so that we should be able to tell them what we feel about their laws. We cannot refuse to have anything to do with them by arguing that they have been invited here only by the Government and that we have nothing to do in the matter. We can certainly advance such an argument against anything done in defiance of public opinion. I was, therefore, surprised to read your letter...

(From Gujarati)

*Collected Works*, Volume 31, pages 449-50

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Gandhiji attended a party held in honour of the delegation in Bombay on the day of their arrival.



## 109. SOUTHWARD: CHARLIE ANDREWS

That restless great soul, Charlie Andrews, is never so happy as when he is wandering in search of God, i.e., humane service... He came to Sabarmati before proceeding to South Africa. He was not well. He got worse. But he will not cancel his passage. He was better, having rested under the hospitable roof of *Sjt. Ambalal Sarabhai*.<sup>230</sup> And now, though he is not strong enough, he is on his way to South Africa...

He is sensitive. He feels the criticism gently conveyed to him by well-meaning friends that he should have been in India whilst the Union deputation was here and the Indian settlers would not need him so long before the time of the Round Table Conference. He has allowed himself just to answer the criticism in his "The Search for God."<sup>231</sup> He was not wanted by the deputation. Its hands are full. As a matter of fact, the deputation does not want to be coached. It does not want to collect evidence officially. It has come to gather impressions without being told. It is enough if the members have come with an open mind. We have no reason to think otherwise. They must be left undisturbed save by their own consciences. And conscience acts best when unprompted. It is put upon its mettle.

Mr. Andrews is wanted in South Africa and that now. Because the settlers immediately need a helper. Reuter has told us they were in consternation when they heard of his illness. He is their chief, if not their only hope. They must prepare their case. They need all the time that is now left for that preparation. They need him for this.

He must prepare the atmosphere that is required for the Conference. He is the only living link between the whites and the Indians. The Conference can do nothing, if the South African public opinion is intensely hostile to Indians. South African public opinion is not like ours. It has force behind it. It has votes that count. It can dictate policies. It can defy Downing Street. Mr. Andrews can to some extent cultivate and mould that opinion. His very presence disarms criticism and silences opposition. His place at the present moment is undoubtedly in South Africa.

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<sup>230</sup> Millowner and businessman in Ahmedabad

<sup>231</sup> In that article, the Reverend C.F. Andrews wrote of his impending journey to South Africa:

"There have been many voices of discouragement of late, stating - what seems almost evident on the surface - that journeys to South Africa are useless, while the colour bar remains so firmly established, while the daily treatment of Indians in the streets, in the railway trains and in constant social ways, marks them out as an inferior and subject race. All this I know full well from a bitter and intimate experience. Nevertheless, in face of an Asiatic Bill, which has only been suspended, not withdrawn, I have confidence and hope. For God is there, keeping his high Festival in human hearts, quickening love in them among the Dutch and English, even as He is doing here among ourselves; and surely He will meet me there as the companion..."

And the deliberations of the Conference will affect not only the future of settlers in South Africa but they will indirectly influence the Asiatic policy of the other Dominions and Colonies. But the settlers must not deceive themselves. Mr. Andrews' powerful intervention is indispensable for their cause. But the ultimate success must depend upon themselves. There is no help in the world like self-help. They must be firm but moderate in their demands; they must speak with one voice; they must act like one man; they must not swerve an inch from truth; they must discharge their part of the contract, i.e., they must conform strictly to all sanitary and building regulations and lastly they must be prepared in a body to suffer for their cause. There is no salvation without suffering.

*Young India*, September 30, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pages 458-60

## **110. PRECARIOUS CONDITION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The latest mail from South Africa has brought me a batch of papers which show the precarious condition of the Indian settlers in that sub-continent. Trade licences are an eternal problem. The administrative reins are being daily tightened. Hitherto, in Natal, it has been a fairly recognised rule not to touch old licences under the wide discretionary powers given to licensing officers except for cases of grave insanitation or breach of conditions imposed by the officers. But that sound rule is gradually being disregarded and even renewals are being arbitrarily refused. The case sent to me is pathetic and refers to an old lady, Mrs. Sophia Bhayla. The Secretary of the South African Indian Congress in introducing the case says:

"This poor lady with five children has been ruined through the caprice of the licensing officer and to avoid being put in jail by her creditors, it is highly likely that she will have to seek the protection of the law of insolvency."

The judges of the appellate courts showed their sympathy for the poor woman but declared themselves powerless, being bound under the statute not to interfere with the discretion vested by the legislature in the licensing officers, except when they can be proved to have been bribed or incapable of exercising the powers vested in them. Here is what the principal judgement says:

"The licensing officer refused her licence after she had held it for many years and it would appear that the refusal is based on the ground that this lady had not paid the dues which it is said she should have paid to the Town Council of Estcourt. At first sight it would appear that that was somewhat harsh for the licensing officer, who happens to be town clerk and town treasurer and holds other offices as well, that because of the knowledge that he had as town treasurer and town clerk, he should say as licensing officer: Well, you had trouble with my employers, the Town Council, and you have not paid your rates or the dues which are payable and, therefore, I will not grant you a renewal of this licence. That does appear to one's mind to be inequitable.

If this lady had committed an offence against the bye-laws, there was a ready remedy for that by prosecuting her or by proceeding against her according to the law if she had broken any contract."

Thus, the judges though willing were unable to redress a manifest wrong. When a law is bad, a judge is helpless unless he resigns. Such heroic action is not to be expected in these days.

But the Government is not powerless. Town Councils, composed as they are of rival traders, are not to be expected to do justice. They will generally use the powers given to them for crushing their rivals, but the central administration can certainly render aid in such glaring cases. The Round Table Conference will be a mockery, if even cases of manifest hardship remain unredressed. The Class Areas Bill may be shelved for ever but if the spirit animating it survives, the position of the settlers will in no wise be better than if the Bill had been passed. An empty victory will be worse than a proper defeat. For in the noise of it, the cry of the anguish of the sufferers may be hushed and they may be denied even the solace of sympathy.

*Young India*, November 4, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pages 551-52

## 111. THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

Here are extracts from a letter from Mr. Andrews after his arrival in Durban:

"It is good to get here again, and though it has been a difficult time on the voyage, I am so thankful that I came on and did not delay longer. There are any amount of things here to be settled and other things to put straight before the delegation arrives, and it will take every moment of my time to get through.

"Today I have had the warmest possible welcome and Rawat's Bioscope was crowded this evening at the 'welcome.' I am staying with Sorabjee at 19, First Avenue. The house at 110, Field Street, is all pulled down and site sold to Europeans!

"The days have been crowded to the full and it is almost impossible to avoid it as I had expected. There was a very serious smallpox outbreak in the Indian quarters and every single smallpox case was that of an Indian. The mortality was as high as 25 percent and it was of a very virulent type. There were vicious letters in the press abusing the Indians for insanitary habits, etc. The one thing to do was what you did in Johannesburg<sup>232</sup> and after getting vaccinated myself (without which I could have done nothing at all), I got the Medical Officer to let me visit the Indians who were kept in quarantine daily, and did everything I could do pacify them. Also we met and formed an Indian Health Committee and

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<sup>232</sup> During the plague epidemic in the Indian location of Johannesburg in March 1904

decided to work under the doctor's orders and he has already set us to work. At once, as soon as this was announced the whole tone of the press changed and we have been praised where before we were being blamed. Altogether it is going to work out for the best.

"I have had time now to consider things fully and get hold of the situation. There is no doubt that if we can get the best public opinion on our side in the next few weeks, we shall get a good press and materially help the Conference by creating a favourable atmosphere beforehand. It has been rather difficult to persuade them not to have a big demonstration just at the time of the Conference, thinking it would 'impress' them. I have been explaining to them that some good solid work (like) clearing out the dirt from insanitary quarters would 'impress' far more than all the demonstrations and speeches in the world.

"At the same time, the last thing I would wish is that things should go to the other extreme and get slack and lazy and indifferent. What is needed is to direct the excitement and energy into a right channel. I have consulted the best Europeans who are sympathetic and they all say that the *hartal* and Day of Prayer which we held about a year ago was extraordinarily impressive in the right sense of the word and no one felt it to be provocative. They felt that Indians were doing the right thing in their own way and doing it well."

The reference to the sale of the property in Field Street revives oldest memories. It was one of the oldest properties of which a long lease was purchased by the late Haji Aboobakr Amod - one of the earliest Indian merchants to settle in South Africa. The property was sublet to the late Parsee Rustomjee who had possession of it till his death. It was more a public place than a private store - most informal Indian gatherings were held there. It was the place where the most important decisions were taken. It was there that Gokhale used to pass much of his day time. It was there that Andrews worked. It sheltered the rich and the poor. It had become a real *dharmshala*. On the expiry of the lease the Durban Town Council knew the (to the Indians) sacred character of the place, but the knowledge could not save the property from passing into European hands. Hence the reference to it by Mr. Andrews and the note of exclamation.

His presence there at this juncture is indeed a good godsend. The unfortunate outbreak of smallpox might easily have created a panic both among Europeans and Indians. The former might have taken dangerously drastic measures and the latter might have become paralysed with fear. The prompt measures taken by Mr. Andrews averted what might have developed into a calamity.

That godly man's presence is likely to turn the scales in favour of the settlers. And though not much may be expected of the Conference, he is certainly creating the proper atmosphere for a calm and just consideration of the intricate problem.

Sir Mohamed Habibullah's deputation has a heavy responsibility on its

shoulders.<sup>233</sup> It has the solid backing of unanimous public opinion. Let us hope for the best.

*Young India*, November 18, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 32, pages 55-56

112. LETTER TO THE REV. C. F. ANDREWS, NOVEMBER 22, 1926

My dear Charlie,

I have just got your cable about prayer day.<sup>234</sup> I am forwarding it to Sarojini<sup>235</sup> and writing a strong backing leader in *Young India*. The whole *Ashram* will join you that day in your prayers. I hope to be that day in Wardha. I shall be with you in spirit that day though the body will be there with Vinoba<sup>236</sup> and Jammalalji.<sup>237</sup>

Shastri<sup>238</sup> was here yesterday. We had a long and quiet chat.

Please remember there can be no response from our side to any scheme of repatriation, voluntary or otherwise. We are bound to look after all returned immigrants. But that can be no part of any scheme. Any such agreement will immediately make repatriation compulsory in substance though not in law.

I hope you are getting *Young India* regularly. I do deal with S. A. matters almost in every issue. The coming number will deal with Colonial-born Indians. It is an appeal to them not to ask for any differential treatment.

Hope you are keeping good health...

With love,

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<sup>233</sup> The Round Table Conference on the Indian question in South Africa was held in Cape Town from December 17, 1926, to January 13, 1927. The Indian delegation to the Conference was led by Sir Mohamed Habibullah, member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, and included: Sir Pheroze Sethna, Sir d'Arcy Lindsay, Sir G. F. Paddison, Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Rt. Hon. G. L. Cobbett, and Sir G. S. Bajpai.

<sup>234</sup> The Reverend C.F. Andrews suggested that December 19, the Sunday following the arrival of the Government of India delegation in South Africa for the Round Table Conference, be observed as a day of prayer. The day was observed both in India and in South Africa. In South Africa, under the leadership of the Deans of Cape Town and Johannesburg, many Anglicans joined the Indians in prayer. Dr. da Plessis of Stellenbosch University issued a call to the Afrikaner people to observe the day.

<sup>235</sup> Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, then President of the Indian National Congress

<sup>236</sup> Vinoba Bhave, an associate of Gandhiji

<sup>237</sup> Jammalal Bajaj, an associate of Gandhiji

<sup>238</sup> V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, a delegate to the Round Table Conference in Cape Town

Yours,  
MOHAN

*Collected Works*, Volume 32, page 76

### 113. COLONIAL-BORN INDIANS<sup>239</sup>

I have received a letter on behalf of colonial-born Indians of South Africa chiding me for "absolutely forgetting them." The letter says:

"Our only desire is that we should receive only one message from you. I am sure you will not refuse this our last request to you."

I appreciate the affection underlying this rebuke. There is a strong tie binding the colonial-born Indians to me. But there was no special message that I could think of sending to them. The majority of my messages are sent through the weeklies that I am editing. And the pages of *Young India* and Gujarati and Hindi *Navajivan* are full of messages to the settlers and their descendants in South Africa. Though I do attend to a great deal of private correspondence, force of circumstances has obliged me to restrict it to its utmost limit and treat these weeklies as a vehicle for correspondence. These weeklies, as a friend once reminded me, are not newspapers but view-papers, for the transmission of my views such as they are. They have also received messages through C. F. Andrews. But these friends want me to send them a special message through the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri. I know what this request means. The letter reminds me of the days when Gokhale was in South Africa. The colonial-born Indians knew my connection with Gokhale and they rightly expect me to use Srinivasa Sastri as a vehicle for all my thoughts and sentiments. Colonial-born Indians and other friends in South Africa will certainly have their heart's content through Srinivasa Sastri.

I am writing these notes before meeting him. We shall have discussed the whole of the South African question not only in its relationship to the things that the Union Government can or cannot do, but also to the things that the Indians, including the colonial-born, can and cannot do. But one thing I would say to the latter publicly.

Let them beware of the tendency to cut themselves away from the settlers who were not born there and of asking for special privileges by reason of their own South African birth. Let them remember that they are, and remain, Indians in every sense of the term in spite of their South African birth and that, therefore, their duty is to throw in their lot completely with the former and work with them in every possible way. They will, by so doing, serve themselves and the country. Let them remember the work that they did so selflessly and bravely as members of the Stretcher Bearer Corps in 1899 during the Boer War and during the protracted *satyagraha* struggle between 1906 and 1914. Never was

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<sup>239</sup> Indians born in South Africa were known as "colonial-born Indians."

there then a whisper of their cutting themselves adrift or asking for special privileges. They have a great future before them if they will seize the occasion. They can become a living link between South Africa and India, if they will but represent the best of India and assimilate the best of the Western civilisation that they come in contact with and as it is represented there by the best Englishmen and the best Boers.

*Young India*, November 25, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 32, pages 82-83

## 114. A DAY OF PRAYER

C. F. Andrews has sent me the following characteristic cablegram:

"EXECUTIVE DECIDED OBSERVE DECEMBER NINETEENTH DAY PRAYER FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE. CHURCHES CO-OPERATING. AFTER WIDEST CONSULTING BEST EUROPEAN SENTIMENT FEEL STEP LIKELY MUCH APPRECIATED. ADVISE SAROJINI."<sup>240</sup>

He is an intensely godly man and, therefore, a man of prayer. His politics are guided, coloured and ennobled by his prayers. Prayer with him is no empty formula. It is with him intense and incessant communion with God and waiting upon Him for guidance in his daily work, great and small. No work that is done in His name and dedicated to Him is small. All work when so done assumes equal merit. A scavenger who works in His service shares equal distinction with a king who uses his gifts in His name and as a mere trustee. Unlike as among us very imperfect beings, in His *darbar* the motive rather than the act itself decides its quality. We infer the intention from the act. He, knowing the intention as much as the act, judges the act according to the intention.

And Andrews, because his intentions are the purest possible, believes that God will ensure his success. He has every reason for his belief. For he has hitherto succeeded where others have failed. No one knows the history of Andrews' many unseen services. Those the public see are by no means the most significant or fruitful, not to mention contemporary events. Who knows, for instance, how he influenced the many beneficial decisions of Lord Hardinge? Truly with him "left hand knoweth not what the right hand doeth."

This good man has made his own this South African matter to which he was first appointed by Gokhale. He thinks and prays about it intensely. He had prepared me by a previous letter for the cable I have given to the public. He has infected the Indians with his belief in prayer. I know them all and I must own that many have accepted his advice purely as a matter of form or to please him or to make political capital out of the event.

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<sup>240</sup> The executive of the South African Indian Congress decided to observe December 19, 1926, as a day of prayer, to coincide with the Round Table Conference.

The Reverend Andrews suggested advising Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, President of the Indian National Congress and former President of the South African Indian Congress.

But I know that there are some who have endorsed his proposition with absolute sincerity. The sincerity of the few will cover the insincerity or the indifference of the many.

The Dutch element of South Africa is religious according to its own lights. In South Africa, therefore, in times of famines or locust visitations, there are days officially appointed for humiliation and prayer. It is then no wonder that Andrews has found the best European sentiment ranging itself round a proposal which has its seat, not in his brain but in his heart. But he is not easily satisfied. He wants an adequate response from India and her public bodies. He wants no resolutions, he does not ask for money, he wants a melting of our hearts. He wants us, if we will, to look Godward. He wants us to seek help from God.

Andrews has become an Indian because he is an Englishman. He wants to rule not by force but by love. And love ever identifies itself with the loved one. He believes that the reputation of European humanity is at stake in South Africa. So much tribulation has been suffered in South Africa that in his opinion, the future of the relations between Asiatic and Coloured races and the European will largely depend upon the deliberations of the forthcoming Conference, which is mainly a result of his efforts. He wants divine blessings on these deliberations and asks our co-operation (in) invoking them. Let no one ask what is prayer and where and who is God. Both prayer and belief in God are supremely acts of faith. Let those, therefore, who have that faith respond to the appeal of this English Indian.

Prayer is a result of realisation of our helplessness and our final reliance upon God to the exclusion of all else. We are surely conscious of our helplessness. On the eve of his departure, the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri has called the Indian cause which he is going to espouse a "desperate cause." Let us then pray on the 19th if we have faith in God. All Hindus, *Mussalmans*, Christians, Parsis, Jews and others can join if they will. Though we may know Him by a thousand names, He is one and the same to us all.

*Young India*, November 25, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 32, pages 86-87

## 115. THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

Mr. Andrews cables as follows from Pretoria:

"PRAYER DAY ENDORSED BY DUTCH CHURCH NINETEENTH.  
HERTZOG RECEIVES DELEGATES<sup>241</sup> SEVENTEENTH. THEN RETIRES.  
FIRST SESSION TWENTIETH."

The endorsement of the prayer day by the Dutch Reformed Church is a great step towards securing an atmosphere favouring a just solution of the difficult question. The Dutch Church is a most conservative body in South Africa. It has rarely taken a broad view of the Indian or the general colour question as it is called in South Africa. The

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<sup>241</sup> Delegates to the Round Table Conference



reception that is to take place on the seventeenth by General Hertzog of the delegates to the Conference is a step in recognition of the tremendous importance of the Conference and of the issues that are to be discussed by the Conference.

I hope that the Indian public will back wholeheartedly the noble effort of this single-minded Englishman. One may thoughtlessly say that it costs nothing to offer prayers and that the pressmen will announce that prayers were offered for the success of the mission at so many places. But in reality it is a most difficult thing that Mr. Andrews has asked us to do. One can give of one's possessions willingly or unwillingly or even for a show one may give unwilling intellectual assent to a proposition. But there is no such thing as unwilling or showy heart co-operation. And what Mr. Andrews wants is heart co-operation, for, prayer is nothing else but an intense longing of the heart. You may express yourself through the lips; you may express yourself in the private closet or in public; but to be genuine, the expression must come from the deepest recesses of the heart. Let those who can, that is those who believe in the cause of the Indians of South Africa and who believe in God and therefore in prayer, set apart some time on the nineteenth instant for the heart co-operation with the Indian settlers of South Africa and invoke God's blessings on the deliberations of the Conference.

If there is anybody in India who still does not know what the Indian cause in South Africa is, let him or her understand that the very existence of the Indians in South Africa is at stake. Specifically, the Asiatic Bill that was suspended during the last session of the Union Parliament and which will be subject matter of discussion is a Bill which is so designed as to make it impossible for any self-respecting Indian to remain in South Africa. Let those who do not know the legal position of Indians in South Africa realise that they have practically no political status whatsoever within the Union. They have no rights even of residence in Orangia except as domestic servants. In many parts they cannot become owners of landed property. Throughout South Africa, the trading rights have been considerably curtailed and the administration of the existing legislation regarding trading rights is becoming more and more severe against Indian traders, even against those who are holders of trading licences of long standing. I say nothing about the social barriers that have been erected against them and consequent difficulties about freedom of travelling etc. They have hardly any facility for the education of their children worth the name. The position, therefore, it will be seen, is precarious enough as it is. The Asiatic Bill,<sup>242</sup> if it is passed, will put the finishing touch. The Conference has been brought about after tremendous difficulties to ease the situation and to secure the barest justice for the Indian settler. And it is on this effort that C. F. Andrews seeks to invoke the blessing of God on the nineteenth instant. Let those who believe, in all humility, tender their heart co-operation.

*Young India*, December 16, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 32, pages 431-32

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<sup>242</sup> Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill

## 116. MESSAGE TO PUBLIC MEETING, WARDHA, DECEMBER 19, 1926

I am glad you are having a prayer meeting in response to the appeal of that good soul Andrews. The problem in South Africa is the problem of the removal of untouchability. The work of the Conference now (being) held in South Africa will have a far-reaching effect not only on Indians but on all Asiatics, Negroes and others. Let us pray to God that He may inspire the members of the Conference with wisdom and that justice may be done.

*Bombay Chronicle*, December 22, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 32, page 437

## 117. SPEECH AT FORTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, GAUHATI, DECEMBER 26, 1926<sup>243</sup>

Gandhiji said that Mr. C. F. Andrews had kept him in touch with the position in South Africa through correspondence. Mr. Andrews had emphasised in his letters that prayers should be held all over for divine guidance of the Round Table Conference. Need for such prayer was paramount. They knew that the Indian Government had no power to force its will on South Africa. The recent Imperial Conference had conceded to the Dominions even greater freedom and independence in the field of imperial relations. They could, therefore, only pray to God to shower His blessings on those engaged in the discussions of the Round Table Conference so that enlightened by the divine blessings, the Conference might concede justice to the Indian settlers in South Africa.

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<sup>243</sup> Gandhiji addressed the Congress in Hindi while moving the following resolution:

"This Congress welcomes the Round Table Conference now sitting in South Africa to deliberate upon the best method of dealing with the question of the status of Indian settlers in that sub-continent and prays for divine blessing and guidance upon its deliberations.

"This Congress once more tenders its thanks to that good Englishman, Mr. C. F. Andrews, who has been chiefly instrumental in preparing in South Africa a calm atmosphere suitable for the holding of the Conference.

"This Congress authorises the President to cable the text of the resolution to General Hertzog, Sir M. Habibullah and Mr. C. F. Andrews."

The resolution was seconded by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and passed unanimously.

General Hertzog was Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and Sir M. Habibullah leader of the Indian delegation to the Round Table Conference.

He then drew the attention of the audience to the fact that the untouchability of South Africa, from which their countrymen were suffering, was nothing but a repercussion of Indian untouchability. It therefore behoved them to put their own house in order.

He reminded the South African statesmen that history showed those who having power abused it prepared for their own ruin, and implored them to grant the Indian settlers elementary justice which they desired. They did not ask for favours; in fact they had forgone, for the sake of peace, things they need not have in strict justice.

*Report of the Indian National Congress, Forty-first Session, Gauhati (Assam), 1926, pages 51-52; Collected Works, Volume 32, pages 463-64*

## **118. COMPARISON WITH UNTOUCHABILITY**

... We who are responsible for Indian untouchability are ourselves victims of it in South Africa. It is a case over again of "the biter bitten." We have sown the wind in India, we are reaping the whirlwind in South Africa.

The Round Table Conference is now sitting to consider whether there is a way out. Andrews is making Herculean efforts to bring about a happy result. He has mobilised the purest forces of South Africa in favour of the cause.

Let us, however, see the difference between the two untouchabilities. The Indian is withering. The axe has been laid at its root. Enlightened public opinion is against it. No one whose opinion carries any weight defends it. The chains that bind the "untouchables" are daily being broken. Law does not countenance it. What there is of it is all due to the persistence of custom. Customs die hard, they long survive the withdrawal of legal sanction, especially if they are ancient. The disappearance of Indian untouchability is now purely a question of time.

The South African species on the other hand is growing into a hardy tree. It is being daily armed with fresh legal sanctions. The legal disabilities of the Indian untouchables of South Africa have grown with every sitting of the Union Parliament since 1915 in spite of the final settlement of 1914. It is spreading in other parts of the British Empire, as was made plain by the Kenya letter printed last week in these columns.

It is against this growing evil that Andrews is fighting almost single-handed in South Africa. Let us hope that his efforts will be crowned with success.

But the very best way of dealing with the evil no doubt is to rid ourselves of it in India. The members of the Union deputation<sup>244</sup> were heard to say more than once that it would

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<sup>244</sup> The Parliamentary delegation from South Africa headed by F. W. Beyers, which

be time for Indians to agitate for the removal of the bar in South Africa when they had got rid of it in India. No doubt they forgot or did not know that with us here, there was no legislative bar against the untouchables. But it would ill become us to advance an argument of that nature when we are seeking justice. There is a fine legal maxim which is applicable to our case. Those who seek justice must come with clean hands. The best case therefore that we can prepare against South African untouchability is to put our own house in order. Till then, I suppose, we will have to be content with what palliatives the Round Table Conference secures for us...

*Young India*, December 30, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 32, pages 475-77

### **119. SIR HABIBULLAH DEPUTATION – I**

Mr. C. F. Andrews cables:

"ADVISABLE DELEGATION STAY TILL FEBRUARY TO TIDE OVER PROVINCIAL ELECTION AND KEEP ATMOSPHERE CALM."

I do hope that it would be possible for Lord Irwin<sup>245</sup> to comply with Mr. Andrews advice and permit the deputation to stay in South Africa till the elections are over. The elections in South Africa, as everywhere else, raise not the best thoughts but the worst passions and create bad blood. There is no doubt that the deputation's will be a restraining influence. But that, of course, from a South African point of view, may be the best reason for sending the deputation away before the elections begin. The candidates may resent the courteous curb that the presence of the deputation must impose upon a free flow of their eloquence.

*Young India*, December 30, 1926; *Collected Works*, Volume 32, page 477

### **120. SIR HABIBULLAH DEPUTATION – II**

I tender heartiest welcome to Sir Habibullah deputation on its return home. The public have not yet sufficient knowledge for forming a definite opinion about the results of the deputation. One thing is however certain that they have by their tact, ability and cohesion contributed not a little to the peaceful atmosphere that reigned supreme whilst the Round Table Conference was going on. One can only hope that the atmosphere will be reflected in the result of their deliberations. Not much importance need be attached to the cablegram from South Africa attributing the opinion on the part of a section of the Indian settlers, rejecting the conclusions of the Round Table Conference. It is as yet too

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arrived in India on a three-week visit at the invitation of the Government of India. Please see item 107 above.

<sup>245</sup>Viceroy of India, 1926-31

early. The opinion can only be based upon conjecture, for nobody knows what the conclusions are. We are therefore bound to suspend judgement till we have the full text before us of the agreement said to have been arrived at between the parties. The ever vigilant Mr. Andrews is there to watch Indian interests.

In this connection an Indian settler sends me the following appropriate reflections on the deliberations:<sup>246</sup>

"Recent messages from South Africa through Reuter's agency and Mr. C. F. Andrews suggest that with the enhanced status acquired by the Union of South Africa... she has begun to view the Indian question... in a more generous spirit...

"The Round Table Conference too according to the Hon. Mr. Sastri<sup>247</sup> has terminated successfully and Mr. Sastri has expressed his thorough satisfaction with the agreement arrived at between the Union and the Indian Government delegates... We can only wish that his high hopes may be fulfilled. Mr. Sastri has further advised the Indian settlers: 'If you, our people from India, play the game, it will not be long before you get your due... even in the measure that you expect.' Mr. Sastri has thus given the Indian settlers the hope that they would even be granted full civic rights. Whether Indians are given full civic rights or not, even if the present policy of persecuting and driving Indians from pillar to post is abandoned and they are allowed to earn an honest livelihood undisturbed and unmolested - the labour of the Conference will not have been in vain.

"It were well to give the advice to play the game to the Union Government. Even while we are given the hope of a satisfactory settlement of the Indian question and while we are being told that a change of heart has taken place, we find that the policy of depriving Indians of their means of livelihood and ousting them is being persistently pursued by the provincial governments with the sanction of the Union Government.

"The Town Council of Pietermaritzburg is clearing what it has chosen to term the European locality of every single Indian trader by refusing to grant him a renewal of his licence. Many old established firms have thus already had to close down their businesses in those places without any compensation whatsoever. From a report published in *Indian Opinion* dated December 31, we find that several tailors, shoemakers and barbers who were carrying on their respective occupations for the last ten, fifteen and twenty years have been refused licences on the only ground that they were Indians, and on appeal the decision of the Licensing Officer was upheld by the Town Council in every case. That this should happen just when the Conference was deliberating is not a little surprising and it is a glaring illustration of who has not been playing the game."

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<sup>246</sup> Only excerpts are reproduced here.

<sup>247</sup> V. S. Srinivasa Sastri

## 121. HONOURABLE COMPROMISE

Sir Mahomed Habibullah and his colleagues are to be congratulated upon having secured a settlement that is honourable to both parties. It is not the best that could be conceived, but it is the best that was possible. I doubt if any other deputation could have done more. The Class Areas Bill, which brought about the Conference and round which the battle raged, is dead and gone. The Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, who when the deputation sailed for South Africa was of all members the most communicative and had warned us not to expect much, did not conceal at the end of the labours of the Conference his satisfaction at the result. A perusal of the settlement warrants the satisfaction.

But like all compromises this one is not without its danger points. The dropping of the Class Areas Bill is balanced by repatriation, re-emerging as re-emigration. If the name is more dignified, it is also more dangerous. Repatriation could only be to India. Re-emigration can be to any country. The following sentence in the settlement clearly points to that interpretation: "The Union Government therefore will organise a scheme of assisted emigration to India or other countries where Western standards are not required." This assisted emigration to other countries I hold to be dangerous, for there is no knowing what may happen to the poor ignorant men going to an unknown land, where they would be utter strangers. Such countries as would have taken them would only be either Fiji or British Guiana. Neither has a good name in India. It is decidedly a disadvantage to have been party to assisted emigration to any other part of the world.

The good point about this assisted emigration is that whereas before the settlement the repatriates lost their domicile, the re-emigrants now retain it and lose it only if they absent themselves so long as to warrant the inference that there is no intention on their part to return to South Africa. How many assisted emigrants can hope to refund the assistance in money they might have received or how many can hope to return with their families is a different question. The non-forfeiture clause is clearly designed not so much to guarantee a substantial right as not to hurt national self-respect.

The annexure, containing a summary of "conclusions and recommendations reached by the Round Table Conference on the Indian question in South Africa," is a remarkable document betraying in every paragraph a heroic attempt to reconcile conflicting interests and sentiments. The industrious reader will have no difficulty in discovering hopeful paragraphs. I shall therefore content myself with drawing attention to a paragraph that is fraught with grave danger. The Union Government is "to take special steps under the Public Health Act for an investigation into the sanitary and housing conditions in and around Durban, which will include the question of the limitations of sale of municipal lands subject to restrictive conditions." I do not know what is aimed at in this paragraph, but my suspecting mind - and suspicion is based upon previous bitter experience of interpretations, warranted and unwarranted, that a strong party places upon agreements

with a weak party to the latter's disadvantage - conjures up all kinds of frightful consequences arising from this proposed committee and limitation. Already the Durban Corporation has been invested with powers which it has utilised for the suppression of its Indian citizens. So far as I know a committee can bring to light nothing that is not known to the Corporation or the Government. The appointment of an advisory committee of Indians may be simple padding. The Health Committee may bring in a hysterical report, as a previous committee to my knowledge has done, and limitations may be put upon the purchase of municipal lands by Indians which may cramp the Indian community residing in Durban. Nor do I like the paragraph which seems to imply that provincial governments are at liberty to take any action they might against the Indian settlers without reference to the Central Government.

But the compromise is acceptable in spite of the dangers referred to by me, not so much for what has been actually achieved as for the almost sudden transformation of the atmosphere in South Africa from one of remorseless hostility towards Indians to that of a generous toleration and from complete social ostracism to that of admission of Indians to social functions. Mr. Andrews sends me a glowing account of the utmost cordiality with which the Indian members of the deputation were received alike by the Government and the people, how local Indians were able to gain entry to the most fashionable hotel in Cape Town without any let or hindrance and how the Europeans in South Africa were flocking to him to know all about the Indian deputation and the Indian question. If this atmosphere of goodwill and sociability is kept up and encouraged, the settlement can be used as a solid foundation for erecting a beautiful temple of freedom for the Indian settlers in South Africa. But the success of the settlement very largely depends upon the selection of the Consul or Commissioner who will be selected to represent the Government of India. He must be a person of eminence, great ability and great strength of character, and in my opinion, he must be an Indian. The very fact of his being an Indian will strike the imagination of the European population and raise the Indian settlers in European estimation. He will reach the heart of Indians in a way no Englishman, not even perhaps Mr. Andrews, can, and if a man can be selected who will command the equal esteem of the Union Government we need not fear the future. Such a man in my humble opinion is Mr. Srinivasa Sastri. I cannot conclude this hasty survey of the settlement without placing on record my deepest conviction that the happy result is predominantly due to the ceaseless and prayerful labours of that godly self-effacing Englishman, Charlie Andrews.

*Young India*, February 24, 1927; *Collected Works*, Volume 33, pages 117-19

## PART IV

1927-36

### Editors' Note

Gandhiji was happy that the Government agreed to appoint a non-official Indian - V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, the scholarly and sagacious inheritor of Gokhale's mantle - as the first Agent in South Africa. Gandhiji had great confidence in Sastri who had played an important role at the round table conference in Cape Town. He had, in fact, suggested Sastri's name and persuaded him to accept the assignment.

Gandhiji saw the Agent's task as the modest one of seeing that "no fresh restrictive legislation was embarked upon by the Union Government and that the existing restrictive laws are administered liberally and with due regard to the vested rights." (Item 122). The position of Indians had deteriorated so much that it was difficult even to conceive of a return to the legal status and expectations of 1914.

Gandhiji helped Sastri in his work, both with advice tendered to him and by calling on Indian South Africans to cooperate with him fully. He defended Sastri from criticism, even by his son Manilal.

Gandhiji had felt that since 1920 when he had become a non-cooperator, he could do little to help Indian South Africans as he had no influence with the Indian Government and the Government was not responsive to public opinion. But now he was able to work with and through Sastri who represented not only the Government but in a way the people of India. Gandhiji, therefore, advised Indians in South Africa to seek help from Sastri, rather than himself.

Significantly, in letters to Sastri and to Indians in South Africa, as well as in articles in *Young India*, Gandhiji stressed the need for unity in the community - a need of which he was becoming increasingly conscious in the deteriorating communal situation within India as well.

Sastri was able to establish reasonably good relations with the leaders and officials of the South African Government and helped mitigate the problems of the Indians. For instance, the government agreed to a condonation scheme for Indians who entered the Transvaal on "fraudulent" certificates obtained before 1914 when the officials of the Asiatic Department in the Transvaal were corrupt.

All through 1928 and 1929 Gandhiji received a regular flow of letters, cables



and memoranda from South Africa on different questions agitating Indian settlers there. And the work of C.F. Andrews there continued to bring him joy and hope. Sastri completed his tenure in South Africa in 1929 and returned to India. Gandhiji wrote to his successor, K.V. Reddi: "I continue to receive anxious enquiries from South Africa. I am obliged to tell them all that they should worry you and not expect much from here." (Item 153).

"...not expect much from here." Was Gandhiji withdrawing from his involvement in South African affairs? On the contrary. He was, rather, seeking to encourage in the Indian settlers the self-sufficiency that was essential for the success of their struggle. A self-sufficiency, essentially, in the matter of initiative and leadership.

But, regrettably, there were serious divisions and rivalries among leaders of the Indian community for several years. Different groups and personalities were seeking favours from the Agent, instead of serving the community. They had become dependent on the Agent and hence the Indian Government.

Moreover, when Gandhiji learned of the fate of those "repatriated" from South Africa to India, including many Indians born in South Africa, he became disillusioned about the terms and operation of the Cape Town Agreement. He wrote in *Young India* on June 4, 1931:

"There should have been no agreed repatriation at all, and if there was to be any, there should have been ample provision previously made to ensure proper occupation for them, and in any case there should never have been any consent to the repatriation of colonial-born Indians, of whom there are fully thirty-three percent in the Calcutta depot."

He warned against bartering away the rights of the poor labouring population "for doubtful concessions to the other Indian settlers." (Item 157).

This section includes affectionate reminiscences of Imam Abdul Kadir Bawazeer, who was with him in the satyagraha in South Africa and became a member of his ashram in India.

Long gaps occur in the references to South African affairs from 1929 to 1939 due to Gandhiji's incarcerations and involvement in the fluctuating fortunes of the Indian National Movement.

## **122. SASTRI AS FIRST AMBASSADOR**

Very considerable relief will be felt by the Indian settlers in South Africa over the announcement that the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri has consented to become India's first Agent-General in that sub-continent, if the post is finally

offered to him by the Government of India.<sup>248</sup>

It is a great sacrifice that Sastri and the Servants of India Society have made. It is an open secret that left to himself he was not inclined to undertake the responsibility and to leave his work in India. But he has yielded to the pressure of friends, especially when it was urged upon him that he alone could successfully inaugurate the working of the Agreement in bringing about which he played not an inconsiderable part. We know from the cables that were sent from time to time from South Africa that the Europeans were anxious that he should accept the honour. Sjt. Srinivasa Sastri had by his eloquence, transparent sincerity, sweet reasonableness, and extreme earnestness won the esteem and respect of the Union Government and the Europeans in South Africa during the short time that he was there as a member of the Habibullah deputation... I know how nervously anxious our countrymen in South Africa were that he should become the first Agent. It was impossible for Sjt. Srinivasa Sastri whom God has endowed with a generous nature not to respond to such a unanimous call from South Africa. It is almost a foregone conclusion that the appointment will be duly made and very shortly announced.

The first Agent-General will have his work cut out for him. Both the Union Government and our countrymen have no doubt high expectations of India's first ambassador. The Union Government no doubt think that being an Indian and a person of great distinction he will make their path smooth with the Indian community in connection with any measures that they may take. In other words, they will expect him to be their sympathetic interpreter both to the Indian community and to the Government of India. Our countrymen equally surely expect him to insist upon an honourable and even a liberal interpretation and fulfilment of the Agreement. It is any time a delicate task to please rival claimants, more so now in South Africa where the clash of conflicting interests is simply bewildering. But I know that if anybody can hold the scales absolutely even and thus give satisfaction to all parties concerned, Sjt. Srinivasa Sastri is certainly the one to be able to do so. I feel certain that the Union Ministers do not expect the new Agent to surrender an inch of what is justly due to the Indian community. All he can be expected to do is to persuade the Indian settlers not to go behind and travel beyond the Settlement of 1914, for some time to come at any rate, until they have proved themselves entitled, by exemplary self-restraint and behaviour, to an enlargement of the position attained by the Agreement of 1914. Our countrymen in South Africa, if they intend to make the Agent's position fairly easy and their own position secure, will not expect him to work wonders. It will be wrong to look forward to a

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<sup>248</sup> Mr. Sastri was appointed representative of the Government of India in South Africa with the title of "Agent" and served in that capacity for a year and a half from 1927 to 1929. The rank of the representative was raised to "Agent-General" in 1935.

complete transformation of the old position, because an honourable Agreement has been arrived at and because a great countryman is going to South Africa to see to the fulfilment of that Agreement. They must remember that the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri is not going there as their counsel briefed to attend to every individual grievance. To smother him with detailed individual grievances would be to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. He goes there as a trustee for India's honour. He goes there to safeguard the rights and liberty of the general body of Indian settlers. He will be there to see that no fresh restrictive legislation is embarked upon by the Union Government and that the existing restrictive laws are administered liberally and with due regard to the vested rights. Any individual grievance therefore that he might be called upon to tackle will have to be in terms of the position I have set forth, that is to say, it will have to be illustrative of some general principle of wide application. Unless therefore the Indian community exercises prudential restraint upon themselves in approaching him for redress of their individual grievances, they will make the Agent's position intolerable and even useless for the high purpose for which it is intended. Indeed such an ambassador's usefulness lies not so much in work appertaining to his official capacity as to the indirect service he can render by his sociableness, and by his character, which leaves its impress upon anything and anybody that it comes in contact with officially or otherwise. And if our countrymen desire to make use of the great qualities of head and heart that Sjt. Sastri possesses, they will bear in mind the limitations I have endeavoured to set forth.

I understand that if Sjt. Sastri goes, Mrs. Sastri too will accompany him. This will be a great gain to the settlers...

*Young India*, May 19, 1927; *Collected Works*, Volume 33, pages 269-70

### **123. APPEAL TO SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS<sup>249</sup>**

The Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri has yielded to the pressure of friends in accepting the office of the first ambassador for India in South Africa, at the sacrifice of his cherished wishes, solely with the object of serving you. It rests with you to make the best use of his services and his presence amongst you. You cannot do so unless you fulfil the following conditions:

1. You will not expect too much.
2. You will not try to seek relief in purely individual cases through him.
3. You will not swerve from truth in your dealings with him. To be false to him would be to be false to yourselves.
4. You will remain completely united.

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<sup>249</sup> The Gujarati original, from which this was translated, was published in *Navajivan*, May 15, 1927.

5. You will put your own house in order and purify yourselves.

You will not assume that all your grievances will disappear with the coming of the Rt. Hon. Sastri as the first Agent. He will have done enough if he succeeds in seeing that no new restrictive legislation is passed against you, that the operation of the old restrictive enactments is not made unnecessarily harsh and that the spirit of the new Agreement is carried out by the Union Government.

The Rt. Hon. Sastri is going there as the representative, not of individuals, but of India as a whole. He is going there to uphold the prestige of India. Therefore you will not run to him for relief in every individual case. If you do, you will make the mistake of expending a pound for the matter of a penny.

Our strength depends solely on truth. No matter how you behave in your business dealings, you will never in the interests of the community think of swerving from the path of truth in your dealings with the Rt. Hon. Sastri. In attempting to deceive him you will be working your own ruin.

We here constantly receive reports of dissensions amongst you. If you go on creating different and conflicting interests, e.g., the rights of the rich as distinguished from those of the poor, the rights of the North Indians as distinguished from those of South Indians, of the Colonial-born as distinguished from those of the merchants, of the latter from those of the indentured, of the Transvaal Indians as distinguished from those of the Cape Indians and Natal Indians, you will lose the little that you have gained. If you want to better the position of the whole community, you will always stand united.

We are ultimately to win by our own endeavour which does not mean sharp practice, but self-purification, which again means reform from within and purging ourselves of evil customs and superstitions, educating our children, and contributing money for education as well as other measures of social reform. In this work of self-purification, the Rt. Hon. Sastri's profound experience as an educationist and reformer should be very helpful, and the presence of Mrs. Sastri should be an inspiration to our women.

You will never get another such opportunity in the near future of ameliorating your condition. In my opinion it was impossible to find a worthier, abler and more impartial representative than the Rt. Hon. Sastri. Let us believe that the Hand of God has brought about this happy consummation. It rests with you entirely to benefit or not by the chance which God has in his mercy given you. May He show you the right path.

*Young India*, May 19, 1927; *Collected Works*, Volume 33, pages 326-27

## 124. LETTER TO V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI, MAY 15, 1927

Nandi Hills,  
May 15, 1927

Dear brother,

I must dictate this letter. I forgot to mention one thing to you. I think I gave you the name of Umar Hajee Ahmed Jhaveri, one of the most truthful men I have met in my life.<sup>250</sup> If he has thought ill of a person, I have known him to tell him so and apologise. He is the brother of the very first Indian merchant who went to South Africa, the late Abubakar Ahmed. Umar Hajee Ahmed has considerable property in Durban and has a plot of land with handsome buildings in a central place in Church Street, Pretoria. This property was the only property registered in the name of an Indian in the Transvaal. It became a point of honour with us to insist upon that property remaining in the ownership of Indians. Mr. Jhaveri was telling me that there was some dispute about it. I don't remember the exact circumstances in which the matter stands at present, though of course the past history I know well. This is a matter that might come before you. You will then recall the fact that I mentioned it to you. This is no individual matter but one of national concern. There is correspondence about this between General Smuts and myself. You will see all the papers if the case ever comes before you.

I saw Dr. Malan's cable. It was splendid. I am glad you are going so early as 8th June. Poor Andrews is being torn to pieces, and you will not reach South Africa a moment too soon.

The Natal Provincial Council's vote is indeed a bad beginning. But in the Cape Parliament the Natal vote counts for little. I have no doubt that you will have no difficulty with the Natal members, some of whom are good, and all of them, unlike as in the Transvaal, the Orange and even the Cape, are proud of the British connection. But, probably, you already know all such things.

Yours sincerely,

*Collected Works*, Volume 33, page 329

## 125. HORRIBLE PRACTICES<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Umar (or Omar, Omer) Jhaveri, an early associate of Gandhiji in South Africa and a leader of the Indian community

<sup>251</sup> This was a comment on a letter from the Reverend C. F. Andrews who had referred to the evil practices of self-torture like "fire-walking" festivals by

I know the temple at Umbilo, which may really be called a suburb of Durban. Even years ago, when the temple was erected, I had my misgivings. Bitter experience has taught me that all temples are not houses of God. They can be habitations of the devil. These places of worship have no value unless the keeper is a good man of God. Temples, mosques, churches are what man makes them to be. I am therefore not surprised at the painful and horribly superstitious practices going on in this so-called temple. The origin of these practices is easy enough to trace. There are three classes of Indians in South Africa. The free Indian trader has nothing to do with these practices. Nor have the large number of Colonial-born Indians who have received in the face of terrible odds a tolerably liberal education. The third class is the indentured Indian, now become free. He is drawn mainly from the poorest class here. Nothing has ever been done by the Government or the employers or by the free Indian community to help these unfortunate men and women out of their ignorance and superstition. The result is that they are preyed upon by superstitious and even evil-minded men who pose as priests and holy men. They mutter a few Sanskrit verses whose meaning they do not know and which they horribly mispronounce, and resort to all kinds of awe-inspiring practices. And what can be better than a temple, where simple people congregate and where every kind of superstition derives a halo from associations attributed to temples? I think that the common law of South Africa is wide enough to deal with these practices if the Government desires to put them down.

The fact is, unfortunately, that the prejudice against Indians in South Africa is not ascribable to these practices, nor is it directed against the men who are victims of this barbarism. It is directed chiefly against the free trading class who have nothing to do with these practices. And therefore these practices have gone without any notice or comment. And if they are now being noticed, it is in order to prejudice the European mind against the Habibullah Agreement<sup>252</sup> and against what little relief is sought to be given to the Indian settlers. It should also be borne in mind that these practices are by no means common amongst Indians throughout South Africa. They are confined only to the part of the coast of Natal where indentured Indians are to be found in their largest numbers. If therefore the Government intend to put these practices down, they can do so under the common law with ease, and they can be dealt with also through municipal bye-laws. I am sure that if action is taken, not a voice will be raised against it in the name of religion falsely so called for sheltering these practices. No cultured Indian will have anything to do with them, and the ignorant people who witness these tortures with awe will not dare to defend them in a court of law. What we can do here is to encourage cultured Indians in South Africa to fight the superstition. They should, without

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Indians at Umbilo temple and to a page of pictures of such things in the *Natal Advertiser*.

<sup>252</sup> The Cape Town Agreement between the Governments of the Union of South Africa and India. Please see Appendix III.

seeking Government intervention, work in the midst of the poor people, and wean them from these barbarisms, and advise them to help the Government, if they choose to prosecute those who take part in those practices, thus showing their desire not to reproduce in South Africa all that is bad in our life, but to reproduce only that which is good in our civilisation. It is our duty to advise and encourage our countrymen in South Africa to do nothing that will give a handle to the agitation against them.

*Young India*, May 19, 1927; *Collected Works*, Volume 33, pages 339-40

## **126. TELEGRAM TO THE TRANSVAAL BRITISH INDIAN ASSOCIATION, JUNE 1927<sup>253</sup>**

BIAS<sup>254</sup>  
JOHANNESBURG

STRONGLY ADVISE JOINT ACTION

GANDHI

*Collected Works*, Volume 33, page 435

## **127. LETTER TO A. I. KAJEE, JULY 17, 1927**

As at the Ashram, Sabarmati,  
July 17, 1927

My dear Kajee,

I was delighted to receive your letter after a long absence. It is difficult to give you guidance from this distance over differences with the Transvaal. I am, however, hoping that Mr. Sastri's arrival has smoothed matters over. As soon as I got the cablegram from Johannesburg, I sent a reply which I hope was duly received. Do please keep me informed of further developments...

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<sup>253</sup> This was in response to a cable dated June 3, 1927, from A. I. Kajee which read:

"TRANSVAAL INDIAN SECESSION FROM CONGRESS DESTROYS SOLIDARITY OUR COMMUNITY. MASS MEETING JOHANNESBURG SUNDAY. EXTREMELY NECESSARY YOU CABLE IMMEDIATELY TO ASSOCIATION AGAINST SUCH ACTION."

The Transvaal British Indian Association seceded from the South African Indian Congress in May 1927.

<sup>254</sup> Telegraphic address of the Transvaal British Indian Association

Yours sincerely,

*Collected Works*, Volume 34, page 184

## 128. LETTER TO V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI, AUGUST 1, 1927

Bangalore  
August 1, 1927

My dear brother,

I was thankful for your first letter from South Africa. The hopeful note cheers me.

The Transvaal, I see, is causing you some anxiety. But I have every hope that the people there will ultimately listen to you.

I notice your appeal for social workers. You won't get any from this end. I know Devadhar<sup>255</sup> contemplates sending or even taking a batch. But my own feeling is that it is essentially work for local volunteers. But whether it is done by local volunteers or workers imported from here, the work is worth doing and has got to be done. The Government of India, the Natal Government and the planters are not a little to blame for the mischief. The tone having been once set, it is tremendously difficult to set another all of a sudden. All strength to your elbow.

Do please keep your health.

Andrews cabled about your expenses. I am not going to weary you with what was done here. But I am informed that you will have all the assistance you need. I personally feel quite at ease. It is not the style of living that is going to count in your case, it is your internal strength that is going to count and is counting already...

With love,

Yours,  
M. K. Gandhi

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<sup>255</sup> Gopal Krishna Devadhar(1871-1935), one of the founding members of the Servants of India Society and its President from 1927, succeeding Mr. Srinivasa Sastri.



## 129. INDIAN SETTLERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

India's first ambassador has not allowed the grass to grow under his feet. He is busily sowing seeds of true union by a seasonable word now addressed to the Europeans and now to the Indian settlers, and he seems to be having fair success with both. Europeans gracefully acknowledge his splendid worth and exquisite impartiality. Indians gratefully recognise the immense strength of character which backs every word that this great son of India utters.

He has now appealed to them to produce an army of social workers in the cause of public health and sanitation. Let us hope that his appeal will not fall upon deaf ears, and that well-to-do and educated Indians will respond as zealously as they did when C. F. Andrews appealed to them for assistance for the scavenging work he did during the outbreak of smallpox in Durban some months ago.<sup>256</sup> Agent though he is of the Government, if Reuter's report is correct, Sjt. Sastri did not spare it over its criminal indifference about the sanitary and social welfare of the indentured Indians. For the neglect of sanitation amongst the indentured Indians, three parties are really responsible - the Government of India, the employers, and the local government. If the Government of India had insisted upon a minimum standard, and if the employers had taken a human interest in the employees and the local government had considered the indentured Indians as future citizens of South Africa, they would have learnt, during their five years' indenture, habits of modern sanitation. For during the five years of indenture they had to live like soldiers in barracks and they could have been made to conform to any reasonable sanitary regulations that might have been framed, even as they were made to conform to labour regulations which were often even harsh and severe. But this is past history. There is no more indentured emigration now.

The question is now to make of the existing Indian population model citizens, and if the Government and the Indian settlers cooperate, it is not at all impossible to set a better tone, and create a healthy Indian public opinion that would not tolerate any insanitation or ugliness. Let the Indian settlers do their part of forming sanitation brigades, cleaning up latrines and streets and instructing ignorant people in the elementary laws of sanitation, even as they did in 1897 in Durban. Sjt. Sastri's work will be fruitless unless he is willingly and whole-heartedly helped by the Indian settlers. They must conform to the wholesome maxim of law that those who seek justice or equity must come with clean hands. Let the settlers be clean in body, mind and soul, and thus

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<sup>256</sup> Please see item 111 above.

make the best use of the golden opportunity they have of having an Ambassador who has got the ability to serve them and who has in a remarkable measure the ear of the European inhabitants of South Africa.

*Young India*, August 11, 1927; *Collected Works*, Volume 34, pages 311-12

### **130. LETTER TO V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI, AUGUST 12, 1927**

As at Bangalore,  
August 12, 1927

I do not know that you want to know Mr. Andrews' opinion about your work. But he has thought it worth while to spend money on cabling the following to me:

"SASTRI'S SUCCESS UNPRECEDENTED. GOVERNOR-GENERAL ADMIRABLY SUPPORTING, ALSO MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS."

It is difficult to trust Andrews with any monies for telegraphic charges, and yet I cannot summon sufficient courage to swear at him for this cable news. I am not going to make use of it for the press. I never had any doubt about your success. All I want to be sure of is your health.

I see you are already telling the public that your term of office will not go beyond one year. Anyway I have your assurance that you will not run away even for the Commission if your presence is indispensable there at the end of the year which is fast spinning away its course.

There was too a good letter from Miss Schlesin<sup>257</sup> from which I was tempted to quote, but I restricted the temptation and destroyed the letter. Ere this reaches you, if she kept her promise, she must have seen you.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi

*Collected Works*, Volume 34, pages 332-33

### **141. LETTER TO V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI, JUNE 4, 1928**

Sabarmati,  
June 4, 1928

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<sup>257</sup> Miss Sonja Schlesin, Gandhiji's former secretary in South Africa

My dear friend and brother,

You are posting me regularly with the events on your side. They help me much.

I am writing this week a cautious article in *Young India* on the two judgements. If possible, I shall send you an advance copy.

Pragji<sup>258</sup> has written a long letter to me. He is a good man. I have acted upon your cablegram and cabled to our friends there that they should rely on you for guidance.

I do hope you are keeping well.

Yours sincerely,

*Collected Works*, Volume 36, page 363

## 142. INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA: TWO CASES

Two very important cases have been decided recently by the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa. One of them, *S. B. Medh v. Immigrants Appeal Board*, though important in itself, affects only a few special cases of Indians who received exemption certificates under the Smuts-Gandhi Settlement as being educated Indians. It was contended by the Union Government that the exemptions were not complete. I need not go into greater detail. The Court has now found that the exemptions were complete in the sense submitted on behalf of the appellant.

The other case, *Daya Purshottam v. Immigrants Appeal Board*, has far-reaching consequences for the Indian settlers. The judgement in this case lays down that section 5 of Act 37 of 1927 does not possess retrospective effect. Hence certificates obtained by fraudulent means do not become cancellable at the will of the Immigration Board or the Immigration Officer. If this judgement stands, holders of certificates even though they were originally tainted will remain undisturbed. This is a great victory for the settlers. I have no desire to see fraud in any shape or form protected. But the case of these settlers is not one of ordinary fraud. In many cases, at least up to 1914 the Asiatic Office<sup>259</sup> was a corrupt department and it made it practically impossible for *bona fide* entrants to enter unless they resorted to some crooked means so as to satisfy the greed of the Asiatic officers. Where Government officials are privy to fraud, it ill becomes that Government to punish the helpless victims.

Cables from the South African settlers tell me that the Government are appealing against the two decisions. I venture to suggest to the Union Government that it would be more in

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<sup>258</sup> Pragjivan Desai

<sup>259</sup> In the Transvaal

keeping with their conciliatory attitude and the spirit of the new understanding that they do not seek to deprive the Indians of the advantage the two appeals give them. The judgement in the first appeal protects only a few individuals. And in their case there is no question of fraud. The judgement in the second appeal protects a fair number of those who are already in the Union. It will be no serious calamity for the Union to have to absorb a few more Indians than the Government had counted upon. The Union Government should remember that these appeals are very expensive affairs especially for the poor Indians. It is hardly fair for an organised powerful Government to take successful citizens through appellate courts and thus exhaust them into submission or worse. It may be well to possess a giant's strength, but it is admittedly wrong to use it against dwarfs.

The settlers will do well not to set much store by their success in these two appeals. They have in *Sjt. Sastri* a great friend and adviser. Let them press their suit as much as ever before him but having done so let them abide by his advice. He will use in their behalf all the influence he has acquired with the Union Government. I welcome their cables. I appreciate the trust they repose in me. But my power to help them from this distance and in the changed circumstances I found myself in 1920 is much too limited to be of value. Their strength therefore lies in their unity, moderation and reliance upon one who is not merely Agent-General for the Government of India but is their true and powerful friend and guide.

*Young India*, June 7, 1928; *Collected Works*, Volume 36, pages 371-72

### **143. FOR SOUTH AFRICA INDIANS**

A cable from the Secretary, South African Indian Congress, Johannesburg, says:

"CONDONATION SCHEME ACCEPTED. ILLEGAL ENTRANTS IN THE UNION NOW IN INDIA MUST EITHER RETURN BEFORE 30TH SEPTEMBER NEXT OR SEND APPLICATIONS TO REACH BEFORE THAT DATE THE COMMISSIONER, ASIATIC AFFAIRS, PRETORIA. AFTER SENDING APPLICATIONS THEY MUST RETURN TO THE UNION BEFORE 30TH MARCH, 1929. GIVE WIDE NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY ALL PARTS INDIA."

This ends the agitation that was going on in South Africa in respect of the condonation scheme and was making the Rt. Hon. Sastri's position difficult and causing an anxious time in South Africa as well as here. Let those Indians, who have domiciled rights in South Africa, are holders of certificates and are desirous of availing themselves of the right of return, make haste to send their applications so as to reach the Commissioner of Asiatic Affairs, Pretoria, on or before the 30th September next, unless they propose to proceed to South Africa themselves so as to reach there before that date. Each applicant should give full particulars, giving name, address, occupation, date and number of certificates and disclose all relevant facts. The application should be sent by registered post in good time...

*Young India*, July 19, 1928; *Collected Works*, Volume 37, pages 72-73

## 144. SOUTH AFRICA'S CONTRIBUTION

A friend writes from South Africa:

"Reuter cabled from India that the South African Indians are sending every month five *lakhs* of rupees for the Bardoli no-tax campaign. A mischievous thing, besides being a gross exaggeration. The prejudice caused by the remittance of moneys to India will now be deepened and given a sharp edge. So far as I have been able to ascertain, about £500 have been sent in all for the Bardoli fund."<sup>260</sup>

It has not been without pain that I have followed the campaign of lies that has gathered round the Bardoli struggle. Nothing was evidently considered too mean or too palpably absurd to damage a cause which had no secrecy about it and which was intended to cause no injury to a single soul and which had no direct political aim. Without verification and probably from malice prepense the falsehood that *lakhs* of rupees were being received by *satyagrahis* from South Africa was given currency. Well, the cause of *satyagraha* was not damaged by the false statement. But the cause of Indians in South Africa can be easily damaged if the white colonists can be persuaded that vast sums of money are being sent from South Africa to Bardoli and that to sustain an agitation which they may dislike. I hope however that not much notice was taken of the statement in South Africa. Anyway I can corroborate what the correspondent says. Anyone can look at the accounts lying at Bardoli or receipts for the Bardoli Fund and he will find that the correspondent's information is much nearer the truth than the inflammatory statement cabled to South Africa.

*Young India*, August 16, 1928; *Collected Works*, Volume 37, pages 182-83

145. TELEGRAM TO V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI, SEPTEMBER 20, 1928

RIGHT HONOURABLE SASTRI  
PRETORIA

PRAY INTEREST YOURSELF IN ABOOBAKER'S PRETORIA PROPERTY. OMER JHAVERI HIS BROTHER WILL SEE YOU. PROPERTY WAS MATTER PUBLIC SETTLEMENT OF 1908. IT MUST BE PRESERVED FOR HEIRS AND SUCCESSORS

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<sup>260</sup> A *satyagraha* was conducted by peasants in Bardoli from February 1928 - under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel and the guidance of Gandhiji - against an increase of land revenue assessment. It ended with a settlement on August 6, 1928.

*Collected Works*, Volume 37, page 291

## 146. SASTRI'S WORK

A graphic letter received this week from an eye-witness describes the now famous Klerksdorp incident of which the South African press is full. Though nothing remains or needs to be said from the political standpoint after the full, free and frank apology from the Union Government, too much cannot be said of *Sjt.* Sastri's generous and courageous behaviour in the face of a plot which might have proved fatal in its result. The letter before me shows how this true son and representative of India stood his ground without the least nervousness even when the lights were put out by the party that had come led by the Deputy Mayor to break up the meeting he was addressing. And when the firing of an explosive had made the meeting hall too suffocating for the audience, *Sjt.* Sastri went outside and, as if nothing untoward or serious had happened, finished his speech without even referring to the incident. Popular as he had already become among the Europeans of South Africa before this incident, his cool courage and generous behaviour raised him still further in this estimation.<sup>262</sup>

And as he wanted no fame for himself (few men would be found shier than *Sjt.* Sastri of fame), he turned his popularity to the advancement of the cause he has represented with such singular ability and success. During his all too brief stay in South Africa he has immensely raised the status of our countrymen in that part of the world. Let us hope that they will by their exemplary conduct show themselves worthy of him.

But Sastri's contribution to the solution of the difficult and delicate problem of South Africa does not rest merely upon what was after all an accident. We know nothing except through the results of the inner working of the ambassador's office in which he had to exhaust all his art of a diplomacy that comes from a conviction of the correctness of one's cause and that spurns to do or countenance anything wrong, mean or crooked. But we do know how unsparing he has been in the use on behalf of his cause of the gifts of eloquence, scholarship, both English and Sanskrit, and great and varied learning with which nature has lavishly endowed him. He has been delivering to large and select

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<sup>261</sup> On the same day, Gandhiji cabled Mr. Jhaveri in Durban asking him to see Mr. Sastri. *Collected Works*, Volume 37, page 291.

Please see also item 124 above.

<sup>262</sup> The Anti-Asiatic party continued its agitation even after the Cape Town Agreement, and attempted a boycott of the Indian shops.

In September 1928, when Mr. Sastri was invited to address a meeting in the Town Hall of Klerksdorp, chaired by the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor led a group anti-Indian demonstrators who shouted insults at Mr. Sastri and tried to disrupt the meeting. After they exploded a stink bomb, the meeting was adjourned to the outside and Mr. Sastri resumed his speech.

The South African Government apologised for the incident.

audiences of Europeans lectures on Indian philosophy and culture which have stirred European imagination and softened the hard crust of prejudice which has hitherto prevented the general body of Europeans from seeing anything good in the Indian. These lectures are perhaps his greatest and the most permanent contribution to the Indian cause in South Africa.

It must be a serious problem for the Government of India to choose *Sjt.* Sastri's successor. He has persistently withstood all pressure to prolong his stay in South Africa. Letters from South Africa show me how our people dread *Sjt.* Sastri's impending departure. It will be a calamity if a worthy successor is not found to continue the mission so successfully inaugurated and represented by *Sjt.* Sastri. Tradition has, I hope, been set up at the Viceregal Lodge of treating the office of India's Agent in South Africa as neutral ground which the Government and popular parties may jointly tread. It is to be hoped that the successor to be chosen will be one who will commend himself equally to the Government and the people, and who will truly represent not merely the Government of India but the people as well.

*Young India*, October 18, 1928; *Collected Works*, Volume 37, pages 368-69

#### **147. TELEGRAM TO G. D. BIRLA, OCTOBER 30, 1928<sup>263</sup>**

Ahmedabad,  
October 30, 1928

...ON GENERAL GROUNDS INVITATION SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISTS  
ADVISABLE

GANDHI

*Collected Works*, Volume 37, page 417

#### **148. LETTER TO SIR MAHOMED HABIBULLAH, NOVEMBER 3, 1928**

*Satyagraha Ashram*, Sabarmati,  
November 3, 1928

Dear friend,

I have your letter. I knew *Sjt.* Sastri's suggestion. I do think that the South African journalists' coming to India is likely to result in a better understanding.

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>263</sup> This concerns a suggestion by Mr. Sastri that a group of journalists from South Africa be invited to India.

Sir Mahomed Habibullah Saheb Bahadur, K.C.I.E.  
Member, Viceroy's Council,  
New Delhi

*Collected Works*, Volume 38, page 10

### **149. A SOUTH AFRICAN TRIBUTE TO MR. SASTRI**

I have hitherto resisted the publication of the many tributes to the Rt. Hon. Sastri's work in South Africa that I have found in the cuttings friends in South Africa have sent me. But now that his return to the Motherland is imminent, I cannot resist the temptation to quote in full the following ungrudging tribute from Professor Bell of Cape Town...<sup>264</sup>

His official work, great as it has been, has been outweighed by his unofficial contribution. His transparent sincerity and his passionate love of his country made him give unstintingly the whole of his matchless gifts to the service of the cause that took him to South Africa. The result is a changed atmosphere in that sub-continent and a smoother passage for his successor. Let me hope that the great service rendered by the distinguished patriot to the country will be crowned by a rousing reception on his landing, not for his sake but for ours.<sup>265</sup>

*Young India*, January 31, 1929; *Collected works*, Volume 38, page 415

### **150. INTERVIEW TO SOUTH AFRICAN VISITOR<sup>266</sup>**

...The third (interview) was with a highly educated African from South Africa. He had received his education in America but had returned to the home of his ancestors to serve his people. He was very much pained at the apathy of educated Africans towards their own race. "*They become altogether like aliens, they are lost to the race,*" he bitterly complained.

*"We are crushed, trampled upon and oppressed. We do not know which way to turn. The bulk of us are ignorant. The daughter of ignorance is poverty. The two processes go hand in hand and move in a vicious circle. Then there is the outside force, pitiless*

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<sup>264</sup> Not reproduced here.

<sup>265</sup> For further tributes to Mr. Sastri, please see *Collected Works*, Volume 39, page 425, and Volume 40, page 54.

<sup>266</sup> Based on the report by Pyarelal. The interview took place before March 1, 1929; the exact date is not available.



*and unrelenting like a blind force of Nature without any possibility of reprieve or appeal. We feel stricken and overwhelmed. Instinctively we turn to India for a message of hope and deliverance, for we believe that India has a mission to fulfil with regard to all the oppressed races of the world."*

Gandhiji was deeply touched.

"I had occasion to discuss this subject with the Natives while I was in South Africa. I told them that they had got to help themselves and always to work in the hope that help would come to them from somewhere when the hour for it arrived. In the meantime they had to prepare themselves for it by a process of self-purification."

*"I see your point, but what we want to understand from you is how to relate this inner process with the actual problems of the day that confront us - how to set this process of self-purification in motion."*

"The first step is to turn the searchlight inward, to proclaim your feelings to yourself and the world. There is nothing so debasing and demoralising as to conceal your weakness and profess to have strength which you do not possess. The second thing would be to set about boldly and fearlessly to purify public life. Unfortunately a belief has today sprung up that one's private character has nothing to do with one's public activity. This superstition must go. Our public workers must set about the task of reforming society by reforming themselves first. This spiritual weapon of self-purification, intangible as it seems, is the most potent means for revolutionising one's environment and for loosening external shackles. It works subtly and invisibly; it is an intensive process and though it might often seem a weary and long-drawn-out process, it is the straightest way to liberation, the surest and the quickest, and no effort can be too great for it. What it requires is faith - an unshakeable, mountain-like faith that flinches from nothing."

Gandhiji thought that he had said enough and that the conversation was finished, but the African friend sprang a big surprise upon him by telling him how much interested he had been in India's effort to revive the cottage industries of spinning and weaving. He was, he said, anxious to introduce it among his own people who were victims of the economic and moral consequences of unemployment and idleness. What appealed to him most about spinning was the possibilities for awakening and fostering a sense of solidarity and oneness among his people.

*"We have some villages that grow their own food. We have experimentally begun to grow cotton also. We want now to teach our people to manufacture their own cloth and thus to make our villages practically self-contained. It will give us a new social vision, and a new mass consciousness."*

He was sure that spinning could become a most potent means of mobilising race consciousness against imperialistic exploitation. He enquired whether Gandhiji could send a teacher to South Africa. Gandhiji said his son Manilal could teach spinning.

"But I make a better and sporting offer. I would undertake to take six young men here free of charge and give them a full course of training here. Only they will have to accommodate themselves to the discipline and the simplicity of life that prevails here."

The African friend was pleased with the offer and said:

*"Certainly, my people should lead a simple life. I shall certainly try to avail myself of your offer. I hope to write to you from South Africa."*

*Young India*, March 28, 1929; *Collected Works*, Volume 40, pages 61-64

## 151. SOUTH AFRICAN REPATRIATES

The Secretaries of the South African (Indian) Congress have sent me the following letter:<sup>267</sup>

"It was stated that the Government of India have taken no steps to assist the repatriates, that they are stranded and are unable to find employment, that the present-day conditions in India are not congenial to them, that reports have been read conveyed by letters from repatriates, that owing to absence of work and assistance from the authorities, they are either starving or undergoing much suffering and consequently many of them have, by force of adverse circumstances, migrated to Fiji or Malaya.

"In the Cape Town Agreement, one of the conditions accepted by the Government of India in regard to the scheme is that on their arrival in India the emigrants will be helped as far as possible to settle in the occupations for which they are best suited by their aptitude or their resources...

"Judging from the report received from the repatriates, it is doubtful whether the Government of India are doing anything at all to help the repatriates...

"This Congress will be extremely grateful to you if you will afford information on the subject so that it may be guided in making full representations to the authorities."

I refrain from offering any comment at the present moment. But I shall await some statement from the authorities. There is no doubt that if these repatriates are to be received, they must be specially cared for. India to most of them is like a foreign land.

*Young India*, May 2, 1929; *Collected Works*, Volume 40, page 325

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<sup>267</sup> Only extracts are reproduced here.

## 152. INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA: TRADE LICENCES

The office of the Agent of the Government of India in South Africa is certainly not a bed of roses. Sir K. V. Reddi,<sup>268</sup> I see from the mail letter received from South Africa, is having his hands full. The greatest cause of anxiety so far as I can see is in connection with trade licences in the area known as the Gold Area in the Transvaal. The largest number of Indian traders in the Transvaal are to be found in this area and these trade licences are a matter of life and death for them. They have built up large business in the hope of being able to have their licences renewed from year to year. Having survived the danger in the Kruger regime<sup>269</sup> of their businesses being summarily closed at any time, they have rightly or wrongly come to believe that their licences will be perpetually renewed so long as they carry on an honest trade. I have certainly thought that the settlement of 1914<sup>270</sup> covered all these traders and their successors. If these were not vested rights, I do not know what vested rights could be in the Transvaal for them.

But now I understand that municipalities are refusing to issue these licences, taking cover under a section of Gold Law. Legally speaking, perhaps the Gold Law would prohibit Asiatics' trading. But that law was in existence even during the Kruger regime. It was in existence in 1914 when this settlement was arrived at. Therefore Sir K.V. Reddi should have no difficulty in securing protection for these traders.

The agreement which was brought about by the Habibullah deputation contemplates levelling up of the British Indian position in South Africa. Levelling up will be a meaningless term for these traders if the only means of earning their bread and butter is taken away from them. It is necessary therefore for public opinion here to strengthen the hands of the Agent in South Africa and the hands of the Government of India in prosecuting the claim for the protection of these traders.

The matter is not free from difficulty I know. There is the general election pending in South Africa. The Union Ministers left to themselves will probably grant the protection that is so desirable. And that should be considered as obligatory if there is to be an honourable fulfilment of the Cape pact.<sup>271</sup> But the electoral conditions in South Africa are not very different from these conditions in other parts of the world. But however difficult the situation may be, these traders must be protected.

There is a proper, legitimate, easy way out of the difficulty apart from fresh legislation. Law 3 of 1885 of the Transvaal is still in existence. The Gold Law does not supersede

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<sup>268</sup> Sir Kurma Venkata Reddi, Agent of the Government of India in South Africa, 1929-32

<sup>269</sup> The government of the South African Republic, headed by President Paul Kruger, before the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902

<sup>270</sup> Smuts-Gandhi agreement of June 30, 1914. Please see Appendix I.

<sup>271</sup> The Cape Town Agreement of 1927 between the Union of South Africa and India

that law. Therefore the Gold Law has got to be read in conjunction with the Law 3 of 1885. Now that law enables the Government to declare wards, streets and locations as proper for Indian habitation and trade. It is open therefore to the Union Government by administrative action to declare such areas where Indians are now trading to be proper places for Indian trade and residence.

There are other matters equally delicate but I need not refer to them at this stage as the danger in connection with them is not imminent and as it is necessary for public opinion to be crystallised and to concentrate over this single imminent danger.

*Young India*, May 16, 1929; *Collected Works*, Volume 40, pages 387-88

### **153. LETTER TO SIR K. V. REDDI, AUGUST 20, 1929**

Sabarmati,  
August 20, 1929

Dear friend,

I thank you for your very full letter. I have been delayed in replying to it, owing to my peregrinations and then illness from which, by the grace of God, I am recovering.

I do hope that the trade licences matter has been or will be satisfactorily settled. I continue to receive anxious enquiries from South Africa. I am obliged to tell them all that they should worry you and not expect much from here. However, when you think that intensive work here will assist you, you will please tell me.

The news you give me about matters educational is most encouraging. The success of Sastri College must in the end go a long way towards raising our status in South Africa.

I know how true you are when you tell me about our people's apathy in matters in which they are expected to exert themselves. I know even in our time the difficulties of the poor vegetable hawkers. It was their amazing industry that I thought enabled them to walk long distances early in the morning and dispose of, in the best manner they could, their produce before 9 a.m. May success attend your effort on their behalf.

Thank you for interesting yourself in Manilal and his wife. I hope they are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

*Collected Works*, Volume 41, pages 304-05

### **154. A NATIONAL INSULT**

The insulting and impossible (for a self-respecting man) conditions imposed by the Union Government on the Ali Brothers in respect of their contemplated visit to South Africa<sup>272</sup> demonstrate once more the truth of the proverb: "The leopard cannot change his spots." One had thought that after the friendly agreement arrived at the historic Round Table Conference, after the wonderful work done by the Rt. Hon. Sastri in South Africa, the insult offered to the Ali Brothers and through them to the nation by the Union Government was impossible. In view of the undertaking voluntarily given by the Brothers, the Union Government could have felt sure that they would never deliver political speeches. With reference to notabilities the convention is to assume correct conduct on their part without the necessity of imposing galling restrictions. And even when in such cases there is any doubt about such conduct, the convention is to ensure safety through diplomatic and courteous channels. For instance in this very case the Union Government, instead of conveying the restrictions to the Ali Brothers, could have secured their purpose through the Government of India - in so far as it was legitimate. In no case could they exact pecuniary security or impose a ridiculous time-limit as the Union Government have sought to do. It is to be hoped that the Government of India will see that this palpable wrong is righted, the restrictions are wholly withdrawn and the Brothers permitted to proceed to South Africa without hurting their self-respect and without undue restrictions, direct or indirect, tacit or implied.

*Young India*, September 5, 1929; *Collected Works*, Volume 41, page 354

## **155. THE BAN ON THE ALI BROTHERS**

The following cable, which I have extended, has been received by me from the Secretaries of the South African Indian Congress:

"AT AN EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AT DURBAN ON THE SITUATION ARISING OUT OF RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED UPON THE ALI BROTHERS` CONTEMPLATED VISIT TO THE UNION BY THE UNION GOVERNMENT, THE SUBJECT OCCUPIED THE EARNEST CONSIDERATION OF THE COMMITTEE AND THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION WAS PASSED:

"SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN CONGRESS EXECUTIVE AS REPRESENTING THE INDIAN COMMUNITY OF SOUTH AFRICA DEEPLY DEPLORES CONDITIONS IMPOSED BY THE UNION GOVERNMENT UPON THE CONTEMPLATED VISIT OF THE ALI BROTHERS TO THE UNION, AND HEREBY REQUESTS THE AGENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO TAKE ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS FOR THE REMOVAL OF ALL SUCH CONDITIONS."

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<sup>272</sup> Moulana Mohamed Ali and Moulana Shaukat Ali, then prominent nationalist leaders of India, were invited by the Cape British Indian Council. The Union Government imposed conditions on the visit, such as that they should undertake not to discuss political matters of any kind. The two Moulanas then decided not to visit the Union.

We know now what the result of the Agent's intervention has been. The obstinate refusal of the Union Government to waive the restrictions, especially in view of the unsolicited and gentlemanly assurance of the Ali Brothers not to engage in any political controversy or discussion during their sojourn in South Africa, shows in what estimate even the Government of India is held by the Union Government. That estimate will persist so long as the Government of India is an irresponsible Government and therefore remains a body whose wishes can be flouted with impunity by any foreign Government, whether it may be one occupying the Dominion Status or one wholly unconnected with Great Britain. I fear that we will have to submit to such humiliation so long as we, through our own disunion, dissensions and the like, remain impotent and powerless to help ourselves.

*Young India*, September 26, 1929; *Collected Works*, Volume 41, page 470

### **156. LETTER TO THE REV. C. F. ANDREWS, APRIL 19, 1931**

...And now for the Transvaal question. It is becoming more and more difficult day after day. Unless India comes to her own in the near future, I see no prospect of improvement in the situation. Of course the resident Indian population will somehow drag on its existence there. They have sufficient resourcefulness but it would be living from hand to mouth. However we must do all we can. Yours I know is just now the largest share. I have become almost incapacitated for that work. But when we meet we must discuss the situation and I might be able to find out some effective method of dealing with it...

*Collected Works*, Volume 46, pages 50-51

### **157. REPATRIATES FROM SOUTH AFRICA**

Pandit Benarsidas Chaturvedi and Swami Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi have prepared a well-reasoned report of an independent enquiry they held into the condition of emigrants repatriated to India under the assisted emigration scheme from South Africa.<sup>273</sup> This report and the Swami's telegram dated 16th ultimo, asking me to comment on it, telling me, "Condition worst, many starving, women half naked, children begging," have lain with me ever since. I am sorry that I have not been able to deal with the report earlier. The telegram from which I have quoted is an epitome of the report. The condition of our people, who find themselves strangers in their own land, is a disgrace alike to us and to the Government, but more to us than to the Government. No Government in the world can cope fully with such cases. Governments can only support to a limited extent voluntary public effort in such cases. It is really up to the merchant princes and other employers of labour in Calcutta to take a real interest in the welfare of such people, and find suitable employment for them.

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<sup>273</sup> *A Report on the Emigrants Repatriated to India under the Assisted Emigration Scheme from South Africa and on the Problem of Returned Emigrants from all Colonies*, May 15, 1931

But the condition of these people is a small consideration, compared with the cause that has reduced those repatriates to the condition in which they find themselves. There should have been no agreed repatriation at all, and if there was to be any, there should have been ample provision previously made to ensure proper occupation for them, and in any case there should never have been any consent to the repatriation of colonial-born Indians, of whom there are fully thirty-three percent in the Calcutta depot. But it is no use crying over spilt milk. The labours of the framers of the report will not have been in vain if at the time of the revision of the Cape Agreement, the rights of the poor labouring Indian population are not bartered away for doubtful concessions to the other Indian settlers. The position taken up by the latter is unassailable, and should depend on its own merits. The settlers themselves should therefore refuse to be party to any bargain, which would compromise the rights of their less favourably situated brethren. South Africa can easily absorb and accommodate the existing Indian population.

*Young India*, June 4, 1931; *Collected Works*, Volume 46, page 305.

## 158. REMINISCENCES OF IMAM BAWAZEER<sup>274</sup>

*Imam Saheb* went to South Africa about the same year as I (1893). His real name was Abdul Kadir Bawazeer, but, as he served as *Imam* in South Africa, most people knew him as *Imam Saheb*. I always addressed him by that name.

The *Imam Sahib*'s father was the *Muezzin* of the famous *Jumma Masjid* in Bombay and served in that capacity right till his death. He died only a few years ago, after the *Imam Sahib*'s return to India. He fell dead just as he was washing and getting ready for the *azan*.<sup>275</sup> Such a death comes only to the blessed. The *Imam Sahib*'s forefathers were Arabs and had come to India and settled in the Konkan years ago. Hence he knew the Konkani language too. His mother tongue was Gujarati, but he had little schooling. He knew Arabic well enough to be able to read from the *Koran Sharif* with a pleasing intonation, though not so well as to be able to understand everything in the *Koran*. He had picked up, through contacts in practical life, English, Dutch and Creole French. Urdu, of course, he knew. He had also a working knowledge of Zulu. His intellect was so sharp that, if he had regularly studied in a school, he would have earned reputation as a great scholar. Though he was not a lawyer, he had come to understand subtleties of law through practical experience.

The *Imam Saheb* had gone to South Africa for trade and had earned much. When he gave up business, he kept coaches which he supplied on hire and had a fairly good income from that calling. Being a man of independent temper, he never tried his fortune in big business. He had a sweet voice, and, since his father was a *Muezzin*, he occasionally

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<sup>274</sup> Letters to the inmates of the *Ashram*, March 7, 14 and 21, 1932

<sup>275</sup> Call to the faithful

officiated as *Imam* in the mosque in Johannesburg. But he accepted no honorarium for his services.

The *Imam Saheb* had married twice. Both the wives were Malays. His first marriage was not successful, and so he married the lady whom we knew as his wife. This marriage had given him much happiness. He and the *Haji Saheba* served each other with great devotion. He was a sincere friend. So far as I know, the *Imam Sahib's* views about marriage had undergone a complete change and he had come to believe in monogamy...

My first meeting with *Imam Saheb* may be said to have taken place in 1903 in South Africa after my return to that country. He used to tell me that we had met once before that but I have no recollection of that meeting. When I set up practice as a lawyer in Johannesburg, he used to accompany clients to my office. He was an altogether different man then in appearance and manners. He used to dress himself in English style, and wore a Turkish cap. I immediately recognised his intelligence, but otherwise he did not produce a good impression on me at first. I thought him rather obstinate, but, as I came to know him better, I liked him more and more.

I saw, as I had more and more experience of dealing with him, that what I had thought to be obstinacy was only his eagerness to understand fully the implications of every point. If he held an opinion on any matter, he would not give it up till his reason was convinced of his error. He would not take a lawyer's word as gospel truth in legal matters merely because he himself was not a lawyer, but would argue against him even in such matters. Though he had had no education, he had complete confidence in his judgement. Moreover, he had a proud sense of self-respect. I, therefore, saw very soon that he had sufficient strength of mind to cling to his own view without being overawed by anybody.

In the beginning, *Imam Saheb* used to come to me on behalf of clients and explain their cases to me. But he took interest in current affairs and would draw me into discussion about them. He evinced keen interest in discussing the hardships of our countrymen in South Africa and took part in the meetings, etc. On most issues, he supported me, but he never hesitated to oppose me even in public whenever he did not approve of my stand. Gradually, however, he was drawn towards me and, when the *satyagraha* commenced, proved himself as steadfast as a rock. Some fell and some weakened, and some opposed me bitterly, but I don't remember *Imam Saheb* to have wavered at any time. When he was imprisoned for the first time, nobody expected that he would remain strong till the end. On the contrary, many persons told me, including some who held him in high respect, that he would not go to jail again, that he had a delicate constitution, was pleasure-loving and had many wants. This was on the whole true. However, *Imam Saheb* never weakened, whereas I saw many who were known to be simple in their habits withdrawing from the struggle. *Imam Sahib's* capacity for self-sacrifice was very great, and, though he would think long before taking a decision, he showed wonderful strength in clinging to a decision once taken.

When *Imam Saheb* plunged into the struggle, he had no thought at all that he would have to break up his home and embrace a life of complete renunciation. As soon, however, as



he saw that if he wished to remain staunch in the *satyagraha* movement he would have to give up the attachment to his home, he did so almost in an instant. This was no small sacrifice on his part.

We should remember that *Imam Saheb* had set up his home in English style. *Haji Saheba* had lived in that style from her very birth. Fatima and Amina also were brought up like English children. For one who had lived in this manner, it was extremely difficult to curtail his heavy expenditure and adopt an utterly simple mode of life. For *Imam Saheb*, however, once he had made up his mind to do a particular thing, it was quite easy to carry out his resolve. And, therefore, when I decided to leave Johannesburg and to settle in Phoenix, he himself proposed that he, too, would live there.<sup>276</sup> Though I knew his firmness of mind, I was completely at a loss what to say in reply to his proposal. I described to him the hardships of life in Phoenix. A man who had never put his body to the slightest trouble and had always lived surrounded by comforts and luxuries, I wondered how such a person would be able to start forthwith living like a labourer. Even if he himself could bear the hardships of life in Phoenix, what about *Haji Saheba*, and Fatima and Amina, I asked. *Imam Saheb's* reply was brief. He said: "I have put my trust in God. And you do not know *Haji Saheba*. She will always be ready to live where I live, and as I live. If, therefore, you have no other difficulty in the matter, I have decided to come and live in Phoenix. No one knows when the struggle will end. I don't think I shall be able to carry on my old business of supplying coaches on hire, or take up any other occupation. Like you, I too have realised that a *satyagrahi* should give up love of wealth and possessions." *Imam Saheb's* proposal pleased me very much. I wrote to my co-workers in Phoenix. They also welcomed the proposal. And so *Imam Saheb* and his family came over.

Many inmates of *Ashram* probably do not know that *Imam Saheb* joined the residents of Phoenix in all their activities. Everybody fetched water for his or her own use from a spring below. It flowed at some depth below the level of the Phoenix Settlement. The Phoenix buildings were on a hill and one had to climb about fifty feet to reach the place. *Imam Saheb* had a delicate constitution even at that time, but every morning one saw him walking down to the spring with a *kavad*<sup>277</sup> on his shoulders and climbing up slowly with the buckets filled with water. The place now occupied by the spinning-wheel in the *Ashram* was held in Phoenix by the printing press. All the inmates, boys and girls, old men and women, educated and uneducated, had to work in some department of the press. There were all kinds of big or small tasks, composing, folding the printed copies of the paper, making wrappers, pasting stamps, moving the wheel with the hand whenever the machine stopped, etc., etc. Everybody was required to give some time and help in these tasks, especially on the day on which the journal was to be published. *Imam Saheb*, *Haji Saheba*, Fatima and Amina, all four of them joined in this work. *Imam Saheb* had learned composing. For a man of his temper and habits and of his age, this was indeed wonderful.

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<sup>276</sup> Gandhiji closed the Tolstoy Farm in Johannesburg in January 1913 and moved to Phoenix Settlement near Durban with some passive resisters and their children in the school at Tolstoy Farm.

<sup>277</sup> Two baskets or vessels suspended from the ends of a stick carried horizontally over the shoulders

In this way, *Imam Saheb* identified himself completely with the life at Phoenix. He and the other members of his family were non-vegetarian, but I don't remember any time when they cooked such food at Phoenix.

This, however, does not mean that *Imam Saheb* was in any way a less devout Muslim. He never missed *namaz*, nor did he or his family ever fail to observe the *roza*. By adopting the manner of life of the other inmates and making a sacrifice for their sake, he really demonstrated the nobility of Islamic culture.

*Imam Sahib's* capacity for self-sacrifice was to be put to a still more severe test. He went to jail again several times, and proved himself a model prisoner. When, however, in the year 1914 it was decided that most of the inmates of the *Ashram* should return to India, leaving only a few of them in Phoenix, *Imam Saheb* was put to a real test. South Africa had practically become his home. *Haji Saheba*, Fatima and Amina were complete strangers to India and did not know any Indian language - a little English and Dutch was all the language that they knew. But *Imam Saheb* took no time to come to a decision. He had made up his mind that he and his family would live wherever I did. That was his self-sacrifice for the cause of *satyagraha* and his contribution towards Hindu-Muslim unity...

(From Gujarati)

*Collected Works*, Volume 49, pages 183-84, 202-03, 217-19

#### 159. SPEECH AT TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION, BANGALORE, JANUARY 7, 1934

...When as a young man I went to South Africa, I observed that the coolies, indentured Indians, were fast going down owing to the drink habit. The law in South Africa made it a crime for indentured Indians to carry drink home. They could drink as much as they liked at the canteen. The result was that many women were found literally lying in gutters. It was not a thing of which any Indian could be proud. I pleaded with the Government, but mine was a voice in the wilderness. So the thing went on. But it made a lasting impression on my mind. I knew what I had to do when I came to India after a long exile.

I am not a temperance man. I am a prohibition man. I fought with my countrymen in South Africa and said, "We should not fight for an equal right to drink." I could not persuade them for a long time, but I did succeed in persuading a majority of them that to fight for rights was one thing and to fight for indulgence in vice was another...

*Collected Works*, Volume 56, pages 449-450

#### 160. LETTER TO SIR PURUSHOTTAMDAS THAKURDAS, SEPTEMBER 13, 1936

Dear Sir Purushottamdas,

You will please explain to the South African delegation my sincere regret over my inability to welcome them in person.<sup>278</sup> Apart from convalescence it is difficult for me to tear myself away from my new home, Segaoon. I pray to God that this visit may result in removing cobwebs of misunderstanding and bringing the two countries closer together.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi

*Collected Works*, Volume 63, page 280

### **161. LETTER TO J. H. HOFMEYER, OCTOBER 5, 1936**

Dear Mr. Hofmeyer,

It was a great pleasure to receive your warm letter. I do hope you are having a profitable time in this land and that you find the people you meet to be hospitable.

It will be a matter of regret to me that although you have so many friends in India, we may not meet at all.

You may be interested to know that the paper I am writing on is hand-made written with a village reed pen. You ought not to leave India without seeing some typical villages. Of course it is foolish of me to expect you to visit Wardha and Segaoon and glance at the humble effort we are making.

With kind regards to you and fellow members,

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi

*Collected Works*, Volume 63, page 351

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<sup>278</sup> A South African Parliamentary delegation, consisting of eleven members of Parliament, led by J. H. Hofmeyer, Union Minister of the Interior, visited India for 26 days. Sir Purushottamdas, a businessman who had taken a special interest in Indians overseas, handed over the letter of Gandhiji to Mr. Hofmeyer on arrival of the delegation in Bombay on September 19, 1936.

## **PART V**

### **1938-41**

#### *Editors' Note*

This section covers but four years. And yet a more active period of time can scarcely be imagined.

The clouds of war hovered over the world menacingly, while nationalist opinion in India reached fever pitch. Congress ministries were in office in some Provinces in India, a distinct gain in Indian self-governance. But the Congress and Muslim League had drifted apart, a distinct loss to Indian self-sufficiency. The League alleged injustices on Muslims in Congress-governed provinces, while parties representing extreme Hindu opinion criticised Gandhiji and the Congress bitterly for "pandering to Muslim intransigence" and "betraying Hindu interests." A communal riot shook Bombay, capital of the Congress-governed presidency, in 1938.

The political air was incendiary, both within India and further afield. Suspicions governed the relationship between the Viceroy and his Executive Council on the one hand and the Congress and Muslim League on the other. And between Congress and the Muslim League.

When Britain declared war on Germany, India had not been consulted. The Congress ministries resigned in protest in 1939. Jinnah and the Muslim League promptly celebrated the day as a 'Day of Deliverance.' The two-nation theory was now abroad.

Even as Gandhiji tried to keep the principal communities within India together, he counselled patience and unity to the Indian community in South Africa. Through an All India Congress Committee resolution passed in June 1939, Gandhiji expressed trust "that there will be no dissensions among them (Indians of South Africa) and that they will present a united front." (Item 173). And even as he tried, in vain, to persuade the British Government in India to obtain Indian co-operation in the war effort by offering independence at the end of the war, he sought to obviate a campaign of passive resistance by getting the Union Government to conciliate the community.

A new generation of leaders was emerging in South Africa. They denounced the officials of Indian organisations for constantly seeking compromises with the government as it proceeded to impose more and more humiliating laws. The new leaders - radicals and Communists as well as followers of Gandhiji's ideas - called for a militant struggle against discrimination and humiliation. They sought co-operation with the Africans and others oppressed by the regime. They were inspired by the national movement in India and the anti-fascist movement in Europe.

Gandhiji was approached in May 1939 by Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo and Manilal Gandhi for blessings and guidance to passive resistance in the Transvaal. A meeting of the Indian

people in the Transvaal had decided on passive resistance against the Asiatics (Transvaal Land and Trading) Bill, rejecting the advice of the leaders of the Transvaal Indian Congress. Dr. Dadoo, who moved the proposal, was subsequently chosen leader of a Council of Action.

Gandhiji was encouraged by the spirit of sacrifice of Dr. Dadoo and his colleagues. (Items 182, 186). He gave moral support to passive resistance and ensured a resolution by the All India Congress Committee assuring its support.

Chiding the Union Government for its lack of finality in policy with respect of Indians, Gandhiji said:

"Evidently the Union Government would not be happy till they have either driven away Indians whom they have given legislative protection to or reduced their status to such an extent that no self-respecting Indian would care to remain in South Africa." (*Harijan*, May 27, 1939). (Item 170).

In an impassioned cable to Smuts on July 16, 1939, Gandhiji asked : "You have great power. Must you use it against a handful who have done Union no injury?" (Item 178).

As in the past, the prospect of another *satyagraha* persuaded the Indian Government to move. It informed Gandhiji that negotiations had been initiated with South Africa, with British support, and there was hope of an honourable compromise.

At the same time as Gandhiji counselled Dadoo to postpone passive resistance, planned to commence on August 1, 1939, he pressed the Government of India to act. A succession of communications to South Africa show Gandhiji's anxious exertions: "Delicate negotiations proceeding" (July 25, 1939, to Dadoo). (Item 181). "I have put myself in touch with the Ministers" (July 29, 1939, press statement). (Item 182). "There is a ray of hope that we shall reach a settlement" (August 19, 1939, to Dadoo). (Item 186). "I have been staying their hand. But they are getting restive. They won't be satisfied with any patchwork settlement." (August 21, 1939, to Member, Viceroy's Executive Council). (Item 187). "Making effort" (August 28, 1939, to Dadoo). (Item 188). "Trying my best" (September 19, 1939, to S.B. Medh). (Item 190). "Advise patience" (October 23, 1939, to Dadoo). (Item 192). "Suggest you invite Dadoo see you" (October 23, 1939, to Smuts). (Item 193).

Gandhiji anticipated a long and difficult struggle. (Letter to Manilal and Sushila Gandhi, August 21, 1938; *Collected Works*, Volume 70, page 109). He informed Dr. Dadoo that he did not expect anything substantial from the negotiations, but suggested that any possibility for an honourable compromise should be explored. He said that too much had already been surrendered in past years and that the struggle would be very hard. He hoped that a handful of Indians at least would make it a mission of their life to serve the cause of the Indian community. (Item 186).

In the meantime, he helped Dr. Dadoo and his Passive Resistance Committee to be recognised by the Indian Agent-General and the South African Government. (Items 187 and 193).

The diplomatic efforts by the Indian Government proved fruitless and the Second World War intervened. Gandhiji wrote to Dr. Dadoo on December 13, 1939:

"If you can tide over the war period, it will be good. But I can imagine a situation when submission would be unmanly..." (Item 195).

There was only a token passive resistance in 1941.

Gandhiji was in prison from August 1942 for launching the "Quit India" movement, and there occurs another gap in his statements on South Africa.

## **162. MESSAGE TO INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA, JUNE 6, 1938**

I can give only one message to the Indians in South Africa. We shall never be able to preserve our self-respect in South Africa without self-sacrifice. There can be no such distinctions as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Madrasis, Gujaratis or Punjabis.

M.K. Gandhi

(From Gujarati)  
*Collected Works*, Volume 67, page 109

## **163. INTERVIEW TO THE REV. S.S. TEMA, JANUARY 1, 1939<sup>279</sup>**

TEMA: *How can my people make their Congress as successful as the Indian National Congress?*

GANDHIJI: The Congress became successful for the simple reason that it was inaugurated by the most selfless and cultured people that could be found in that age. They made themselves the representatives of the people and captured their imagination by reason of service and self-sacrifice. They were from the people and of the people. You have not, as far as I am aware, a band of Africans who would be content to work and live in impecuniosity. Among those who are educated there is not that absolute selflessness. Again, while most of your leaders are Christians, the vast mass of the Bantus and Zulus are not Christians. You have adopted European dress and manners, and have as a result become strangers in the midst of your own people. Politically, that is a disadvantage. It makes it difficult for you to reach the heart of the masses. You must not be afraid of

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<sup>279</sup> Sent through Manilal Gandhi who was returning to South Africa

being "Bantuised" or feel ashamed of carrying an *assegai* or of going about with only a tiny clout round your loins. A Zulu or a Bantu is a well-built man and need not be ashamed of showing his body. He need not dress like you. You must become Africans once more.

T: *Of late there has been some talk of forming an Indo-African united non-white front in South Africa. What do you think about it?*

G: It will be a mistake. You will be pooling together not strength but weakness. You will best help one another by each standing on his own legs. The two cases are different. The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a menace to the white population. You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance. You are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indian. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races. The Indians can co-operate with you in a number of ways. They can help you by always acting on the square towards you. They may not put themselves in opposition to your legitimate aspirations, or run you down as "savages" while exalting themselves as cultured people in order to secure concessions for themselves at your expense.

T: *What sort of relations would you favour between these two races?*

G: The closest possible. But while I have abolished all distinction between an African and an Indian, that does not mean that I do not recognise the difference between them. The different races of mankind are like different branches of a tree - once we recognise the common parent stock from which we are sprung, we realise the basic unity of the human family, and there is no room left for enmities and unhealthy competition.

T: *Should we adopt violence or non-violence as a means for our deliverance?*

G: Certainly, non-violence under all circumstances. But you must have a living faith in it. Even when there is impenetrable darkness surrounding you, you must not abandon hope. A person who believes in non-violence believes in a living God. He cannot accept defeat. Therefore, my advice is non-violence all the time, but non-violence of the brave, not of the coward.

T: *Your example has shed so much influence upon us that we are thinking whether it would not be possible for one or two of our young men, who we are hoping will become leaders, to come to you for training.*

G: It is quite a good and sound idea.

T: *Do you think Christianity can bring salvation to Africa?*

G: Christianity, as it is known and practised today, cannot bring salvation to your people. It is my conviction that those who today call themselves Christians do not know the true

message of Jesus. I witnessed some of the horrors that were perpetrated on the Zulus during the Zulu Rebellion. Because one man, Bambatta, their chief, had refused to pay his tax, the whole race was made to suffer.<sup>280</sup>

I was in charge of an ambulance corps. I shall never forget the lacerated backs of Zulus who had received stripes and were brought to us for nursing because no white nurse was prepared to look after them. And yet those who perpetrated all those cruelties called themselves Christians. They were educated, better dressed than the Zulus, but not their moral superiors.

*T: Whenever a leader comes up in our midst, he flops down after a while. He either becomes ambitious after money or succumbs to the drink habit or some other vice and is lost to us. How shall we remedy this?*

*G: The problem is not peculiar to you. Your leadership has proved ineffectual because it was not sprung from the common people. If you belong to the common people, live like them and think like them, they will make common cause with you. If I were in your place, I would not ask a single African to alter his costume and make himself peculiar. It does not add a single inch to his moral stature.*

*Harijan*, February 18, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 68, pages 272-274

## **164. INTERVIEW TO SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN STUDENTS<sup>281</sup>**

*"What should we, South Africa-borns, do to preserve our Indian culture in our country of adoption?" they asked Gandhiji. "What other languages would you ask us to learn besides English?"*

Gandhiji answered by first twitting them for giving the first place to English. He advised them instead to learn Hindustani, which should contain all words of Sanskritic as well as Persian or Arabic origin that are used by the man in the street. The Hindus dared not neglect the study of Sanskrit nor the Muslims of Arabic, not only because the study of these languages was necessary to give them access to their scriptures in the original, but also because these two tongues contained the grandest poetry that the world has ever produced. He concluded:

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<sup>280</sup> In 1906, Bambatta (Bambata), a Zulu chief, refused to pay a new poll tax imposed on the Zulus. The tax was onerous £1 on each adult when the average annual wage of an African was £5. A tax collector was killed and a widespread rebellion followed.

The Natal Government sent troops into the area and suppressed the rebellion after 4,000 Africans and 30 whites were killed. Another 4,000 Africans were arrested and sentenced to brutal lashings.

<sup>281</sup> The students, who were in India to pursue medical studies, met Gandhiji in Bardoli sometime before February 6, 1939.



"But above all you should jealously retain the essential simplicity and spirituality which is the hallmark of Indian culture."

Their other question was whether they should carry on the struggle for their rights in South Africa through *satyagraha* or through constitutional agitation.

Gandhiji: "If the South African Indian community had guts in them, I would say *satyagraha*, and they are bound to win. I am hoping that some day from among Indian youths born in South Africa a person will rise who will stand up for the rights of his countrymen domiciled there, and make the vindication of those rights his life's mission. He will be so pure, so cultured, so truthful and so dignified in his bearing that he will disarm all opposition. The whites will then say, 'If all Indians were like him, we should have no objection to giving them an equal status with us'. But he will answer, 'It is not enough that there is one representative of the Indian community whom you are ready to recognise as your equal. What I am, other countrymen of mine too can be, if instead of calling them names and putting them under all sorts of disabilities you give them a sporting chance in the matter of educational and other facilities which are today denied them'. Such a one, when he appears, will not need to be coached by me. He will assert himself by his sheer genius."

*Harijan*, February 18, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 68, pages 385-386

### 165. A LETTER, APRIL 7, 1939<sup>282</sup>

New Delhi  
April 7, 1939

I hope that you will have a successful meeting. There is no doubt that the proposed measure,<sup>283</sup> if it becomes law of the Union of South Africa, will mean slow death of the Indian community in the Transvaal. It is the fashion of the day to condemn many of Hitler's acts as so many breaches of pacts. What is it if the proposed measure is not an attempt to commit a flagrant breach of the Cape Town Settlement of 1914 and subsequent declarations of the Union Government?

*Collected Works*, Volume 69, page 115

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<sup>282</sup> This letter was presumably addressed to Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi, then President of the Natal Indian Congress, who arrived in India on March 18, 1939, and held meetings in several cities with a view to enlightening the Government and the people about the conditions in South Africa. The message was to a public meeting in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.

<sup>283</sup> The reference is to the Asiatics (Transvaal Land and Trading) Bill, 1939.

**166. TELEGRAM TO MR. PATHER, APRIL 7, 1939<sup>284</sup>**

PATHER CHAIRMAN  
CARE RUSTOMJEE  
DURBAN PIETERMARITZBURG

SIR RADHAKRISHNAN'S MESSAGE MUST IMPROVE RELATIONS EUROPEANS  
INDIANS SOUTH AFRICA

GANDHI

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**167. TELEGRAM TO A. I. KAJEE, APRIL 16, 1939<sup>285</sup>**

KAJEE  
DURBANSUB

SUGGESTION DIFFICULT WHOLE THING DEPENDS YOUR EFFORT

GANDHI

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**168. TELEGRAM TO DR. Y. M. DADOO, MAY 4, 1939<sup>286</sup>**

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<sup>284</sup> This was in reply to a request by Mr. Pather from Pietermaritzburg, Chairman of the newly-created Gandhi-Tagore lecturership, for a message for the inaugural lecture under its auspices by Sir S. Radhakrishnan on April 10, 1939.

<sup>285</sup> This was in reply to a telegram of May 11, 1939, from Mr. Kajee, secretary of the South African Indian Congress and Natal Indian Congress, requesting Gandhiji to appeal to General Hertzog and General Smuts to postpone the Asiatics (Transvaal Land and Trading) Bill and agree to a Round Table Conference.

<sup>286</sup> This telegram was sent in reply to a telegram from Dr Dadoo and Manilal Gandhi, received in Calcutta on May 2, 1939, which read:

"UNION GOVERNMENT INTRODUCING INTERIM BILL TOMORROW. COMMUNITY  
RESOLVED OFFER *SATYAGRAHA* EXPECTING YOUR BLESSINGS AND GUIDANCE."

Earlier, on March 15, 1939, Dr. Dadoo and S.B. Medh had sent a letter to Gandhiji describing the series of anti-Indian measures enacted in South Africa. They informed Gandhiji that at a mass meeting of Transvaal Indians on March 1, 1939, a proposal, moved by Dr. Dadoo, calling for passive resistance in the event of the segregation bill (servitude scheme) being introduced in Parliament, was adopted. The community, they said, was by an overwhelming majority in favour of passive resistance.

Brindaban  
4 May 1939

DOCTOR DADOO  
47 ENDSTREET  
JOHANNESBURG

YOU HAVE TO SUFFER NOT I THEREFORE LET GOD ALONE BE YOUR  
GUIDE

GANDHI

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

169. INTERVIEW TO THE ASSOCIATED PRESS OF INDIA, MAY 12, 1939

Gandhiji said that he was deeply grieved that the Union Government seemed to have no finality about their policy in respect of Asiatics. Their past declarations were being disregarded and some of the recommendations made by their own Commissions were also being set at naught.

There was no wonder, he said, that a section of British Indian settlers in South Africa resented this policy and in despair were thinking of resorting to civil disobedience.<sup>287</sup>

He could only hope that wiser counsels would prevail and that the Union Government would retrace their steps and respect the rights acquired by British Indian settlers.

*Collected Works*, Volume 69, page 259

## 170. THE LATEST MENACE

Rajkot,  
May 23, 1939

It has been a matter of grief to me that the Union Government have not respected their own agreement regarding their treatment of British Indians. There has been a policy of progressive stringency in their anti- Asiatic drive. One had hoped that what is known as the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914 was the last word in this matter. It was also hoped

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<sup>287</sup> At a large mass meeting organised by the Nationalist Group of the Transvaal Indian Congress in Johannesburg on May 7, 1939, under the chairmanship of E. I. Asvat, it was decided to launch passive resistance if the Asiatics (Transvaal Land and Trading) Bill became law. Dr. Dadoo was elected leader of a Passive Resistance Council of 25 members.

At a subsequent mass meeting on July 9, 1939, passive resistance was planned to begin on August 1, 1939.

that with virtual restriction of Indian immigration, there would be progressive amelioration in the condition of domiciled Indians. But that hope was dashed to pieces. Much deterioration has taken place since then. There have been Round Table and other conferences, agreements have been reached, but never has finality been felt by the Indians. Evidently the Union Government would not be happy till they have either driven away Indians whom they have given legislative protection or reduced their status to such an extent that no self-respecting Indian would care to remain in South Africa. I have therefore not discountenanced their reported decision to fight this latest menace of segregation through civil resistance if necessary. There must be perfect cohesion and union among the Indians who are divided into groups. And their resistance will be vain if they are not resolute in self-suffering. Public opinion in India including that of Europeans will, I hope, back the Indians in their unequal fight and call upon the Indian Government to exert its influence with the Union Government. Lastly, I appeal to the best mind of South Africa<sup>288</sup> to see that simple justice is not denied to the Indian settlers who have done no wrong to the country of their adoption.

*Harijan*, May 27, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 69, pages 292-293

### **171. TELEGRAM TO SIR RAZA ALI, JUNE 3, 1939<sup>289</sup>**

SIR RAZAALI  
CECIL  
SIMLA

AM CONSTANT TOUCH OUR COUNTRYMEN SOUTH AFRICA

GANDHI

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

### **172. LETTER TO KUNVAR SIR JAGDISH PRASAD, JUNE 5, 1939**

Bombay  
5 June 1939

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<sup>288</sup> Presumably General J. C. Smuts

<sup>289</sup> This was in response to a telegram from Sir Syed Raza Ali, received on June 3, 1939, which read:

"INDIANS MEETING JOHANNESBURG TOMORROW TO CONSIDER CIVIL RESISTANCE  
AM ADVISING THEM AGAINST IT AS PREMATURE INDIA TOO WEAK TO HELP THEM.  
PLEASE CABLE YOUR ADVICE CONGRESS CARE GABACO JOHANNESBURG."

The meeting in Johannesburg was, in fact, called by the leadership of the Transvaal Indian Congress which was opposed to passive resistance.

Dear Sir Jagdish,

Many thanks for your full letter of 31st ultimo on the S.A. Indian question.<sup>290</sup> I share the hope with you that H.M.'s Government will make effective representations. The expression Common Wealth of Nations, has no meaning for us if what is going on in S.A., Kenya etc., is its connotation. I had a full chat with Sir Girjashanker...<sup>291</sup>

Yours sincerely,

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

173. RESOLUTION OF THE ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE, JUNE 24, 1939<sup>292</sup>

... The A.I.C.C. regrets the attitude of the Union Government towards Indian settlers. It betrays utter disregard of the obligations undertaken by the predecessors of the present Government. The policy just initiated by them is in direct breach of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914, the Cape Town Agreement of 1927, the Feetham Commission of 1932<sup>293</sup> and the subsequent undertakings on behalf of the Union Government. The A.I.C.C. notes with pride and satisfaction the firm stand taken up by the Indians of South Africa. They will have the sympathy of the whole Indian nation behind them in their fight for self-respect and honourable existence. The A.I.C.C. trusts that there will be no dissensions among them and that they will present a united front. The A.I.C.C. appeals to the Union Government to retrace their steps and carry out the promises of their predecessors to adopt a policy of progressive amelioration in the status of the Indian nationals in South Africa, 80 percent of whom are born and bred in that sub-continent and to whom South Africa is their only home.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, June 25, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 69, page 367

## 174. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI, JUNE 25, 1939

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<sup>290</sup> Sir Jagdish Prasad, member of the Viceroy's Executive Council for Education, Health and Lands, had written a lengthy letter to Gandhiji on the developments in South Africa and the actions of the Government of India. He said that the United Kingdom Government was actively intervening in response to representations by the Government of India.

<sup>291</sup> Sir Girjashanker Bajpai

<sup>292</sup> The resolution was drafted by Gandhiji on June 23, 1939, and adopted by the A.I.C.C. at its session held in Bombay from June 24 to 27. It was moved by Mr. Bhulabhai Desai.

<sup>293</sup> The Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure Act Commission, under the Chairmanship of Justice Feetham, appointed by the Government of the Union South Africa "to enquire into the occupation by Coloured persons of proclaimed land in the Transvaal"

Birla House  
Mount Pleasant Road  
Bombay

Chi. Manilal,

You must have read the resolution.<sup>294</sup> It is not proper that I have not received any information about the fight there. There is no news about the struggle either. Everyone believes that I am being kept informed. But there has been no information from that side. Who is Dadoo? There was a cable from him.<sup>295</sup>

After that there has been nothing. I am preparing the ground for whatever help can be given. But if I get no regular news from there at all, nothing can be done...

Blessings from  
BAPU

*Collected Works, Volume 69, page 373*

#### 175. DR. LOHIA'S AMENDMENT TO SOUTH AFRICA RESOLUTION OF THE ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

It is a matter of congratulation that the South Africa resolution of the A.I.C.C. escaped complete disfigurement which the learned Dr. Lohia's amendment would have caused. I tender him my thanks for having listened to Pandit Jawaharlal's advice to respect the opinion of an expert like me who had passed the best part of his life in South Africa and who had not lost touch with that great country after retiring from it.<sup>296</sup>

This incident is an illustration showing that mere learning, mere humanitarianism divorced from actual experience may spell disaster to the cause sought to be espoused. Dr. Lohia's amendment had as much place in the resolution of mine as mine would have in a resolution framed by him as an authority on socialism to meet a socialist difficulty. If I

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<sup>294</sup> Please see previous item for the text of the A.I.C.C. resolution.

<sup>295</sup> Please see footnote to item 167 above.

<sup>296</sup> Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, a Socialist leader and secretary of the Foreign Department of the All India Congress Committee, 1936-38, moved an amendment to the resolution on South Africa to urge the Indians to co-operate with the Africans and present a united front in opposing the segregation policy. The amendment was carried.

The resolution was, however, reconsidered when Gandhiji indicated that the amendment would not be appropriate as the resolution concerned proposed civil resistance by Indians against measures which affected them alone, and was based on the undertakings given to the Indian community.

It was then passed without the amendment.

made any such attempt, he would very properly say, "Don't pass the resolution if you don't like it, but don't disfigure it. It would defeat the purpose for which it is framed"...

Having said this let me say for the information of Dr. Lohia and his fellow humanitarians that I yield to no one in my regard for the Zulus, the Bantus and the other races of South Africa. I used to enjoy intimate relations with many of them. I had the privilege of often advising them. It used to be my constant advice to our countrymen in South Africa, never to exploit or deceive these simple folk. But it was not possible to amalgamate the two causes. The rights and privileges (if any could be so called) of the indigenous inhabitants are different from those of the Indians. So are their disabilities and their causes. But if I discovered that our rights conflicted with their vital interests, I would advise the foregoing of those rights. They are the inhabitants of South Africa as we are of India. The Europeans are undoubtedly usurpers, exploiters or conquerors or all these rolled into one. And so the Africans have a whole code of laws specially governing them. The Indian segregation policy of the Union Government has nothing in common with the policy governing the African races. It is unnecessary for me to go into details. Suffice it to say that ours is a tiny problem compared to the vast problem that faces the African races and that affects their progress. Hence it is not possible to speak of the two in the same breath. The A.I.C.C. resolution concerns itself with the civil resistance struggle of our countrymen on a specific issue applicable solely to them. It is now easy to see that Dr. Lohia's amendment, if it had remained, would have been fatal to the resolution which would have become perfectly meaningless. The appeal to the Union Government would have lost all its point.

But good often comes out of evil. The amendment, wisely withdrawn, shows to the Africans and to the world in general that India has great regard and sympathy for all the exploited races of the earth and that she would not have a single benefit at the expense of the vital interest of any of them. Indeed the war against imperialism cannot wholly succeed unless all exploitation ceases. The only way it can cease is for every exploited race or nation to secure freedom without injuring any other.

My examination of the South Africa resolution would be incomplete if I did not warn the Indians in South Africa against building much on the resolution itself. It is a potent resolution only if the Indians take the contemplated action. The motherland will not be able to protect their self-respect, if they are not prepared to protect it themselves. They must therefore be ready to suffer for it. The struggle may be prolonged, suffering great. But they will have the moral backing of the whole nation. In this Hindus, Muslims, and all political parties including Europeans are united. The Government of India may feel powerless. I fancy they are not so powerless as they imagine. I am reminded of the "Thought for the Day" in the *Times of India* of the 24th instant. It begins, "We have more power than will." I know their sympathy is with the Indians. If they have the strength of will, they have the power. Our countrymen in South Africa know the conditions of *satyagraha*. The foremost condition is unity among themselves.

To the Union Government I would say, "You have never proved your case. Your best men have admitted that there is no difficulty in your absorbing the two hundred thousand

Indians in your continent. They are but a drop in the ocean. Remember that 80 percent of them are born in South Africa. They have adopted your manners, customs and costume. They are intelligent. They have the same feelings and emotions that you have. They deserve better treatment than to be regarded untouchables fit only to be relegated to ghettos. This is not playing the game. And you should not wonder if, at last, Indians say, 'We shall rather die in your jails than live in your segregation camps.' I am sure you do not want to go to all that length. Let it not be said of you that you had no respect for your promises."

Bombay, June 26, 1939

*Harijan*, July 1, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 69, pages 376-379

### **176. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, JULY 8, 1939<sup>297</sup>**

I have carefully read Sir Raza Ali's condemnation of my advice to Indians in South Africa not to embark upon a non-European front. My advice may be bad on merits but does not become bad because I have been absent from South Africa for a quarter of a century. I have no doubt about the soundness of my advice. However much one may sympathise with the Bantus, Indians cannot make common cause with them. I doubt if the Bantus themselves will as a class countenance any such move. They can only damage and complicate their cause by mixing it up with the Indian, as Indians would damage theirs by such mixture. But neither the A.I.C.C. resolution nor my advice need deter the Indians from forming a non-European front if they are sure thereby of winning their freedom. Indeed, had they thought it beneficial or possible, they would have formed it long ago.<sup>298</sup>

*Harijan*, July 15, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 69, page 408

### **177. TELEGRAM TO GENERAL SMUTS, JULY 16, 1939**

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<sup>297</sup> According to *The Hindu* (July 9, 1939), Gandhiji made this statement "on being shown Sir Raza Ali's statement on A.I.C.C. resolution regarding South Africa."

Sir Syed Raza Ali had told the Associated Press of India that the "A.I.C.C. had made a serious blunder by deleting from the resolution the passage supporting the non-European front," as that was likely to encourage the Union Government in pursuing its anti-Indian policy.

Criticising Gandhiji's statement in the *Harijan* (please see previous item), he said: "The trouble is that Mahatmaji's knowledge (of South Africa) is quarter of a century old." (Quoted by A. C. Meer in *The Leader*, Durban, August 1, 1986).

<sup>298</sup> A Non-European United Front had been formed in South Africa in April 1939 and Dr. Dadoo was its Transvaal Secretary. Gandhiji was apparently not informed of this development.



Abbottabad  
16 July 1939

GENERAL SMUTS  
CAPE TOWN (SOUTH AFRICA)

WHY IS AGREEMENT OF 1914 BEING VIOLATED WITH YOU AS WITNESS IS  
THERE NO HELP FOR INDIANS EXCEPT TO PASS THROUGH FIRE

GANDHI ABBOTTABAD

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**178. TELEGRAM TO GENERAL SMUTS, JULY 16, 1939<sup>299</sup>**

PREMIER  
CAPETOWN (SOUTH AFRICA)

IMPLORE YOU PREVENT INDIAN TRAGEDY BY REFRAINING FROM  
NEEDLESS WOUNDING OF THEIR SELF-RESPECT IT TAKES VERY LITTLE TO  
PLACATE THEM YOU HAVE GREAT POWER MUST YOU USE IT AGAINST A  
HANDFUL WHO HAVE DONE UNION NO INJURY

GANDHI ABBOTABAD

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**179. TELEGRAM TO DR. Y.M. DADOO, JULY 19, 1939**

Abbottabad  
19 July 1939

DR. DADOO

POSTPONE PASSIVE RESISTANCE TILL FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

GANDHI

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<sup>299</sup> General Smuts replied by telegram on July 19, 1939:

"THANKS FOR WIRE SITUATION IS BEING CAREFULLY EXAMINED AND THERE IS NO  
INTENTION TO VIOLATE 1914 AGREEMENT KIND REMEMBRANCES AND GOOD  
WISHES."

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**180. TELEGRAM TO MANILAL GANDHI, JULY 19, 1939**

GANDHI  
INDIAN OPINION  
PHOENIX (NATAL)  
SOUTH AFRICA

POSTPONE PASSIVE RESISTANCE TILL FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS  
CABLED DADOO

BAPU

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**181. TELEGRAM TO DR. Y.M. DADOO, JULY 25, 1939<sup>300</sup>**

DADOO  
47 ENDSTREET  
JOHANNESBURG (SOUTH AFRICA)

POSTPONEMENT ADVISED BECAUSE DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS  
PROCEEDING RESULT EXPECTED SOON ANNOUNCE POSTPONEMENT DUE  
MY ADVICE IF PEOPLE IN EARNEST NOTHING LOST BY SHORT  
POSTPONEMENT TREAT THIS CONFIDENTIAL

BAPU

**182. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, JULY 29, 1939<sup>301</sup>**

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<sup>300</sup> This was in reply to a telegram from Dr. Dadoo and Manilal Gandhi which read:

"ALL PLANS ARRANGED FOR CAMPAIGN. UNLESS SOUND REASONS FOR  
POSTPONEMENT OUR POSITION WITH PEOPLE WILL BE PRECARIOUS. WITH  
EXCEPTION OF FEW SELF-INTERESTED WHOLE OF TRANSVAAL INDIANS BEHIND US.  
OPPOSITIONISTS AVERSE TO PASSIVE RESISTANCE ALTOGETHER THEY CONTEND  
POSTPONEMENT ADVISE PENDING FORTHCOMING NEW LEGISLATION NEXT YEAR.  
PRESENT MEASURE AFFORDS MORE THAN ENOUGH REASON FOR ACTION WITHOUT  
LEAST DELAY. WE HAVE DOUBTS MISREPRESENTATIONS MIGHT HAVE BEEN MADE  
TO YOU. HUMBLY REQUEST YOU CABLE FULL DETAILS YOUR REASONS FOR  
POSTPONEMENT."

<sup>301</sup> Gandhiji received the following telegram from Dr. Dadoo on July 28, 1939:

I have been in telegraphic correspondence with Dr. Dadoo, leader of the Passive Resistance Committee in South Africa. I have no hesitation in asking the Passive Resistance Committee to postpone, for a time, the proposed launching of the struggle on 1st August. I do so because I have some hope of an honourable settlement. I know that the Government of India as well as the British Government are trying to obtain relief. I have put myself in touch with the Ministers. In the circumstances I think a brief postponement of the struggle to be necessary. I am fully aware of the enthusiasm of the resisters. They have proved their mettle before, and they will do so again if it becomes necessary. But it is a code with passive resisters to seize every opportunity of avoiding resistance, if it can be done honourably. Every cessation in search of peace adds strength to real fighters. Let them remember that the Cape Town Settlement of 1914 was the outcome of a cessation of struggle for the sake of peace. I hope that the proposed cessation will lead to a similar result. Should it unfortunately prove otherwise and should the struggle begin, let Dr. Dadoo and his fellow-resisters know that the whole of India will be at their back.<sup>302</sup>

*Hindustan Times*, July 30, 1939; *Harijan*, August 5, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 70, page 44

### **183. LETTER TO MANILAL AND SUSHILA GANDHI, AUGUST 6, 1939**

Segaon, Wardha,

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"RECEIVED CABLE ADVISING US POSTPONEMENT PASSIVE RESISTANCE FIRST AUGUST UNTIL FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS STOP ADVISABLE YOU MAKE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT BOTH IN INDIA AND IN SOUTH AFRICA RE POSTPONEMENT STOP UNDER EXISTING CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN INDIAN COMMUNITY DETERMINED AND RESOLUTE TO LAUNCH PASSIVE RESISTANCE NEWS WILL BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD AND OUR CAUSE STRENGTHENED IF IT COMES FROM YOU STOP WE PREPARED TO FOLLOW YOUR ADVICE."

Gandhiji then made this public announcement as requested.

<sup>302</sup> Dr. Dadoo and the Passive Resistance Committee acceded to Gandhiji's appeal to postpone the struggle.

Gandhiji received the following cable from Dr. Dadoo on August 1, 1939:

"FOLLOWING YOUR ADVICE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED BRIEF POSTPONEMENT LAUNCHING PASSIVE RESISTANCE FIRST AUGUST STOP COMMUNITY GRATEFUL YOUR DIRECT INTEREST AND GUIDANCE IN OUR DIFFICULT STRUGGLE STOP ACT 1939 IN OPERATION REPEAL ESSENTIAL SETTLEMENT STOP LAND TENURE ACT 1932 ROOT PRESENT EVIL PRAY BEAR IN MIND ALL OUR DISABILITIES AND RESTRICTIONS RIGHTS SINCE 1885 RE IMMIGRATION TRADE OWNERSHIP AND TRADING LICENCES WHILE NEGOTIATING STOP COMMUNITY PREPARED FOR STRUGGLE REQUEST KEEP US INFORMED PROGRESS NEGOTIATIONS."

August 6, 1939

Chi. Manilal and Sushila,

I have your long letter full of news. It will be of help to me.

Here the work is going on at full speed. There has been some delay as your Prime Minister is away. I will keep you informed if there are any special developments. But what counts and will count is your strength. I had a cable from Nana<sup>303</sup> saying that I did a good thing in advising postponement. I have not replied to the cable. Can't the differences there be patched up? Who are the persons behind the threat of murder? How did matters reach that stage?

Blessings from  
Bapu

(From Gujarati)

*Collected Works*, Volume 70, page 70

#### **184. TELEGRAM TO DR. Y. M. DADOO, AUGUST 11, 1939<sup>304</sup>**

DR. DADOO  
47 ENDSTREET  
JOHANNESBURG

PENDING FINAL DIRECTION RATHER DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS STILL  
GOING PLEAD FOR PATIENCE WE MUST LOSE NO CHANCE SETTLEMENT  
WILL NOT WASTE TIME

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<sup>303</sup> S. M. Nana, secretary of the Transvaal Indian Congress. He had strongly opposed passive resistance.

<sup>304</sup> This was in reply to a telegram of August 9, 1939, from Dr. Dadoo which read:

"MINISTER STUTTAFORD PRESS INTERVIEW SATURDAY STATED NO CONFERENCE AND UNWILLING TO OPEN INDIAN QUESTION. FURTHER STRESSED PRESENT ACT FOR TWO YEARS BUT BEFORE SUCH EXPIRATION HE HOPES TO PASS PERMANENT LEGISLATION. OUR PRESENT FIGHT IS AGAINST 1939 ACT. MINISTERS INTERVIEW MAKES PROSPECTS FOR HONOURABLE SETTLEMENT GLOOMY AND DOUBTFUL. ANTI-ASIATIC PROPAGANDA INDICATES IMMINENT SEGREGATION. HANDFUL INDIAN ANTI-PASSIVE RESISTERS MISCONSTRUING OBJECT POSTPONEMENT STRUGGLE OTHER OPINION EARLIEST LAUNCHING STRUGGLE DESIRABLE PRAY CABLE IN DETAIL PRECISE NATURE AND BASIS NEGOTIATIONS AND FIX TIME LIMIT FOR POSTPONEMENT WE ARE NOT INFORMED WHAT NEGOTIATIONS TRANSPIRING

DADOO

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

### 185. INDIAN STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Whether our countrymen in South Africa have to take up passive resistance or not, there is no doubt that they will not be able to vindicate their position if they cannot close their ranks and act as one man and act unselfishly. Their corporate existence cannot be maintained with honour, if individuals in order to serve their selfish ends compromise the community's interest and honour. There is, at the time of writing these lines, a cleavage between the local Congress and the passive resisters. The resisters seem to have the bulk of the Indian population with them. But the name and prestige of the South African Indian Congress is with the non-resisters. Now there is a prospect of a lawsuit over the possession of the Congress books, funds and offices. I would warn the resisters against falling into the legal trap. Let them follow my example. The equivalent to the Congress in my days was the British Indian Association.<sup>305</sup>

From the very commencement of passive resistance, I recognised that all Indians would not and could not join the struggle although all might be, as they actually were, in sympathy with it. Although it was open to me, being secretary, to utilise the name and prestige of the Association, I founded a separate organisation,<sup>306</sup> leaving the British Indian Association free to act as it might within constitutional limits. It was possible by this arrangement to protect the non-resisters from harm, retain their sympathy and save the resisters from the embarrassment that would undoubtedly be caused by non-resisters if they were members of the same body. Let the present passive resisters work along their own lines and rely upon getting more than prestige by their strength, sacrifice and capacity for suffering. A passive resister should have a generous heart and represent not only his own companions but even his opponents. Whatever rights he secures, he will secure for all. He is a friend of all and enemy of none. That is the first condition of successful passive or civil resistance.

*Harijan*, August 19, 1939; *Collected Works*, Volume 70, pages 91-92

### 186. LETTER TO DR. Y. M. DADOO, AUGUST 19, 1939

Segaon, Wardha  
19 August 1939

My dear Dadoo,

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<sup>305</sup> Transvaal British Indian Association

<sup>306</sup> Passive Resistance Association

It has stirred me to find you leading the *Satyagraha* band. Manilal and Medh have together given me a good account of you. It makes me glad to know that you are son of a valued client of mine.

You know that I am watching your movement as closely as I can. You have done well in sending me the relevant literature. There is just a ray of hope that we shall reach a settlement. But you will not expect anything heroic nor will you promise great things. If you have to fight it will be a fight for honour. You won't get anything very substantial. Too much has already been surrendered during these years. You are engaged in a very hard struggle. And if as a result of the present effort a handful of you make it the mission of your life to serve the cause there you will gradually build up a prestige that will stand you in good stead.

Yours sincerely  
M.K. Gandhi

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**187. LETTER TO KUNVAR SIR JAGDISH PRASAD, AUGUST 21,  
1939<sup>307</sup>**

Segaon, Wardha

August 21, 1939

Dear Sir Jagdish,

I know you have been putting up a good fight on behalf of the Indians in S.A. I have been staying their hand. But they are getting restive. They won't be satisfied with any patch work settlement. I know too, that nothing brave is to be expected from here. It is therefore doubly necessary not to prolong the agony. If you can, you should tell Rama Rau<sup>308</sup> to keep himself in touch with the Passive Resisters. As you know there are two parties there. He should take the P.R.'s into his confidence. They complain that he does not even recognise them. I can hardly believe this of Rama Rau. I am making inquiry. But I thought you should know what I am getting from S.A.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi

Kunvar Sir Jagdish Prasad

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<sup>307</sup> Sir Jagdish Prasad wrote to Gandhiji on July 13 and 21, 1939. In the first letter, he suggested that the move by some Indians in South Africa to embark on passive resistance would be a grave mistake. In the second letter, he expressed gratitude to Gandhiji for asking Transvaal Indians to postpone passive resistance.

<sup>308</sup> Sir Benegal Rama Rau, Agent-General of India in South Africa

Simla

**188. TELEGRAM TO DR. Y. M. DADOO, AUGUST 28, 1939<sup>309</sup>**

MAKING EFFORT. HAVE INFORMATION SAYING UNION GOVERNMENT  
WILL CONCILIATE INDIAN OPINION NOTHING RELIABLE WILL SOON GIVE  
DEFINITE NEWS

GANDHI

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**189. LETTER TO DR. Y. M. DADOO, SEPTEMBER 19, 1939**

My dear Dadoo,

I was glad to have your reply. Of course there is no absolute reason why passive resistance should be stopped because war has broken out in Europe. But wisdom may dictate that course. Of this you should be the best judges. I am trying my best to have the enforcement of the obnoxious law postponed. As the letters are delayed, you will use cable when necessary.

Yours,  
BAPU

*Collected Works*, Volume 70, page 187

**190. LETTER TO S. B. MEDH, SEPTEMBER 19, 1939**

*Chi. Medh,*

I have your letter. You will see (for yourself) from the letter to *Bhai* Dadoo that I understand what you say. I am doing all that I can. Manilal must be getting these letters, so I won't be particular in writing to him. What is this about somebody in Boksberg

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<sup>309</sup> The above was in reply to a telegram received from Dr. Dadoo on August 27, 1939, which read:

"RELIABLE INFORMATION THAT UNION GOVERNMENT REJECTED INDIAN GOVERNMENT OFFER FOR ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE UNION GOVERNMENT INTIMATED THAT ADVANCE COPY CONTEMPLATED LEGISLATION SHALL BE FORWARDED TO INDIAN GOVERNMENT STOP APPEAR NEGOTIATIONS PROCEEDING ON FUTURE LEGISLATIONS STOP CONCERNED NO MENTION ACT 1939 ON WHICH WE PLEDGED STRUGGLE PRAY INFORM PROGRESS."

having been killed? There seems to have been some report to that effect in the *Rand Daily Mail*. It seems there too a terrorist gang has come into existence.

Blessings from  
BAPU

(From Gujarati)

*Collected Works*, Volume 70, page 188

### 191. LETTER TO DR. Y. M. DADOO, SEPTEMBER 27, 1939

My dear Dadoo,

Haji Ismail Bhabha<sup>310</sup> writes complaining that *satyagrahis* are acting violently, that they had gone to the June meeting taking lethal weapons with them, that they were exploiting Muslim women, etc. I have written to him saying that I am writing to you. I suggest your seeing him. Our duty is to see even the opponent's viewpoint and meet him wherever we can.

I hope things are shaping and proceeding well there.

Yours  
BAPU<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> A trader in Belfast, Transvaal, active in Indian community associations

<sup>311</sup> In a letter of November 4, 1939, to Gandhiji, Dr. Dadoo wrote:

"There is no truth whatsoever in the allegation of Haji Ismail Bhabha. I can assure you that the *satyagrahis* remained ever loyal to the principles of non-violence and never for a single moment did they countenance violent methods. Some Muslim women out of sheer enthusiasm and in complete accord with the desires and wishes of the chief members of their households, did attend our meeting. In my opinion, it was an event of tremendous value to the progress of our community. I shall most certainly see him but might I proffer a medical opinion, without malice affecting it, that his mental stability is open to question. As you rightly say, our duty is to win our opponents by love and understanding."

He continued as regards the 4 June meeting:

"The Attorney-General has declined to prosecute the accused in June the 4th case. They were committed for trial by the presiding magistrate in a preparatory examination held recently. Legal opinion declares that a *prima facie* case was made out. It seems obvious that the Attorney-General was influenced... by extra-legal considerations. Such are the ways of corrupt society!"

At a public meeting of the Transvaal Indian Congress in Johannesburg on June 4, 1939, supporters of Dr. Dadoo had been attacked with lethal weapons. Dayabhai Govindji, 25, was killed and several others were injured. Police arrested five persons who were related to S. M. Nana and A. I. Kaje (secretaries of the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses), but they were not prosecuted.



**192. TELEGRAM TO DR. Y.M. DADOO, OCTOBER 23, 1939<sup>312</sup>**

DADOO  
47 ENDSTREET  
JOHANNESBURG

ADVICE PATIENCE SEND DETAILS WHAT GOES ON

BAPU

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**193. TELEGRAM TO GENERAL SMUTS, OCTOBER 23, 1939**

GENERAL SMUTS  
PRETORIA

DISTURBING NEWS FROM INDIAN FRIENDS JOHANNESBURG. TRUST YOU  
ARE NOT ENFORCING NEW LEGISLATION SUGGEST YOUR INVITING DR.  
DADOO SEE YOU

GANDHI

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**194. TELEGRAM TO GENERAL SMUTS, NOVEMBER 8, 1939<sup>313</sup>**

PRIME MINISTER  
PRETORIA

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<sup>312</sup> This was in reply to a telegram of October 21 from Dr. Dadoo which read:

"ACT OF 1939 INFLICTING INTOLERABLE HARDSHIPS ON GROWING NUMBER OF OUR  
PEOPLE PATIENCE STRETCHED TO STRAINING POINT PRAY CABLE DEFINITE ADVICE."

<sup>313</sup> This was in reply to the following telegram from General Smuts on November 2, 1939:

"NO JUSTIFICATION FOR ALARM. DR. DADOO EVIDENTLY MISINFORMED AND IS  
BEING GRANTED INTERVIEW BY MINISTER OF INTERIOR  
PRIME MINISTER"

YOUR KIND CABLE GREATLY RELIEVED

GANDHI

**195. LETTER TO DR. Y. M. DADOO, DECEMBER 13, 1939<sup>314</sup>**

My dear Dadoo,

I have your clear and firm letter. Gen. Smuts sent me a cable in reply to mine that the minister was seeing you. He said too that I need have no anxiety. My opinion therefore is based on this assurance. The brunt has to be borne by you. Therefore my advice must always be in favour of caution. But you must be the final judges. Only you should know that just now you should entertain no hope of much work being done here. You will have to fight single handed. If therefore you can tide over the war period, it will be good. But I can imagine a situation when submission would be unmanly. This is a matter of feeling. Of this you must be the sole judges. You will now act as you think best. You will keep me informed of the doings there. Please show this to Medh and Manilal. I am not writing separately to them.

Love  
Bapu

Segaon  
December 13, 1939

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

**196. DISTURBING NEWS**

The news from South Africa is disturbing. Dr. Malan is on the war-path. He will enforce segregation by law. He will prohibit legal unions between the Whites and Asiatics.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> This was in reply to a letter of November 4 by Dr. Dadoo explaining the delicate position of the Indian community in the Transvaal, and adding:

"Since the Passive Resistance Council has postponed the movement on your advice, we look to you for future guidance. A few of us have taken oath in public that we shall start P.R. if the harmful operation of the new Act is not stayed. Therefore, I appeal to you in the event of the Union Government remaining adamant on this issue, to give us the necessary leave to carry on our struggle. Either an honourable settlement or P.R. can solve our problems."

<sup>315</sup> Dr. D.F. Malan, leader of the Nationalist Party, moved in the House of Assembly of the South African Parliament:

"The House regards it as urgently necessary that the policy of segregation between Europeans and non-Europeans, residentially, industrially and practically should be carried out without delay and that on the basis of the report of the Government Commission of 1939 on mixed marriages steps should be

He will tolerate the Indians' presence only as hewers of wood and drawers of water, never as human beings having equal opportunities and rights with the Whites. Here in India, which is daily growing in consciousness of her self-respect and her right to be regarded as a free nation, this racial bar is resented. India's independence is coming sooner than many people think. So far as I can see nothing can stop her march to her natural destiny. I myself envisage alliance with Great Britain and the Dominions, if the freedom is to come as a result of an honourable understanding between the two countries. But if the statesmen of South Africa continue the attitude of race superiority, alliance between unequals would become an impossibility. I look upon this war as a divine judgement. The whole world is directly or indirectly affected by it. Every nation subordinate or free has to make its choice. Personal wishes of the present actors are likely to be confounded. I would urge Dr. Malan and those South Africans who think with him to take a long view of things. He is of course on the right track if he thinks, as many Africans<sup>316</sup> do, that God has created the White man to be lord and master of the Coloured man. I hope that Dr. Malan is not one of them. Anyway I hope General Smuts will resist the pressure that is being put upon him to adopt the reactionary legislation suggested by Dr. Malan.

Segaon, January 27, 1940

*Harijan*, February 3, 1940; *Collected Works*, Volume 71, pages 144-145

## 197. TWO THOUGHT-PROVOKING LETTERS

... The second letter is from South Africa. I take a few sentences from it:

"I am puzzled as to what should be the attitude of Indians at the present juncture. The 'White' races are so utterly callous in regard to 'Coloured' people, and in spite of the war colour prejudice continues unabated. Why then should we give our lives for them? Quite recently an Indian student who returned here from Europe was telling us that in spite of the fact that the steamer was not crowded the British company hesitated to give accommodation to Indians. Such treatment leads us and also the African people to believe that there is no difference between the Nazis, the Boers and the British, so far as we are concerned. If there were Nazi rule in South Africa, we could not be treated worse than we are today. Many of us think that the British are sweet-tongued but they pursue their own ruthless policy in spite of honeyed words, whereas Hitler would be more frank. He at any rate says exactly what he feels. Is there not truth in this? Anyhow we ought to know where we stand. Please tell us."

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taken to prohibit miscegenation. The House requests the Government, therefore, to introduce immediately legislation necessary to carry out that policy effectively."

<sup>316</sup> Presumably "Afrikaners"

Though differently worded the two letters betray the same thought. It is difficult for those who suffer at British hands to shed either their dislike of or a disinclination to help them. But the present is a real testing time for *ahimsa* which alone can throw light on our path.

First of all we must distinguish between the British people and their policy. We must have full liberty thoughtfully and with reason to criticise the latter, but we may not dislike them... Let us tell them where they are in the wrong, but let us not wish them any harm. We may demand a mental and heart change in their outlook, but we may not pray for their downfall.

Such an attitude is indispensable in *satyagraha* which demands that, while we may neither speak evil of wrongdoers nor wish them ill, we must at the same time show them the error of their ways and non-co-operate with them in their wrongdoing... The writer from South Africa rightly says that there is not much to choose between the British and the Nazis. This is as clear as daylight in South Africa, in particular, where Coloured races are treated as definitely inferior in every way. What more than this could the Nazis say or do? The defeat of the British would connote the victory of the Nazis, which, again, we do not and must not desire. Therefore, we should be impartial. We are desirous of our own independence...

*Harijan*, October 13, 1940; *Collected Works*, Volume 73, pages 84-85

198. TELEGRAM TO HAJEE E. M. PARUK, NATAL INDIAN CONGRESS,  
SEPTEMBER 1941<sup>317</sup>

E. M. PARUK  
NATAL INDIAN CONGRESS  
37 ALBERT STREET  
DURBAN

WISH SUCCESS. HOPE INTERNAL DISSENSIONS COMPOSED

GANDHI

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India microfilm 1798

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<sup>317</sup> Mr. Paruk, a sugar mill owner, became President of the Natal Indian Congress in 1940 when a group led by A. I. Kajeer revived the NIC, refusing to recognise the amalgamation of the NIC and the Colonial Born and Indian Settlers Association in 1939 to form the Natal Indian Association.

**199. LETTER TO SIR SHAFAT AHMED KHAN, OCTOBER 9,  
1941<sup>318</sup>**

Sevagram  
9-10-41

Dear Sir Shafa'at,

I am delighted to have your letter just received. I was glad to learn of your appointment as High Commissioner. Nothing less than what you have so nobly said in your letter could be expected of you. I know that you have before you a most difficult task. May God be your help. I appreciate your desire to see me before you sail. I shall be delighted to meet you and place at your disposal all I know about the problem and our people in the Union.

Yours sincerely  
M.K. Gandhi

Documents from Shri Pyarelal, National Archives of India, microfilm 1798

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<sup>318</sup> This was in reply to a letter from Sir Shafa'at Ahmed Khan, dated October 7, 1941, informing Gandhiji that he had been appointed High Commissioner of India in the Union of South Africa. He wished to pay his respects to Gandhiji before his departure from India, and discuss the problem of Indians in South Africa.

## PART VI

1945-48

### *Editors' Note*

This final section of the volume contains Gandhiji's comments on South Africa in the last phase of his life.

The Quit India Movement of 1942 had placed Gandhiji, his wife Kasturba and his colleagues behind prison bars.

The situation in their Poona jail was to become sombre. In February 1944, Kasturba fell grievously ill. It became clear, before long, that she was in her deathbed. As life ebbed away from her fragile body, the events of three decades earlier, in the final phase of the *Satyagraha* in South Africa, must have been re-lived by the two prisoners in their thoughts.

On February 22, 1944, Kasturba, the heroine of the 1913 march into the Transvaal, died. A prisoner of the British Raj. But a prisoner who had shaken the prison house to its foundations...

In the meantime, the clock was ticking away for the British Raj. Events moved swiftly in the three years between 1945 and 1948. World War II came to an end as did, in a sense, India's War of Independence. And just as the former left a divided Germany, the latter left a divided India. But India was, at last, free.

Gandhiji did not fail, through these momentous events, to remain posted with the latest developments in South Africa.

A delegation of the South African Indian Congress, led by Sorabjee Rustomjee, arrived in India in March 1946, as the South African Government proceeded to enact the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill, denounced by the Indian community as the "Ghetto Bill." In a statement dated March 18, 1946, Gandhiji said:

"The threatened Land and Franchise Bill which has brought the South African delegation to India, though superficially it affects the Indians of Natal and the Transvaal, is in effect a challenge to Asia and by implication to the Negro races..." (Item 202).

On the same day, he said in a cable to General Smuts: "Your Asiatic policy... ill becomes you... withdraw Land and Franchise Measure and call... RTC (Round Table Conference)." (Item 203).

And in an article in *Harijan* dated June 2, 1946, he declared: "The cause is the cause of the honour of India and through her of all the exploited coloured races of the earth whether they are brown, yellow or black." (Item 207).

When the Indian community launched passive resistance shortly after, under the leadership of Dr. Y. M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, Gandhiji sent a message to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, suggesting he lend support. At his prayer meeting, he expressed the hope that the passive resisters would prove themselves to be ideal *satyagrahis* in every respect. (Item 211).

Disturbed by reports of white violence against the *Satyagrahis*, he said in a speech on June 27, 1946, that the whites there were becoming more and more frenzied in their hooliganism and seemed to be determined to cow down the *satyagrahis* who were behaving in a calm and dignified manner. (Item 213).

Writing in *Harijan*, on June 30, 1946, he said: "Let us hope that our countrymen's heroic resistance will not only shame the hooligans into silence but prove the precursor of the repeal of the law that disfigures the statute book of South Africa." (Item 212).

Gandhiji said in his speech to the All India Congress Committee in Bombay on July 7, 1946:

"The South African struggle may appear to be insignificant today but it is charged with momentous consequences." (Item 217)

That statement was to prove prophetic, as the Indian resistance encouraged the African people and resulted in a defiance campaign of all the oppressed people of South Africa in 1952.

It was more than thirty years since the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement. And more than twenty years since he wrote *Satyagraha in South Africa*. But his words at the end of that book rang true:

"... had it not been for this great struggle and for the untold sufferings which many Indians invited upon their devoted heads, the Indians today would have been hounded out of South Africa. Nay, the victory achieved by Indians in South Africa more or less served as a shield for Indian emigrants in other parts of the British empire, who, if they are suppressed, will be suppressed thanks to the absence of *Satyagraha* among themselves, and to India's inability to protect them, and not because of any flaw in the weapon of *Satyagraha*. I will consider myself amply repaid if I have in these pages demonstrated with some success that *Satyagraha* is a priceless and matchless weapon, and that those who wield it are strangers to disappointment or defeat."

Gandhiji was gratified and proud that *satyagraha* had been revived in the land of its birth. He said in a speech on July 10, 1946, that it was a matter of pride for India that the children of indentured labourers and traders - many of them descendants of Harijans - were proving themselves such brave *Satyagrahis*. "After all," he remarked, "civil resistance had its birth in Asia. Jesus was an Asiatic. If he was reborn and went to South Africa today and lived there, he would have to live in a ghetto." (Item 218).

Indian public opinion, which became increasingly sensitive as the country moved towards independence, pressed for sanctions and other strong action against racism in South Africa. All parties were united on this matter of honour for the country.

Under pressure of public opinion, the Indian Government lodged a complaint with the United Nations, withdrew its High Commissioner from South Africa and imposed a trade embargo.

Gandhiji had no doubt that the struggle would be difficult. In May 1947, on the eve of a major rally organised in Johannesburg, he said he wanted "to warn the organisers of the rally against rhetorical display or raising idle hopes and to advise them to carry on their demonstration with dignity and restraint." (Item 234).

Dignity and restraint. Those were his chosen attributes for a true *satyagrahi*. And those were his own attributes as he walked, on January 30, 1948, compassionately, but determinedly, to stop bullets of prejudice in their lethal track. Even two days prior to his assassination, addressing a prayer congregation at Birla House, New Delhi, he had reverted to his favourite theme, South Africa.

## **200. MESSAGE TO INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA, APRIL 18, 1945<sup>319</sup>**

As India holds the key to the freedom of all the exploited races and nations of the earth so do Indians in South Africa hold the key to the protection and freedom of the exploited people in the overseas. For it was in South Africa that *satyagraha* was fairly tried and became largely successful. Will the Indians there unite and sacrifice themselves for the common cause?

*Bombay Chronicle*, May 1, 1945, and *The Hindu*, May 2, 1945; *Collected Works*, Volume 79, page 391

## **201. LETTER TO KANTILAL GANDHI, APRIL 27, 1945**

... Everyone in South Africa should live in harmony and bring credit to India. Everyone should be dedicated to service.

(From Gujarati)

*Collected Works*, Volume 80, page 24

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<sup>319</sup> The message was conveyed through J.R. Bhala, Joint Secretary of the Overseas Indian Students' Association, who had met Gandhiji and acquainted him with the difficulties facing the overseas students.



## 202. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, MARCH 18, 1946

Course of events has raised the question of South Africa Whiteman's policy to the highest level. Unseen, it holds the seeds of a world war. The threatened Land and Franchise Bill<sup>320</sup> which has brought the South African Indian delegation to India,<sup>321</sup> though superficially it affects the Indians of Natal and the Transvaal, is in effect a challenge to Asia and by implication to the Negro races. India in her present exalted mood can view it in no other way. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is Indian to the core but, being also an internationalist, he has made us used to looking at everything in the international light instead of the parochial. India, weak physically and materially but strong ethically and numerically, has proclaimed from the house-tops that her independence would be a threat to no one and no nation, but will be a help to noble effort throughout the world and a promise of relief to all its exploited peoples. Therefore India regards the contemplated measure of the Union of South Africa as an insult and challenge to them.

The Indian deputation see in the present measure not merely an assault on Indian property rights but also on their status as free men. They do not want merely to exist in South Africa. They need not have sent the deputation all the way to India for that purpose. They want to be in South Africa as equals of the European settlers of South Africa. They know that today they are not. But they must stop deterioration and hence move forward. In that forward march India will help, of course. Indeed all the moral forces will be at their call. The brunt, however, will have to be borne by them. They rediscovered the force of Truth (*Satyagraha*) and that will be their only and ultimate source of power. Time for it is not yet. Let us hope, it will never come. They have to try together<sup>322</sup> on their side all the moral forces of the world. They will have to clear the ground of all the weeds, all sordidness, all personal ambition which always and everywhere creeps in, if sleepless

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<sup>320</sup> The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill, which was introduced in the Parliament of the Union of South Africa in March 1946.

<sup>321</sup> The South African Indian Congress decided at its Conference in February to oppose the proposed legislation and to prepare immediately for "concerted and prolonged resistance". A delegation of the Congress, led by Sorabjee Rustomjee, arrived in India to urge the Indian Government to seek a round table conference with South Africa and, failing that, to withdraw the High Commissioner from South Africa and impose economic sanctions against South Africa. The other members of the delegation were S. R. Naidoo, A. S. M. Kajee and A. A. Mirza.

The delegation was received by the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, on March 12, 1946. It had earlier met Gandhiji on March 3rd, and he had helped draft the delegation's memorandum to the Viceroy. For the draft of Gandhiji, please see *Collected Works*, Volume 83, pages 230-31. The text of the memorandum may be found in Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress* (Bombay: Padma Publications, 1947), Volume II, Appendix III.

The resolution of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress (March 12-15, 1946) on "Indians in South Africa" was probably prepared by Gandhiji.

<sup>322</sup> Probably "to gather"

vigilance is not kept on the watch-tower. Imagine the plight of a poor barque sailing when the beacon light in front has gone out.

They must be prepared for accidents and consequent suffering. If they are in earnest and hardy enough to brave the worst, they are bound to come out the best in the end.

What about the whites of South Africa? They invited the Indians in the first instance. If they had thought the invitees would always be like slaves or that they would not be followed by their free brethren, they were soon undeceived.

Does real superiority require outside props in the shape of legislation? Will they see that every such wall of protection weakens them, ultimately rendering them effeminate? The lesson of history ought to teach them that might is not right. Right only is might. Field Marshal Smuts is a great soldier-statesman. Will he not perceive that he will be taking the whitemen of South Africa down the precipice, if he persists in the policy underlying his measure? Let him take counsel with the Allies to whose victory on the battlefield he contributed not a little. He will surely throw away its fruits, if he persists in his plan of protecting the civilisation of the West by artificial means.

Poona, March 18, 1946

*Harijan*, March 24, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 83, pages 284-286

203. TELEGRAM TO FIELD MARSHAL J. C. SMUTS, MARCH 18, 1946

YOUR ASIATIC POLICY REQUIRES OVERHAULING. IT ILL BECOMES YOU. LEAST YOU SHOULD DO IS WITHDRAW THREATENED LAND AND FRANCHISE MEASURE AND CALL ADVISORY ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE AT LEAST OF UNION BRITISH AND INDIAN GOVERNMENTS AND IF POSSIBLE OF ALL ASSOCIATE POWERS TO CONSIDER ASIATIC AFRICAN AND GENERAL COLOUR POLICY ARISING FROM ASIATIC BILL. THIS IS NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNLESS YOU SO WISH.

YOUR AND SOUTH AFRICA'S SINCERE FRIEND  
GANDHI<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Field Marshal Smuts said in a cabled reply of March 21, 1946:

"I MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR INTEREST AND YOUR KIND MESSAGE OF FRIENDSHIP WHICH IS WARMLY RECIPROCATED. INDIAN DIFFICULTIES IN NATAL HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE ACUTE IN RECENT YEARS AND NOW HAVE TO BE URGENTLY DEALT WITH TO PREVENT DETERIORATION FROM WHICH INDIANS MAY BE GREATEST SUFFERERS. REPEATED LOCAL CONFERENCES WITH INDIAN ORGANISATIONS HAVE PRODUCED NO SOLUTIONS AND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE WITH OUTSIDE POWERS IS NOT POLITICALLY FEASIBLE. AS REGARDS PROPOSED LEGISLATION CONFIRMATION OF POLITICAL STATUS ON INDIANS HAS BECOME HIGHLY EXPEDIENT AND IS GREAT STEP FORWARD EVEN THOUGH REPRESENTATION IS BY EUROPEANS UNDER SOUTH

204. TELEGRAM TO FIELD MARSHAL J. C. SMUTS, MARCH 22, 1946

POONA  
MARCH 22, 1946

FIELD MARSHAL SMUTS  
CAPE TOWN

THANKS FOR WIRE. INDIA IS EXPECTED TO GET INDEPENDENCE THIS YEAR. IF YOU BELIEVE IT, WAIT TILL THEN. CLOISTERED CIVILISATION LIKE CLOISTERED VIRTUE. YOUR GOOD INTENTIONS UNDOUBTED. PREMISE APPEARS FAULTY. INDIA'S PROTEST AGAINST INFERIOR STATUS. PROPOSED FRANCHISE DOUBTFUL PRIVILEGE. LAND TENURE IS SEGREGATION. SHALL RESPECT YOUR WISH AVOID PUBLICITY CONTENTS OUR CABLES.

GANDHI

*Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government, 1944-47, page 160*

## **205. INTERVIEW TO SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION<sup>324</sup>**

Gandhiji remarked on the presence of divisions among them. They admitted divisions but argued that they were there even in Gandhiji's time.

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AFRICA ACT. TO ALLAY FEARS OF FURTHER PENETRATION BILL PROPOSES DEMARCATION OF FREE AREAS IN NATAL WHERE INDIANS AND OTHERS CAN BUY AND OCCUPY LAND FREELY AND QUESTION OF INDIAN SEGREGATION DOES NOT ARISE. DEMARCATION TO BE MADE BY JOINT BOARDS ON WHICH INDIANS ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED. ALTHOUGH BILL CURTAILS RIGHTS OF INDIANS TO BUY AND OCCUPY ANYWHERE IN NATAL IT IS ESSENTIALLY NOT UNFAIR IN INTENTION OR EFFORT AND WILL PROVIDE WORKABLE BASIS FOR INDIAN DEVELOPMENT AND RACIAL PEACE FOR MANY YEARS. AS SUCH I COMMEND IT TO YOU WHO KNOW HOW GREAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES IN MAINTAINING HARMONY AMONG SOUTH AFRICANS OF ALL RACES. I ASSURE YOU OF THE FRIENDLY SPIRIT IN WHICH I AM ACTING IN A SITUATION WHICH MAY EASILY GET OUT OF CONTROL. THIS IS FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION. I SEE NO HARM HOWEVER IN STATEMENT THAT YOU AND I HAVE BEEN PERSONALLY IN COMMUNICATION OVER THIS MATTER IF YOU CONSIDER IT DESIRABLE."

<sup>324</sup> This appeared under the title "With the South African Delegation" by Pyarelal, who explained that the delegation led by Sorabjee Rustomjee "sought Gandhiji's advice on the starting of successful *satyagraha*."

According to Pyarelal, the delegation saw Gandhiji more than once and the last time was in the sweepers' colony in Delhi (*Harijan*, May 19, 1946), where he had arrived on April 1, 1946, so that the interview took place on or after that date.

GANDHIJI: The difference between then and now is this: that in those days the blacklegs became isolated after a time, and it was possible to hold monster meetings everywhere. Parsee Rustomjee went among the indentured labourers and, in the final struggle, they rose like one man. Repeat that history today, and you will win. Do not repeat it, and you will fail. Do you command the sympathy and support of all the interests? Will the mercantile community back you?

SORABJEE: *The mercantile community was not with us even then.*

G: But we had Cachalia.<sup>325</sup> If you have one Cachalia amongst you, the whole of the mercantile community will be covered.

S: *Suppose no merchant comes forward. Is not a struggle possible then?*

G: It will then take a different turn and in the end the mercantile community will be swept out of existence.

A MEMBER: *We are a difficult community at times.*

ANOTHER MEMBER: *And quarrelsome too.*

G: I know, I know. The South Africa of today is not far different from the South Africa that I have known. In the first article I wrote for the *Indian Opinion* I said that if after all there was one true man in South Africa, he will cover all. He will build up the whole structure from within. "Amidst a whole heap of bad coins," I wrote, "if there is one true sovereign, the heap will be worth that one sovereign and no more." If you produce one civil resister of merit, he will pull things through. Do not start the struggle, therefore, unless you have that stuff. Manage to exist you will anyhow. But that should not satisfy you. You have to live as a self-respecting community with an equal status. Indians have to make good that position by showing the real stuff.

The discussion then turned on the strategy of the proposed *satyagraha*. Gandhiji was definitely opposed to sitting in prohibited seats in trains and railway carriages by way of *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* should be on a clear, unequivocal and impersonal issue and capable of taking thousands in its fold...

Gandhiji mentioned how he had refused to send a message for a meeting of the West Africa Federation that was held some time back in London, because they conceived of a struggle after the way of Europe. He added:

Probably theirs is not the way of non-violence. One day the black races will rise like the avenging Attila against their white oppressors, unless someone presents to them the weapon of *satyagraha*.

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<sup>325</sup> A. M. Cachalia

A MEMBER: *You have said, we should associate with Zulus and Bantus. Does it not mean joining them in a common anti-white front?*

G: Yes, I have said that we should associate with Zulus, Bantus, etc. It means that you take them under your wing when you have developed that power of non- violence. You will be their saviour. But if you allow yourselves to be overwhelmed and swept off your feet, it will be their and your ruin. Their slogan today is no longer merely 'Asia for the Asiatics` or 'Africa for the Africans` but the unity of all the exploited races of the earth. On India rests the burden of pointing the way to all the exploited races. She won't be able to bear that burden today, if non-violence does not permeate us more than today. I have been trying to fit ourselves for that mission by giving a wider bend to our struggle. India will become a torch bearer to the oppressed and exploited races, only if she can vindicate the principle of non-violence in her own case, not jettison it as soon as independence of foreign control is achieved.

ANOTHER MEMBER: *Race consciousness is arising all over South Africa. We Indians take advantage of the Bantus. We send our children to Native colleges. But we are ashamed to call ourselves Natives. They feel we are arrogant and aloof. We do not do enough to make an adequate return for what we have got from them. They are getting resentful and the white man encourages and promotes that feeling to widen the gulf.*

G: It will be an evil day for you, if he succeeds. The trouble is that you are all worshippers of the golden calf.

CHRISTOPHER: *Having never seen it, how can we worship it?*

G: Worshipping is different from seeing. Don't we worship God without seeing Him?

The delegation then asked if a leader could be sent from India to organise and lead them.

Gandhiji, in reply, told them that a leader would have to arise from among them. He hoped that they would throw up one in due time. He described to them how he had been arguing with his son Manilal to train up his children for the task. After they had finished their education in India, he hoped, they would go back and settle down in South Africa and serve the Indian community. *Apropos* the training that would equip South Africa-born Indian children for service, he mentioned how he had refused to send his own children to Lovedale and Fort Hare.<sup>326</sup>

*Harijan*, May 19, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 83, pages 352-354

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<sup>326</sup> Lovedale is a secondary school and Fort Hare a college, both established by Christian missions for the education of Africans.

## 206. MESSAGE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY, MAY 1946<sup>327</sup>

It is my firm conviction that Indians in South Africa must not submit to the latest racial legislation of the Union of South Africa. They have well nigh exhausted all constitutional means of seeking redress. Therefore, they have at their disposal the matchless weapon of *satyagraha* which was successfully tried for the first time in South Africa. There is no cause therefore for despair. They must vindicate the honour of the nation to which they belong by use of *satyagraha*, whether they are few or many. They must not selfishly submit to the contemplated segregation nor accept the racial franchise.

*Messages to South African Indian Community from the Leaders of India*, Durban, June 1, 1946

## 207. INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Indian deputation from South Africa have made a great stir in India. They propose to approach the U.N.O.<sup>328</sup> with a view to enlisting the latter's sympathy. But the legislation is going through. The Indian High Commissioner will be withdrawn as he should be. What little aid he can render is nothing compared to the indignity of representing a country whose inhabitants are to be treated as an inferior race. This new caste is worse than the ancient but dying institution of India which has some redeeming features, even while it is dying. But the new civilised edition has none. It shamelessly proclaims that white civilisation requires the erection of legal barriers in order to protect itself against Asiatics and Africans. The Indians in South Africa are bearing a heavy burden which they are well able to discharge. *Satyagraha*, the mightiest weapon in the world, was born and bred there. If they make effective use of it, it will be well with the sacred cause they are handling. It is not one of making it easy for a handful to be permitted to live and trade there if they wear the badge of inferiority called years ago by an Englishman in South Africa "dog's collar." The cause is the cause of the honour of India and through her of all the exploited Coloured races of the earth, whether they are brown, yellow or black. It is worth all the suffering of which they are capable.

New Delhi, May 27, 1946

*Harijan*, June 2, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, page 215

## 208. LETTER TO G.E.B. ABELL, JUNE 15, 1946

Dear Mr. Abell,<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> This message was given to Sorabjee Rustomjee. Please see previous item.

<sup>328</sup> United Nations Organisation

<sup>329</sup> Private Secretary to the Viceroy

His Excellency<sup>330</sup> I have no doubt has seen from the papers that the passive resistance movement on the part of the Indians there has commenced against the Anti- Asiatic Act recently passed by the South African Union Legislature. Is it too much to expect His Excellency to support and express his approval of the movement, as did Lord Hardinge on a similar occasion in South Africa during his Viceroyalty?<sup>331</sup>

Yours sincerely,  
M.K. Gandhi<sup>332</sup>

*Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government, 1944-47, page 95; Collected Works, Volume 84, page 337*

## 209. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, JUNE 21, 1946<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> The Viceroy, Field Marshal Lord Wavell (1883-1950), Viceroy of India, 1943-47

<sup>331</sup> The reference is to the statement by the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, on November 24, 1913. Please see footnote to item 4 above.

<sup>332</sup> Mr. Abell replied on June 18, 1946, as follows:

"The Government of India have already given notice of the termination of the Trade Agreement with South Africa, and have called back their High Commissioner for consultation; they have also decided to refer the dispute to U.N.O. H.E. agreed with all these decisions.

"H.E. has every sympathy for the Indian case and has done all he can to support and further it, but he thinks it would be a mistake for him to make any public declaration on the subject, and that it might do more harm than good to the cause of Indians in South Africa."

<sup>333</sup> 15. Pyarelal in *Harijan* (June 30, 1946) prefaced his report of this speech with the following:

"The heroic struggle going on in South Africa has become a theme of his after-prayer talks. 'We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit meekly any longer to a policy of segregation that is causing disaster to our country and our people,' runs the Passive Resistance resolution passed at a meeting of the Transvaal Indian Congress held at Johannesburg on April 21, 1946. 'They must remember,' continues the resolution, 'that non-violence is the basis of this movement and that this struggle is directed against the policy of segregation and not against the white population of this country.'

"The struggle has the full sympathy of the European democrats and the African section of South Africa. Said the President of the African National Congress at the Transvaal Indian Congress mass meeting:

'I declare from this platform that we Africans do not only sympathise, but will support and assist in all possible manner the Indians in their struggle against this inhuman legislation.'

"Yesterday," he continued, "it was the turn of Africans, today it is the turn of the Indians, tomorrow it will be the turn of the Coloured and there is no knowing where this policy of racialism will end."

(Referring to the start of the passive resistance struggle of the Indian community in South Africa, Gandhiji described how some white people there had taken the law into their own hands and were harassing the passive resisters who were fighting for their self-respect and the honour of India.)<sup>334</sup>

The Union Government seems to be just watching while the whites commit mischief. It is wrong. It is bad enough to pass an unjust law, but it is worse to let white people take the law into their own hands. They ought to realise that Indians are in no way inferior to them. The latter cannot submit to segregation. The only way open to them to obtain redress is through *satyagraha*. They are offering it against the offending law by setting up tents in the prohibited areas. Some white men have vowed vengeance against them. They have been daily raiding their tents, and terrorising them. Some women are also among the resisters. But they have bravely told the men that they will stand by them and share their vicissitudes. It is no small thing in South Africa. The movement is being led, according to the papers, by Dr. Dadoo and Dr. Naicker.<sup>335</sup> It was the duty of the Government to stop this hooliganism of the whites. They can take action against the passive resisters according to law. What is taking place there today is worse than martial law.<sup>336</sup>

I do not say these things to incite you to anger against the whites of South Africa. If you do that you will be unworthy to take part in the prayers. I want you to go home and pray that God may give strength to our brethren and sisters in South Africa, who are fighting for the honour of India, to face all hardships bravely; secondly that He may show light to the whites so that they may cease to inflict inhuman atrocities and the eyes of the Government there may be opened so that they may treat Indians as fellow human beings. The whites of South Africa too are our brethren, being children of the same God.

When we have the control of India's affairs in our own hands such things will become impossible. A free India wedded to truth and non-violence will teach the lesson of peace

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<sup>334</sup> The Indian community began passive resistance on the night of June 13, 1946. Volunteers pitched tents in a vacant municipal land on the corner of Gale Street and Umbilo Road in Durban to court arrest. Initially, the police took no action. On 19 June, bands of white hooligans jeered at, threatened and attacked the passive resisters.

<sup>335</sup> Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, Presidents of the Transvaal and Natal Passive Resistance Councils

<sup>336</sup> *Harijan* (June 30, 1946) has the following:

"The passive resisters are not criminals but respectable citizens. As self-respecting people they will prefer imprisonment to segregation in ghettos. They will resist injustice and oppression with their last breath. It is open to the South African Government to visit them with the penalty of the law for breach or to abrogate the Segregation Act which is contrary to the dictates of humanity. But it will be a dark blot on the history of the white civilisation if lynch law is allowed to have its course in South Africa." He hoped that the South African Government and the civilised conscience of mankind would not allow that.



to the inhabitants of South Africa. But it is for you and the Congress to decide whether a free India will follow the path of peace or the sword...

*Hindustan Times* and *Hindustan*, June 22, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, pages 355-356

#### 210. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, JUNE 22, 1946

...He was glad to tell them, Gandhiji continued, that according to the latest reports received from South Africa, the police there had surrounded the camping ground of the *satyagrahis*, and had given notice to the white population that baiting of the passive resisters would not be allowed.<sup>337</sup> The passive resisters were not criminals but respectable citizens. They were fighting for the vindication of their rights. As self-respecting people they preferred imprisonment to segregation in ghettos. They would resist injustice and oppression with their last breath.

It was open to the South African Government to visit them with the penalty of law or to abrogate the Segregation Act<sup>338</sup> that was contrary to the dictates of humanity. But it would be a dark blot on the history of the white civilisation if lynch law was allowed to have its course in South Africa. He hoped that the South African Government and the civilised conscience of mankind would not allow that. The whites outside South Africa should not allow themselves to be carried away by any misleading propaganda, but should exercise a restraining influence on the South African whites...

*Bombay Chronicle Weekly*, June 23, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, pages 357-358

#### 211. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, JUNE 23, 1946

...He was also happy to inform them that 16 passive resisters in South Africa had been arrested by the South African Government.<sup>339</sup>

A *satyagrahi* breaks laws repugnant to his self-respect and invites the penalty, which he faces cheerfully. Prison-going is not a matter of sorrow to him but of joy. A *satyagrahi* does not expect preferential treatment in prison, but he does expect humane treatment. At the same time he must be prepared to face the worst. He hoped that the passive resisters in South Africa would prove themselves to be ideal *satyagrahis* in every respect...

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<sup>337</sup> On June 21, white hooligans again attacked the passive resisters despite appeals for calm by the Mayor of Durban and the Attorney-General of Natal.

<sup>338</sup> Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, 1946

<sup>339</sup> Passive resisters were arrested for the first time June 21st. They were charged with trespassing, and were cautioned or given suspended sentences.

## 212. WHITE MAN'S BURDEN<sup>340</sup>

According to Reuter, picked Indians, men and women, headed by Dr. Naicker, commenced *satyagraha* (in South Africa popularly known as passive resistance) on June 14th in respect of the Segregation Law of the Union Parliament of South Africa. The same agency further reports that neither the Government nor the Municipality had taken any action against the passive resisters but that some "whites" of Durban had taken the execution of the law into their own hands by raiding the camp at night, cutting down tents swiftly and carrying them away. "A band of 100 young white men broke through the cordon of 50 Indian passive resisters, pulled down the tents and dragged them away torn. Some camp stretchers were smashed and blankets and pillows removed. Two women resisters were involved in the melee. They are stated to have been kicked but not injured."<sup>341</sup>

The papers report that after three days of hooliganism the Borough police had posted themselves near the scene of passive resistance and warned the hooligans against molesting the resisters and terrorising them into submission.<sup>342</sup> This is heartening news. Let us hope that it can be taken at its full value and that the protection means fullest protection against lawlessness, sporadic or organised. Organised popular lawlessness is known as lynching, so shamelessly frequent in America.

Before the Segregation Law was passed, white men, known to be respectable, had carried anti-Asiatic agitation to the point of frenzy. Not satisfied with their triumph in having legislation compelling segregation passed probably beyond expectation, the more advanced section among the agitators have become the executioners of their own laws. They do not know that they are thereby defaming the white man's name!!!

My appeal to the white men and women who have regard for laws for which they have voted is that they should create public opinion against hooliganism and lynch law.

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<sup>340</sup> Gandhiji sent an advance copy of this article to the Viceroy. *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government, 1944-47*, page 162.

<sup>341</sup> In fact, the white hooligans brutally attacked the passive resisters on June 23rd, using lethal weapons. Five resisters fell unconscious and were thrown by the mob in the gutter. Many resisters were injured, including women. Miss Zainab Asvat received a cut on the side of her head and Mrs. Docrat received internal injuries.

The Reuter report was apparently not accurate.

<sup>342</sup> On June 24, the Government issued a proclamation prohibiting any gathering within 400 yards of the passive resistance site. Passive resisters were then arrested.

Passive resistance is aimed at removal in a most approved manner of bad laws, customs or other evils and is designed to be a complete and effective substitute for forcible methods including hooliganism and lynch law. It is an appeal to the heart of man. Often reason fails. It is dwarfed by self. The theory is that an adequate appeal to the heart never fails. Seeming failure is not of the law of *satyagraha* but of incompetence of the *satyagrahi* by whatever cause induced. It may not be possible to give a complete historical instance. The name of Jesus at once comes to the lips. It is an instance of brilliant failure. And he has been acclaimed in the West as Prince of passive resisters. I showed years ago in South Africa that the adjective "passive" was a misnomer, at least as applied to Jesus. He was the most active resister known perhaps to history. His was non-violence *par excellence*. But I must no longer stray from my main subject. It is the resistance of the Jesus type that the white hooligans are seeking to thwart. Let us hope that our countrymen's heroic resistance will not only shame the hooligans into silence but prove the precursor of the repeal of the law that disfigures the statute book of South Africa. In concrete form, what pure suffering, wholly one-sided, does is to stir public opinion against a wrong. Legislators are, after all, representatives of the public. In obedience to it they have enacted a wrong. They have to reverse the process when the same public, awakened to the wrong, demands its removal.

The real "white man's burden" is not insolently to dominate Coloured or Black people under the guise of protection, it is to desist from the hypocrisy which is eating into them. It is time white men learnt to treat every human being as their equal. There is no mystery about whiteness of the skin. It has repeatedly been proved that given equal opportunity a man, be he of any colour or country, is fully equal to any other.

Therefore, white men through the world and especially of India should act upon their fellow men in South Africa and call upon them not to molest Indian resisters who are bravely struggling to preserve the self-respect of Indians in the Union and the honour of their motherland. "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." Or, do they take in vain the name of Him who said this? Have they banished from their hearts the great Coloured Asiatic who gave to the world the above message? Do they forget that the greatest of the teachers of mankind were all Asiatics and did not possess a white face? These, if they descended on earth and went to South Africa, would all have to live in the segregated areas and be classed as Asiatics and Coloured people unfit by law to be equals of whites.

Is a civilisation worth the name which requires for its existence the very doubtful prop of racial legislation and lynch law? The silver lining to the cloud that hangs over the devoted heads of our countrymen lies in the plucky action of Rev. Scott,<sup>343</sup> a white

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<sup>343</sup> The Reverend Michael Scott joined the resisters when white hooligans resorted to violence against them. He was arrested on June 22 and was sentenced to a month in prison. B. Sischy, a white student, was arrested with him.

Several Europeans, as well as Africans and Coloured people, joined the passive resistance in solidarity with the Indians.

clergyman, and his equally white fellow-workers, who have undertaken to share the sufferings of the Indian resisters.

New Delhi, June 26, 1946

*Harijan*, June 30, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, pages 371-373

#### 213. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, JUNE 27, 1946

The South African *satyagraha* was again the theme of Gandhiji's talk after the prayers today. The whites there were becoming more and more frenzied in their hooliganism and seemed to be determined to cow down the *satyagrahis* who were behaving in a calm and dignified manner. The Indians in South Africa were a little over two *lakhs*<sup>344</sup> only. They were a mere handful in the midst of the overwhelming majority of white men and Africans.

Imagine what it must mean for men like Doctors Naicker and Dadoo to be required to live in special locations. I want you all to continue your prayers to God to enable our brethren to remain steadfast till the end and to vouchsafe wisdom to the whites. Let me repeat that prayer from the heart can achieve what nothing else can in the world...

*Bombay Chronicle*, June 28, 1946, and *Harijan*, July 7, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, page 379

#### 214. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, JUNE 28, 1946

Gandhiji paid tribute to the courage and suffering of the passive resisters without retaliation in the midst of the hooliganism which was daily increasing. He was born in India but was made in South Africa of which he knew practically every province. He had passed there twenty years of his life at its meridian. He knew the white men of South Africa. He loved them as well as his countrymen. He felt ashamed, he said, of the hooliganism of some of them. He had the fear that this hooliganism had the sympathy of the mass of the white men of the Union. Hooliganism would not flourish without such silent sympathy. He fondly hoped that as the white men realised the deep strength and sincerity of *satyagrahis*, they would begin to respect them and transfer their sympathy to the suffering passive resisters. He asked the gathering to offer their heartfelt prayers for God's mercy on the hooligans.

He did not want them to send money to their countrymen. Money could not give them victory. They had money enough. But a time might come when it would be their duty in India to offer non-violent resistance of the purest type for the sake of their brethren. He could not tell how.

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<sup>344</sup> A *lakh* is one hundred thousand

India was fast becoming the storehouse of the honour and dignity of the human race. It would be in the fitness of things if it fell to their lot to help the struggle of the gallant resisters of South Africa. But for that the way must be clear before them. He felt that he would know when it was clear. Meantime he invoked the sympathy of the Viceroy and the white men and women of India to do their portion of duty...

*Bombay Chronicle*, June 29, 1946, and *Harijan*, July 7, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, page 380

### **215. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, POONA, JULY 1, 1946<sup>345</sup>**

Gandhiji said that it grieved him to tell them that the hooliganism of the white men of South Africa was daily growing worse. The relieving feature, however, was that the courage and renunciation of the *satyagrahis* was rising to the occasion. One of the sisters, Dr. Goonam, had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>346</sup> The trying Magistrate had reduced the term to four months. Dr. Goonam had objected to it saying that she wanted no favour on the score of her sex. Her offence, if it could be so called, was exactly the same as that of the men *satyagrahis*. But the Magistrate would not listen to her objection.

*Satyagrahis* were being recruited in large numbers. He hoped and prayed, said Gandhiji, that the *satyagrahis* would continue to be strong and firm and that their struggle would be crowned with success...

*The Hindu*, July 3, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, page 398

### **216. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, POONA, JULY 3, 1946**

...Gandhiji said that he would not say that the situation in South Africa was deteriorating. But it was certainly becoming graver. The Government repression was becoming worse. That was, however, part of the bargain. A *satyagrahi* breaks the law and welcomes the penalty.

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<sup>345</sup> As it was Gandhiji's day of silence, his written speech was read out after the prayers.

<sup>346</sup> Dr. K. Goonam Naidoo, the first Indian woman doctor in South Africa, was a leader of the community and Vice-President of the Natal Indian Congress. She led the second batch of passive resisters on June 22, 1946.

Dr. Goonam was sentenced on June 29, 1946, to six months with hard labour, in addition to the sentence of 7 days she had received for contravention of the Riotous Assemblies Act, but four months of the sentence was suspended.

Referring to the arrest and conviction of Parsee Sorabjee<sup>347</sup> to three months' rigorous imprisonment, he described how as a young lad of sixteen he had given proof of unusual courage in the course of the *satyagraha* movement which he conducted in South Africa. A mounted policeman threatened to overrun the passive resisters. Sorabjee held the reins of the horse and told the policeman that he could not frighten the *satyagrahis* into submission by such tactics.<sup>348</sup>

He was a worthy son of a worthy father, the late Parsee Rustomjee, both for his bravery and munificence.

Gandhiji paid a glowing tribute to Rev. Scott of Johannesburg whose Christian conscience had revolted against the inequality of the segregation law and the ill-treatment to which passive resisters were being subjected. As a protest against it, Rev. Scott had decided to cast in his lot with the *satyagrahis* and share with them the indignities to which they were being subjected. It was no small thing for a white man to identify himself with Coloured people in South Africa. If the *satyagrahis* remained free and non-violent till the end, all would be well with them. He had already told the audience their duty in this connection, that is, a heartfelt prayer to God to give strength to the *satyagrahis* and light to the whites.

*The Hindu*, July 5, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, pages 408-409

## **217. SPEECH AT MEETING OF THE ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE, BOMBAY, JULY 7, 1946**

Gandhiji referred to the draft resolution on the *satyagraha* movement now being carried on by Indians in South Africa.<sup>349</sup> He said that the Indians in South Africa were being ill-treated not because they were not whites but because they were considered as coolies.

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<sup>347</sup> Sorabjee Rustomjee led the 17th batch of passive resisters on June 30, 1946, and was sentenced on July 2nd to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

<sup>348</sup> Please see footnote to item 76.

<sup>349</sup> The resolution read:

"The meeting of the A.I.C.C., while it is grieved that it has become imperative for the Indian settlers in South Africa once more to offer *satyagraha* in the land of its birth, against a law imposing on them a colour bar far more sinister than the one against which they had put up a brave fight between 1907 and 1914, congratulates the handful of *satyagrahis* on their brave but unequal action against heavy odds.

"The meeting is pleased to find that doctors and such other men and women are at the head of the gallant struggle and that among them are represented Parsis, Christians, Muslims and Hindus. This meeting is also pleased to find that a few whitemen like the Rev. Scott have thrown in their lot with the *satyagrahis*.

"The meeting condemns the action of some whitemen in resorting to the barbarous method known as lynch law to terrorise the *satyagrahis* into submission to the humiliating legislation..."

The Indians in South Africa spoke English and many of them were doctors and lawyers. In spite of all this, the South African whites looked upon them as coolies and called them as such. The Indians, of course, were in a minority and yet they were putting up a brave fight. They had no swords or guns but they were determined to resist the anti-Indian laws by soul force, which was the only force available to *satyagrahis*. Durban owed its present prosperity to the Indians. The South African whites had agreed to give the Indians the vote though not as equals but as inferiors.

The white civilisation in South Africa could not be kept alive by such means. Gandhiji wondered how a brave man like General Smuts who had praised the Indians so much in the past could be instrumental in taking steps to deprive the Indians of their elementary rights.

Commenting on the doings of the white hooligans who were said to have beaten to death an Indian, whom they mistook for a *satyagrahi*,<sup>350</sup> Gandhiji remarked:

It is a sad event. Nevertheless, I feel happy. A *satyagrahi* must always be ready to die with a smile on his face without retaliation and without rancour in his heart. Some people have come to have a wrong notion that *satyagraha* means only jail-going, perhaps facing *lathi* blows and nothing more. Such *satyagraha* cannot bring independence. To win independence you have to learn the art of dying without killing.

I venture to submit that a civilisation which needs such barbarous legislation for its protection is a contradiction in terms. The Indians are fighting for their honour. The land in South Africa does not belong to the whites. Land belongs to one who labours on it. I would not shed a single tear if all the *satyagrahis* in South Africa are wiped out. Thereby they will not only bring deliverance to themselves but point the way to the Negroes and vindicate the honour of India. I am proud of them and so should you be.

His object in speaking to them, he continued, was not to move them to tears or to incite them to anger and vituperation against the whites. Rather they should pray to God to guide the whites aright and grant strength and courage to their brethren to remain steadfast to the end.

The South African struggle may appear to be insignificant today but it is charged with momentous consequences. *Satyagraha* is today being tried in the land of its birth. The success of a handful of Indians, mostly descendants of indentured labourers, has excited the jealousy of the whites of South Africa. And they are now subjecting them to unspeakable indignities. They are sought to be segregated into ghettos and further humiliated by being offered an inferior franchise. That all this should happen under the *imprimatur* of Field Marshal Smuts fills me with shame and humiliation.

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<sup>350</sup> On June 21, white hooligans attacked Krishnansamy Pillai, a plainclothes policeman on duty in the vicinity of the passive resistance camp, and beat him unconscious. He died of the wounds on June 30th. The Indian community organised his funeral which was attended by ten thousand people.

Our sins have a strange way of coming home to roost. We turned a portion of ourselves into pariahs and today the whites of South Africa are doing the same to our compatriots there. Let us purge ourselves of this curse and bless the heroic struggle of our brethren in South Africa. They do not need our monetary help. But they need all our sympathy and moral support.

*The Hindu*, July 8, 1946, and *Harijan*, July 14 and 21, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, pages 422-423

## 218. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, POONA, JULY 10, 1946

I know what is taking place there (in South Africa) because in a way I belong to South Africa, having passed twenty years of the best part of my life there. It was there that *satyagraha* was born.

The West is passing through a purgatory today. The vanquished lie prostrate at the feet of the victors. But those who have won the war have found that they are no more victors than those who have lost it. Yet it is not in World War II that the Western civilisation will have met its grave. It is being dug in South Africa. The white civilisation in South Africa looks black in contrast with the Coloured or the Asiatic civilisation which is comparatively white. If our people remain steadfast and non-violent till the end, I have not a shadow of doubt that their heroic struggle will drive the last nail into the coffin of Western civilisation which is being found in its true colours in South Africa.

The whites in South Africa are becoming like brutes. Eastern and Western cultures are pitted against each other. And what a contrast they present! The whites have enacted savage laws to force the Indians to live in ghettos. Field Marshal Smuts is a great philosopher. He calls me his friend. He has nothing to say against Asiatic culture. But he has to take measures to safeguard the white civilisation. He told me that he did not look down upon Coloured people. The fact that Mrs. Subbaroyan,<sup>351</sup> when she went to England for studies, stayed in Field Marshal Smuts' house supports the statement. But, said the Field Marshal, in spite of the absence of prejudice, he was bound to protect Western culture in South Africa and he hoped that an understanding man that I was, I would appreciate it.

Gandhiji failed to understand how a culture or civilisation worth the name could require legal protection. The Indians were resisting the ghetto law in a civil, i.e., non-violent and therefore civilised way. They welcomed the penalty for the breach of law which could not be morally defended. But the white hooligans too were breaking their own laws. Theirs was criminal disobedience. It was a matter of pride for India that the children of indentured labourers and traders - many of them descendants of *Harijans* - were proving

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<sup>351</sup> Mrs. Radhabai Subbaroyan, wife of Dr. P. Subbaroyan, zamindar of Kumaramangalam, studied at Oxford University and was prominent in public affairs.



themselves such brave *satyagrahis*. As against this the whites were resorting to lynch law. He remarked:

After all civil resistance had its birth in Asia. Jesus was an Asiatic. If he was reborn and went to South Africa today and lived there, he would have to live in a ghetto.

He hoped that as in 1914, Field Marshal Smuts would at long last realise that he could not persecute the Indians in South Africa for ever and come to an honourable settlement with them when he had tried them through and through. A committee of white men had been formed in South Africa to express sympathy with and identify themselves with the cause of the Indian passive resisters there.<sup>352</sup>

There was something of that kind in his time also. But this time it seemed to be on a bigger scale. If this becomes extensive and the hooliganism is stopped and anti-Asiatic laws are repealed, there is hope of a blending of Eastern and Western cultures. Otherwise South Africa may prove to be the grave of Western civilisation.

*Harijan*, July 21, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 84, pages 430-431

## **219. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, POONA, JULY 11, 1946**

Giving the latest news from South Africa to the prayer gathering, Gandhiji said that men and women from Johannesburg had gone to Durban to offer *satyagraha*. It was good news. Victory was sure if they kept up that spirit.

*Collected Works*, Volume 84, page 432

## **220. INTERVIEW TO LOUIS FISCHER, JULY 17, 1946**

...FISCHER: *The growing anti-white feeling here is bad. In the Taj Mahal Hotel<sup>353</sup> they have put up a notice "South Africans not admitted." I do not like it. Your non-violence should make you more generous.*

GANDHIJI: That won't be non-violence. Today the white man rules in India. So, if the Taj Mahal has the gumption to put up that notice, it is a feather in its cap.

F: *That is what any nationalist will say. You must say something better.*

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<sup>352</sup> A "Council for Asiatic Rights" was formed in Johannesburg and a "Council of Human Rights" was set up in Durban to mobilise sympathy and support to passive resistance campaign.

<sup>353</sup> In Bombay

G: Then I will be a nationalist for once. They have no right to be here if they do not deal with Indians on terms of equality.

F: *No right - yes. But you must give them more than their right. You must invite them.*

G: Yes. When I am the Viceroy.

F: *You mean the President of the Indian Republic.*

G: No. I will be quite content to be the Viceroy, a constitutional Viceroy, for the time being. The first thing I will do will be to vacate the Viceregal Lodge and give it to the *Harijans*. I will then invite the South African white visitors to my hut and say to them: "You have ground my people to powder. But we won't copy you. We will give you more than you desire. We won't lynch you as you do in South Africa" - and thus shame them into doing the right.

F: *There is so much anti-white feeling today.*

G: Of course, I am opposed to that. It can do no good to anybody.

F: *The world is so divided. And there might be another war and that may be between the Coloured and the white races.*

G: Europe seems to be heading for another war. It is not sufficiently exhausted.

F: *Europe is terribly exhausted. But with the atom bomb human beings don't matter so much. A few scientists are enough. The next war will be carried on by pressing a few buttons. That is why colour war is so dangerous.*

G: Anything is better than cowardice. It is violence double distilled.

And to illustrate his remark Gandhiji narrated the story of a Negro clergyman with a Herculean frame in South Africa saying "pardon me brother," when insulted by a white man, and sneaking into a Coloured man's compartment.

This is not non-violence. It is a travesty of Jesus' teaching. It would have been more manly to retaliate...

*Harijan*, August 4, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 85, pages 10-11

## **221. LETTER TO S. B. MEDH, JULY 26, 1946**

Chi. Medh,

I got your long letter of 3 July 1946 on the 25th. The wire has not come. You have given a lot of news in your letter. In the context of a movement of such magnitude it is futile if not difficult to guess who are noble and who are not. Water from many sources flows into the Ganga and yet the Ganga is pure as ever. A major movement is like the stream of the Ganga and is always pure. Under the circumstances our dharma is to stay as pure as the Gangotri. Then all will be well. If she did not remain pure for all time the Ganga would cease to be what she is and turn into a filthy river. We see such things happening in our midst.

Manilal will tell you the rest. The papers here carry a Reuter's cable saying that he has reached there.<sup>354</sup> I am certainly very glad that he went there. Without doubt that was his dharma.

I had told Sorab<sup>355</sup> that no (financial) help whatever should be sent from here. That is my advice now. I am arranging for a lot of other help and you will continue to receive it. It should be a rule with all struggles to depend solely on local support. You will remember that for my part I had tried to avoid help coming from India. But it did come. Some came from England, too, which I put to good use. One might say that in those times it was even necessary to some extent. My experience, however, is that whenever aid arrived from outside we grew lax. Now I see no need to send even a cowrie from here.

(From Gujarati)

*Collected Works*, Volume 85, page 63

222. TELEGRAM TO NATAL INDIAN CONGRESS, JULY 1946

YOUR WIRE HOPE RESISTERS WILL REMAIN FIRM TO THE END STOP  
EVERYTHING POSSIBLE BEING DONE THIS END

GANDHI

Leaflet of the Passive Resistance Council, Durban, (Flash Collection), July 25, 1946

## 223. NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

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<sup>354</sup> Manilal Gandhi had rushed back to South Africa from India because of the launching of the passive resistance movement.

Gandhiji had written to him on June 25, 1946:

"I approve of your returning soon. What seems to be happening is excellent. You should participate in it whole-heartedly." (*Collected Works*, Volume 84, page 369).

<sup>355</sup> Sorabjee Rustomjee

The following news from South Africa will be of interest to the readers.

Rev. Michael Scott who has thrown in his lot with Indians in their struggle there, has written a note under the caption "Not by Might." It is already published in the dailies. It should make a special appeal to all Europeans. He adds in a personal note:

"The spirit which enshrined you and your movement here will not be extinguished by the powerful and cunning forces which are now arrayed against it."

An English sister writes from Durban:

"I went along to the camp almost the first day just to give the campers a word of encouragement and was quite impressed by their cheerfulness and general attitude - it was the real thing like some of the Indian movements I have seen. Then I went to the court one day too and it seemed as though those on trial (apparently) were really the judges and the officials and the Government were in the dock. If you have seen the statements by some of the leaders, you will see they give the same impression.

"Rev. Michael Scott is a very good man. He is only about 40 years old and wears shirts as do many high Anglicans and is addressed as Father Scott. He reminds me somewhat of C.F. Andrews.

"I am glad to know that Manilal is coming back. He will be a help to the leaders here, though, as a matter of fact, the struggle on the Indian side has been on a very high level up to the present. It is that that has drawn a group of Europeans to support the struggle but the number is not very large yet."

As I have said before, the battle will certainly go to our countrymen if they remain truly non-violent. Non-violence knows no defeat.

Another friend writes:

"You have heard of Mrs. Naidoo's<sup>356</sup> passing. She met with an accident about three months before her death. During all that time the family could not get my phone number due to some error on the part of the exchange. Mrs. Naidoo wanted to see me but they could not contact me till the day after her death. I loved her. She was a sweet soul, a real friend and had a genius for home-making. There was always a beautiful atmosphere in the Naidoo home and one could drop in at any time, no matter how busy she was and always feel a welcome guest. And what a heroine she was! Think of

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<sup>356</sup> Mrs. G. K. Thambi Naidoo. Wife of a leading *satyagrahi*, she herself went to prison in 1913 in the final phase of *satyagraha*.

the anxiety she must have gone through all the time the children were in India.<sup>357</sup> I do hope that there will be a joint memorial to her and Thambi."

Incidentally I must mention that Mrs. Naidoo's husband was one of the first *satyagrahis* during the days of our struggle there in my time.

Poona, July 31, 1946

*Harijan*, August 11, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 85, pages 92-93

## **224. STRUGGLE OF INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The heroic struggle of the Indian settlers in South Africa continues with unabated zeal. It promises to be prolonged. The longer the resisters are made to suffer, the greater will be their glory and reward. It is true of all long suffering. What the Government of the Union of South Africa has done so deliberately is not going to be changed suddenly, even for the sufferings of the brave men and women. This is said not to damp the zeal of the fighters but to steel them for greater and longer suffering. Their spokesmen, when they were in India, were told in plain language that they must not expect the struggle to close quickly.<sup>358</sup> Time runs always in favour of the sufferer, for the simple reason that tyranny becomes more and more exposed as it is continued. In reality it is never long. Sufferers need never lose hope whether their struggle appears to have a longer lease of life or shorter, when the result is a certainty.

Sevagram, August 12, 1946

*Harijan*, August 18, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 85, page 151

## **225. TWO LETTERS FROM SIR SHAFAT AHMED KHAN**

Sir Shafa'at Ahmed Khan<sup>359</sup> who, but for the recent murderous assault on him, would have joined the Interim Government yesterday, wrote on August 6th to me an interesting letter from which I quote as follows:

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<sup>357</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Thambi Naidoo presented their four sons to Gandhiji, on the eve of his departure from South Africa in 1914, for the service of India. One of the sons, Fakiri, died in India, and the others returned to South Africa after more than 15 years.

<sup>358</sup> The reference is to the delegation of the South African Indian Congress, led by Sorabjee Rustomjee. Please see items 202 and 205.

<sup>359</sup> High Commissioner of India in South Africa, 1941-45

"My study of the Indian community while I was in South Africa convinced me that but for your heroic work in the Union, the Indian race in that country would not have survived as a self-respecting community. You built up, cell by cell, the power of resistance in a highly gifted race and your work in that country is the inspiration of the Indian race in South Africa at the present time.

"My sole aim in South Africa was to lay the foundation of Indian unity in Natal. I do not think I succeeded completely in my aim but I am inclined to think that the heroic struggle which our race is carrying on at the present time would have been impossible but for the dissolution of the Natal Indian Association and A.I. Kajeer's Natal Indian Congress and the revival of the Natal Indian Congress which you had founded in 1894. This was accomplished on August 29th, 1943, and since that time, there has been only one political organisation of Indians in Natal.

"The South African situation is complicated and owing to conventions of diplomacy, my lips are sealed. My despatches from South Africa which give a complete picture of the political situation for three years and are very exhaustive, cannot be published owing to conventions of international intercourse...

"I came to the conclusion that no redress of our grievances in South Africa is possible unless we are masters in our own homeland and India is free."

In reply to my letter acknowledging receipt of the above, Sir Shafa'at Ahmed Khan further writes:

"You will be glad to hear that since my return from South Africa, I have been busy preparing my speeches in South Africa and have added a section in my book, shortly to be published, on the history of the Indian community in South Africa.<sup>360</sup> In this I have made bold to give a brief account of your work there and followed with greatest interest your march to Volksrust, etc.

"For more than three years - 1942-45 - I wrote lengthy despatches to the Government of India on the South African problem and in April 1943 I warned them against General Smuts' policy and told them to take the strongest measures against the Union Government in connection with the Pegging Act... Strong measures have been taken now, but I am afraid it is too late. If the Congress forms a National Government soon and the new member in charge of the Department decides to publish these despatches, particularly from April 1943 onwards, they will clear up numerous points for the next session of U.N.O. I am bound to say that the convention is that such despatches are not published unless and until there is rupture of relations between two countries. I offer no opinion as to whether they should be published at all. This is a matter which the new Government should decide."

New Delhi, September 3, 1946

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<sup>360</sup> Sir Shafa'at Ahmed Khan, *The Indian in South Africa*. Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1946.

*Harijan*, September 8, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 85, pages 245-246

## 226. TIRED OF SATYAGRAHA

News comes from Durban that a group of Indians has sprung up in South Africa who have lost faith in *satyagraha*. They cherish the dream that they can overthrow the rule of the White man there only by joining forces with the Negroes, the Coloured people, other Asiatics and European sympathisers and adopting violent means. The rumour, if there is any truth in it, is disturbing and a definite fly in the ointment. All, whether they believe in non-violence or not, should realise that Indians in South Africa gained world-wide esteem simply because, in spite of being a handful, they showed infinite capacity for suffering and did not, through losing their patience, resort to sabotage and violence. They learnt the wholesome lesson that true well-being springs from suffering and that victory lies in unity. From my own experience, my firm advice to Indians in South Africa is that they should, on no account, be lured away into throwing aside the matchless weapon of *satyagraha*.

This does not, however, imply that they are not to accept the help of the Coloured people, Negroes and any other sympathisers or that they will not help them in their need, should occasion arise. The only condition is that *satyagraha* should be their one and only weapon. If they go astray from the path of non-violence, they will conform to the description of the poor woman who as an Indian proverb goes, went in search of a son and succeeded in losing her husband!

New Delhi, September 11, 1946

*Harijan*, September 22, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 85, pages 297-298

## 227. TELEGRAM TO DR. Y. M. DADOO,<sup>361</sup> OCTOBER 10, 1946

GLAD PASSIVE RESISTERS ADHERE NON-VIOLENCE. HOPE NO WEAKENING OR DIVISION AMONG OUR PEOPLE.

GANDHI

*Collected Works*, Volume 85, page 442

## 228. PLUCKY STAND

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<sup>361</sup> Chairman of the Transvaal Passive Resistance Council

Papers received from Natal contain among other things a remarkable correspondence between the Mayoral Secretary of Durban and the Natal Indian Congress Secretary. A committee has been formed for making arrangements for the Royal visit to Durban proposed to take place in the month of March next year. The main committee has established a sub-committee to deal with the question of joining the Coloured and non-European sections of the population of Durban. For the purpose, the Committee invited the Natal Indian Congress to appoint two representatives to serve on the sub-committee so as to give their advice and assistance to enable the Indian community to see Their Majesties and the Royal Princesses.

To this invitation the Joint Hon. Secretary of the Natal Indian Congress (Meer Saheb)<sup>362</sup> sent the following plucky reply on the 11th September last:

"I am directed by my Executive to state that while the Indian community has the greatest respect for Their Majesties and the Royal Princesses, it must be noted that the Indians of South Africa are at the present moment passing through the most critical period in their history. A series of colour discriminatory Acts depriving us of our elementary human rights during the last half century has culminated in the passing of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, 1946, passed in the teeth of the strongest opposition ever voiced by our community. The action of the Union Government in thus oppressing a voteless section of its population has plunged the whole Indian community in a state of grave unrest. Recent trends in colour legislation leave no room for doubt as to what is in store for people of colour in this country. The colour of a man's skin has become the sole criterion of judging human qualities.

"As a result of all this the Indian community of South Africa resolved on the 13th June, 1946 to launch a campaign of passive resistance against colour discrimination in the laws of this country. This peaceful protest still goes on and 627 of our people, including national leaders like Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. G.M. Naicker, have been sent to jail where they are treated like common criminals. Some of them have served their sentence and have been released after being subjected to inhuman treatment but hundreds still remain behind prison bars and many more continue to be sent to prison daily.

"While the Indian community finds itself in such an unhappy situation in a part of His Majesty's Empire, it is most unreasonable to expect Indians to participate in any rejoicing or celebrations in honour of Royalty. In the circumstances we cannot but suggest that you advise Their Majesties to postpone their visit until such time as there is peace and goodwill in South Africa between the rulers and the ruled, the White and the non-White, the represented and the unrepresented, the privileged and the under-privileged, so that all who constitute the South African nation can equally share, not only its burdens, but also its rewards."

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<sup>362</sup> A. I. Meer, secretary of the Natal Indian Congress



The Natal Indian Congress Executive is to be congratulated on the reply. The Royal visit can evoke no feeling of joy among those who are fighting for their self-respect in South Africa in the making of which they have had no mean share. Let us hope that the Royal visit will be postponed to a more propitious time when the colour bar has become a thing of the past. Such self-denial on the part of Their Majesties will be quite in keeping with the direction which the King and Queen recently issued to substitute in the National Anthem the following new verses:

Nor on this land alone,  
But be God's mercies known,  
From shore to shore.  
Lord make the nations see,  
That men should brothers be,  
And form one family,  
The wide world o'er.

for the antiquated and indefensible verses:

Oh, Lord our God arise,  
Scatter his enemies,  
and make them fall.  
Confound their politics,  
Frustrate their knavish tricks.  
On Thee our hopes we fix,  
God save us all.

New Delhi, October 25, 1946

*Harijan*, November 3, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 86, pages 28-30

## 229. WHAT WILL SOUTH AFRICA DO?

The deputation headed by Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit and sent to the U.N.O. Conference by the Interim Government has undoubtedly done very effective work with marked ability and success.<sup>363</sup> That is clear from the following cablegram sent by Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit from New York:

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<sup>363</sup> Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was leader of the delegation of India to the second part of the First Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, held in New York in 1946.

On November 30, 1946, the Joint Committee of the First and Sixth Committees of the General Assembly adopted a French-Mexican proposal, supported by India and opposed by the Union of South Africa, by 24 votes to 19, with 6 abstentions. The proposal was subsequently adopted by the Assembly, at its Plenary Meeting on December 8, 1946, by a two-thirds majority (32 votes to 15, with 7 abstentions), as resolution 44(I).

"TODAY WITH YOUR BLESSINGS JUSTICE OF SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN CAUSE WAS VINDICATED. COMMITTEE VOTING TWENTY-FOUR TO NINETEEN IN OUR FAVOUR. WENT TO GENERAL SMUTS AFTER MEETING AND SHOOK HANDS. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION AT MANNER IN WHICH I HAD CONDUCTED CASE."<sup>364</sup>

It remains now to be seen how the Parliament of the Union of South Africa and its European public respond. Field Marshal Smuts was able to hurl at the Indian deputation the taunt that India treated her so-called untouchables, legally described as the "Scheduled Classes," much worse than the Union treated her Asiatics or for that matter the Africans. There would be much to be said for the Field Marshal's taunt if it was true. It is true of South Africa that her treatment of Asiatics has legally deteriorated from time to time, so much so that it has now become well-nigh unbearable. Almost every promise made by the Union Government to the Government of India has now been broken. In India, on the other hand, there never has been any law carrying the bar sinister against the Scheduled Classes. It can be proved upto the hilt that the law has always sought to protect the Scheduled Classes. There is no legal bar, so far as I am aware, against any of the Scheduled Classes being regarded as equal in status to the tallest Indian. What is however true to the shame of orthodox Hinduism and the Sanatanji Hindus is that religious custom has denied to these untouchables the rights which the law has allowed, and it is unfortunately also true that sometimes custom overrides the law. But public opinion is progressively rising against this barbarous custom and it is merely a question of time when the custom will be swept out of existence. Let us, therefore, hope that instead of

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Under the resolution, the General Assembly expressed the opinion that "the treatment of Indians in the Union of South Africa should be in conformity with the international obligations under the agreements concluded between the two Governments and the relevant provisions of the (United Nations) Charter"; and requested the two Governments "to report at the next session of the General Assembly the measures adopted to this effect."

<sup>364</sup> According to a report in *Bombay Chronicle* (November 30, 1946), Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, in her reply to Heaton Nichols of South Africa before the Assembly Committee on the previous day, had said: "When I was coming here I saw Mahatma Gandhi, who is very much interested in this whole case. He said to me as I was leaving: 'I do not mind whether you come back having won your case or having suffered defeat, but you must come back as a friend of General Smuts.' And that is not what any man in Mahatma Gandhi's position would have said."

She wrote in her memoirs that Gandhiji had told her:

"Remember, I want the delegation of my country to set an example. I shall be happy if we get votes, but I shall be most unhappy if these are gained in any manner that is divorced from our guidelines... I would not like to lose his (Smuts's) friendship and respect for the sake of gaining a majority vote." (*The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir*, p. 206).

After the vote in the Assembly, she went up to General Smuts and said: "I have come to you to say that if, in the course of this unhappy debate, I have said anything which was not up to the high standard Gandhiji had imposed on me, I ask your pardon." He took her hand in both of his and said: "My child, you have won a hollow victory. This vote will put me out of power in our next elections, but you will have gained nothing." (Ibid. p. 211).

taking doubtful advantage of the things in India which no one defends and against which public opinion is progressively rising, the Europeans of the Union of South Africa will recognise that if the U.N.O. Conference is any index of world opinion, it is decidedly against the European prejudice which has hardened into law.

Srirampur, December 12, 1946

*Harijan*, December 29, 1946; *Collected Works*, Volume 86, pages 218-219

### **230. LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU,<sup>365</sup> FEBRUARY 24, 1947**

...I take it that you have a cable from Durban about orders against Drs. Dadoo and Naicker.<sup>366</sup> I trust you have taken prompt action. I have cabled F. M. Smuts.

BAPU

*Collected Works*, Volume 87, page 13

### **231. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, FEBRUARY 26, 1947**

Referring to the news about the Union Government's refusal of passports and impounding the certificates of identity of Drs. Dadoo and Naicker, Gandhiji said:

"The Union Government will not be able to sustain their anti-Asiatic policy by such an action."

He added that the action was wholly unwarranted and arbitrary if the facts stated in the cablegram he had received in this connection were correct.

Gandhiji hoped that either there were some justifying peremptory reasons for the refusal and impounding or that second thoughts would convince the Government that it was a hasty step and therefore it would be cancelled.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, February 28, 1947; *Collected Works*, Volume 87, page 22

### **232. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, FEBRUARY 28, 1947**

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<sup>365</sup> Then head of the Interim Government of India

<sup>366</sup> The South African Government refused passports to Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. G.M. Naicker, who were due to visit India, and impounded their certificates of identity.

I have received a cablegram from the Natal Indian Congress which says that the Congress, the Transvaal Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Organisation and the African National Congress have decided on their part to refrain from taking part in or in any manner assisting in the celebrations in honour of the Royal visit to the Union of South Africa. They feel that in view of the disabilities imposed upon the Asiatics and Africans and other Coloured people it would be improper on their part to share in the rejoicings of the white people of South Africa. The cablegram asked me to endorse the abstention which they describe by the name of "boycott." I take this opportunity of publicly endorsing the abstention as a natural and dignified step by any self-respecting body of people.

*The Hindu*, March 1, 1947; *Collected Works*, Volume 87, page 28

### **233. TALK WITH DR. Y. M. DADOO AND DR. G. M. NAICKER, APRIL 11, 1947<sup>367</sup>**

Truly speaking, it was after I went to South Africa that I became what I am now. My love for South Africa and my concern for her problems are no less than for India, because it was in South Africa that I discovered the weapon of *satyagraha*, and it was there that I offered a successful non-violent *satyagraha*. It encouraged me in my line of thought and strengthened my faith...

(From Gujarati)

*Biharni Komi Agman*, page 187; *Collected Works*, Volume 87, page 257

### **234. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, MAY 5, 1947**

Sheth Cachalia,<sup>368</sup> Honorary Secretary of the Transvaal Indian Congress, cabled me for a message on the rally which was to take place in Johannesburg of all the non-European races in the Union of South Africa on the question of racial disabilities in the Union.<sup>369</sup> The question is most intricate and almost baffling. It is intricate enough when confined

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<sup>367</sup> Dr. Dadoo and Dr. Naicker, Presidents of the Transvaal Indian Congress and the Natal Indian Congress, visited India from March to May 1947 to attend the Asian Relations Conference and for consultations with the Indian Government and leaders on the situation in South Africa. They met Gandhiji several times during that visit to seek his guidance.

Please see also item 235.

<sup>368</sup> Yusuf Cachalia, son of the late A. M. Cachalia

<sup>369</sup> A "UNO Rally" - jointly sponsored by the African National Congress, the Transvaal Indian Congress and the Transvaal branch of the African People's Organisation - took place in Johannesburg on May 4, 1947. It was one of the largest demonstrations of the non-European people until that time.

only to the Indian disabilities but the inclusion of all the races while logically correct is fraught with grave danger, if the struggle is not kept at the highest level and is not firmly based on truth and non-violence. I wanted to warn the organisers of the rally against rhetorical display or raising idle hopes and to advise them to carry on their demonstration with dignity and restraint. Let no one doubt that the salvation of all the exploited peoples of the earth and, therefore, of the world, lies in the strictest reliance on the coin on whose one face is written truth and on the other non-violence in large letters. Sixty years of experience has taught me no other method.

*The Hindu*, May 6, 1947, and *Harijan*, May 18, 1947; *Collected Works*, Volume 87, page 414

### **235. MESSAGE TO SOUTH AFRICA, MAY 18, 1947<sup>370</sup>**

Field Marshal Smuts<sup>371</sup> is a trustee for Western civilisation. I still cling to the hope that he will not sustain it on the suppression of Asiatics and Africans. South Africa should present a blend of the three.

To the people of South Africa, to whom I am no stranger, I would say that they should not make the position of their representatives impossible by their unwarranted prejudice against colour. The future is surely not with the so-called white races if they keep themselves in purdah. The attitude of unreason will mean a third war which sane people should avoid. Political co-operation among all the exploited races in South Africa can only result in mutual goodwill, if it is wisely directed and based on truth and non-violence.

I have no doubt that those South African Indians who seek to create a division will do harm to themselves and to the great cause of liberty for which the movement of *satyagraha* has stood and must stand.

To the *satyagrahis* I would advise strict adherence to the fundamentals of *satyagraha* which literally means force of truth and this is for ever invincible. It is a good sign that they have a progressive European group solidly behind them. The *satyagrahis* of South Africa should know that they have India at their back in their struggle for preserving the self-respect of the Indians in South Africa.

*Harijan*, May 25, 1947; *Collected Works*, Volume 87, page 492

### **236. LETTER TO A. I. KAJEE, JULY 15, 1947**

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<sup>370</sup> This was sent through Dr. Y. M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker who met Gandhiji on May 18 and 19, 1947.

<sup>371</sup> Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950). Prime Minister of South Africa, 1919-1924 and 1938-1948.

New Delhi,  
July 15, 1947

Dear Kajee,

I have your full letter which is deeply interesting.

I can give no opinion. All I can say is that you should avoid parties within our own ranks.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi<sup>372</sup>

*Collected Works*, Volume 88, page 339

237. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, JULY 17, 1947

We learn from newspapers that the Indians in South Africa are being subjected to goondaism. They are being killed.<sup>373</sup>

I was in South Africa for twenty years and I know how Indians are treated in that country. There is a large number of Muslims there but they all call themselves Indians. May God give us all the sense at least to call ourselves Indians when we are in a foreign country.

Recently Sarup<sup>374</sup> had been to the United Nations along with Justice Chagla<sup>375</sup> and others to present before the world body the case of the South Africa Indians. Since then harassment of Indians in South Africa has taken a new form. It is not the law that has been unleashed against them but goondaism. If this goes on, how will the handful of Indians be able to live there? Once I marched into the Transvaal with two thousand

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<sup>372</sup> Mr. Kajee sought a compromise with the government and formed the Natal Indian Organisation on May 4, 1947.

Gandhiji wrote to Manilal on July 16, 1947:

"I have had a letter from Kajee. He has complained against Dadoo and others. The letter is a long one. However, it has produced no effect on me, for have we not had similar experiences in the past?"  
(*Collected Works*, Volume 88, pages 348-49).

<sup>373</sup> The reference is apparently to the boycott of Indian traders, organised by some whites in the Transvaal at the beginning of 1947, with threats of violence against those who patronised them.

<sup>374</sup> Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, who headed the Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1946

<sup>375</sup> Justice Mahomed Ali Currim Chagla, a prominent jurist, was a member of the Indian delegation to the General Assembly.

people. Not a single Boer so much as touched us. Some of them even gave us water to drink. We have plenty of water here. But it is not in such abundance there. People collect water when it rains and keep it stored in tanks. The Boers were friendly and we went wherever we wanted. But I see a different picture today. Now that we have two Governments here, I shall ask Mr. Jinnah and Jawaharlal to send a joint telegram to Smuts. Mr. Smuts considers me his friend. As a friend I must entreat him to tell the Whites not to do physical violence to even one single Indian. And if he cannot make himself obeyed, he must resign. Lord Mountbatten too should not helplessly watch. He is an Admiral of the Fleet and is of Royal family. Philip Mountbatten, who is going to marry Princess Elizabeth, is like a son to him. Besides, upto the 15th of August he will be the Viceroy and afterwards the Governor-General. He should therefore make use of these advantages and tell Smuts that India is now a Dominion even as South Africa is, that it is now a member of the vast family that is the British Commonwealth and that the ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa should forthwith stop...

My advice to South African Indians is that they should live there as good citizens. Those of them who are wealthy should not neglect their Muslim<sup>376</sup> brethren who are like untouchables there.

(From Hindi)

*Prarthana Pravachan-I*, pages 255-257; *Collected Works*, Volume 88, pages 358-359

### 238. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 11, 1947

One more thing I would like to say is that our countrymen in South Africa may be careful when they carry out their plan.<sup>377</sup> The two Governments here should give all possible help to those who are there and encourage them in their struggle.

(From Hindi)

*Harijanbandhu*, October 19, 1947; *Prarthana Pravachan-I*, pages 407-410; *Collected Works*, Volume 89, page 323

### **239. INTERVIEW TO THE PRESS, OCTOBER 17, 1947**

*...Q: What effect do you think the failure of the U.N.O. to deal justly with the South African-Indian dispute will have on the future of that organisation?*

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<sup>376</sup> The word "Muslim" is apparently an error here. The reference is probably to "poorer" Indians, since all Indians were treated like untouchables.

<sup>377</sup> The Joint Passive Resistance Council had decided to expand resistance from October 13th. Only token resistance had been carried on since the United Nations resolution of December 1946.

Gandhiji: If the U.N.O. fails to deal justly with the South African-Indian dispute, the U.N.O. will lose its prestige. I have no doubt that the U.N.O. can prosper only if it is just.

Q: *And what will be the effect of the failure on the world?*

G: About the effect on the world no one knows. At least I do not.

Q: *Racial equality must be removed if there is to be peace in the world. What is your advice to those who agree with this but do nothing to fight the evil of racial inequality?*

G: Those who agree that racial inequality must be removed and yet do nothing to fight the evil are impotent. I cannot have anything to say to such people. After all the underdogs will have to earn their own salvation.

Q: *What remedy do you propose for the elimination of racial prejudice and antagonism from the affairs of nations?*

G: The solution is largely in India's hands. If everything is alright in India internally, she is likely to play an effective part in straightening out affairs...<sup>378</sup>

*Harijan*, October 26, 1947; *Collected Works*, Volume 89, page 350

#### 240. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 17, 1947

I have received a telegram from South Africa. It says that I have done them a great favour. What favour have I done? I have merely stated what I believe to be good.<sup>379</sup> This is one great thing about *satyagraha*... What does it matter if there are only a handful of people in South Africa? How can there be millions to offer *satyagraha*? In any case, the population there is only a few lakhs. Even if a few hundred, even if only ten persons, come forward, they will add to the prestige of India. They ask me why I do not also request the people here to send money. That pains me. They are not poor people. They have gone to South Africa to make money. They have not gone there to oblige us. Those who are carrying on the struggle there do not have much money, and the moneyed people

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<sup>378</sup> This item was also published on November 13, 1947, in *Passive Resister* (Johannesburg) which indicated that it was an interview with a correspondent of the All India Radio, and included the following question and answer:

Q: *In the case the U.N.O. fails to do justice to the Indians in South Africa, what line of action would you advise the South African Indians to take?*

G: I cannot even think of failure in *Satyagraha*. It never fails. This is my firm belief.

<sup>379</sup> A report on this speech in *Passive Resister*, Johannesburg, November 1947, has "the truth" instead of "good."



do not give them anything. Those who own money begin to love only money. They see their honour and respect only in money. Our people in South Africa say they are fighters, but don't have much money. If they don't have money, how have they carried on so far?

There is a large number of our people in East Africa. The entire East Coast is full of our people. I would ask them to send money. Our country is almost impoverished today. With what face can I ask anybody here to send money? We do have millionaires in our country and they make millions too, but even they are left with little money because of heavy taxation. And to our misfortune the people are fighting among themselves, and that also results in the loss of millions. How can I ask them to spare money for South Africa? When I was in South Africa people from here used to send money. Gokhale<sup>380</sup> used to send money. The Punjab and the whole of India had sent me something between 5 and 7 lakhs. I don't think I can ask people to do any such thing today. There are many Indians in Mauritius. They are coolies there. There is no communal problem in that place. There is a large number of Indians in Mombasa. They are pretty rich. They do not drink, nor do they go to prostitutes. They need money only for their food. How much money does one need for food? Our people in South Africa can say they are fighting not for themselves but for India. Of course, I cannot stop people from sending money there, but I cannot ask them to do so either.<sup>381</sup>

(From Hindi)

*Prarthana Pravachan-I*, pages 428-433; *Collected Works*, Volume 89, pages 353-354

## **241. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1947**

"Anti-colour prejudice in South Africa" was criticised by Gandhiji in his speech after one of his prayer meetings last week.

"India has come into the British Commonwealth with exactly the same status as the Union of South Africa. Should members of one Dominion be helots in another Dominion?"

Gandhiji quoted from a message which he said had been sent to the Natal Indian Congress in Durban five days after the independence of India. This he described as "typical of the average white man's mind in the South African Dominion."

The message, said Gandhiji, had been sent by Dr. S. P. Barnard, Administrator of the Free State. It said: "As you are celebrating the independence of the new Dominions,

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<sup>380</sup> Gopal Krishna Gokhale

<sup>381</sup> of rupees

which you consider a great day in the annals of Indian history, I hope all Indians in South Africa will now emigrate voluntarily to the new Dominions to act as missionaries of the Gospel they have been taught in South Africa, namely, to live in peace and order and not to fight in communal riots in which hundreds have been killed in India."

Gandhiji said South Africa had a large Native population who were treated in some respects worse than Asiatic inhabitants. He added:

"I urge European settlers there to read the signs of the times. Either their prejudices are wrong from every point of view, or the British people and their fellow members of the British Commonwealth have made an unpardonable mistake in admitting Asiatic countries as members of the Commonwealth."

*Passive Resister*, Johannesburg, November 27, 1947

## **242. LETTER TO S. B. MEDH, NOVEMBER 27, 1947**

Chi. Medh

...The news you convey from there<sup>382</sup> is startling. Yet not quite so. I know our people there too well to be startled by the news. And I am alarmed that we have not yet learnt the true lesson. Are we ever going to learn it? How can I guide you from this distance? And where do I have the energy for that? Weigh everything on the scales of truth and non-violence and follow the resultant verdict. And don't be afraid. It should never turn out that you had gone there to exploit and instead you were yourself exploited. The best way is not to bother about what any "ism" says but to associate yourself with any action after considering its merit. Dr. Dadoo<sup>383</sup> has made a favourable impression on everybody here. Our Government here consults me on its various actions.

*Collected Works*, Volume 90, page 114

## **243. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 3, 1947**

Now about South Africa. You will have seen what Vijayalakshmi Pandit has said. She says we have been defeated because we have not been able to secure the required two-

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<sup>382</sup> South Africa

<sup>383</sup> Dr. Y. M. Dadoo was a leader of the Communist Party of South Africa.

thirds of votes.<sup>384</sup> However, a number of people have been helpful and supported her stand. Besides, truth is on our side and in a way we have secured a victory.<sup>385</sup> The Indians in South Africa should therefore not be disheartened. But there is something I have to say. Vijayalakshmi could not have said it because she represented the Government of India. You do not have a remedy but I have one which I had applied in South Africa. What is defeat or victory? The whites of South Africa and Smuts<sup>386</sup> may say that they do not want us there, that we must leave. They may deny us food and water as is happening to non-Muslims in Pakistan and to Muslims in India...

What I have to say here applies also to the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in South Africa. I must tell them that victory and defeat are of no consequence. You must say that you will live in South Africa with honour, that you will not leave. You did not go there because you wanted to. You were invited. You went as indentured labourers and afterwards you had children there. If it is a question of rights no one except the Negroes have a right to be there. The Boers do not have even as much right as you have. There were delegations from all over the world at the U.N.O. Our country also had to send a delegation. We acted rightly. People assemble there to bring about justice; that they cannot or will not is another matter. We must continue our fight in South Africa, not with a sword but with soul force... So I shall say that if the Indians in South Africa have self-respect which I think they have, if they have courage, they must say that even if they did not secure two-third of the votes at the U.N.O., they did secure a very large number. They must tell the whites of South Africa to let them stay in the country with honour. They must tell them they intend to conduct themselves with dignity. They do not want government service. They do not expect help from the whites but they must be allowed to breathe the air, drink the water and live on the land. After all they pay their way, earn their keep, wherever they want to stay. They do not claim the right to vote. If they want the vote they must have it the same way as the whites have it, otherwise they will do without it. They will not carry on *satyagraha* for franchise but they must safeguard their dignity. They must have bread and they must have water and they must have land. Also their children must have education. They will understand if no grants are forthcoming for the purpose but the education for the children is their right and they have the right to fight for this. It is not a question of victory or defeat but of laying down one's life. They must do or die. There is no other recourse. If they want to live in this world in dignity they must do or die. Their duty is clear and admits of no argument. This is what I have to say to the Indians of South Africa and to you. I have nothing else to offer.

(From Hindi)

*Prarthana Pravachan-II*, pages 160-165; *Collected Works*, Volume 90, pages 170-172

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<sup>384</sup> At the second session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1947, an Indian resolution calling for a Round Table Conference on the treatment of Indians in South Africa failed to obtain the requisite two-third majority: there were 31 votes in favour, 19 against and 6 abstentions, with one country absent.

<sup>385</sup> Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit had said: "Ours has been a moral victory of no small importance."

<sup>386</sup> Field Marshal Jan Christiaan Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa

#### 244. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING, NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28, 1948

...You know in South Africa our people are fighting for their rights. Here in India there are no laws depriving the people of the right of owning land or living wherever they please. It is true we have reduced *Harijans* to some such condition but for the rest of society that is not so. But I have seen with my own eyes that that is so in South Africa. The Indians therefore are having to put up a struggle to safeguard their rights and in defence of the honour of India. They can resort to various means in their struggle but they claim to be *satyagrahis* and their struggle has taken the form of *satyagraha*. They keep on sending cables. They cannot even move from one province to another without a permit. South Africa is like a continent. It is a very large country. Indians wishing to go to the Transvaal from Natal can do so only if they have a permit. They say it is as much their country as anyone else's and ask why there should be such restrictions imposed on their movements. Many have succeeded in moving to the Transvaal and the Government this time have been decent. They have not been arrested so far. They first went to Volksrust which is the first city after crossing the border. There were policemen present in strength but they only looked on and did not arrest them. There they found a motor vehicle and proceeded in it further on. Then a meeting was held there at which they were given a warm welcome. I thought I should give you this information.<sup>387</sup>

Those Indians have performed an act of great courage. Indians in South Africa are few in number but, if they all become true *satyagrahis*, their victory is certain and no obstacle can stop them. But this has yet to be achieved. There are, as here, many kinds of people. There are Hindus and there are Muslims. They all work together. They know they cannot fight their battle separately. They have reached Johannesburg but they cannot stop there. They must go on and on till they are arrested. The Government have a right to arrest them, for *satyagraha* implies the acceptance of punishment for the violation of a law. They deserve congratulations.

I shall ask the Government of South Africa not to be too severe with people who carry on their struggle with such decency. They should understand their grievances and come to a settlement with them. Why should it be that one with a white skin cannot have a dialogue with one with a black skin? Why should Indians have to fight for their legitimate rights? How does it harm the whites if Indians too are allowed to live there? Today we are also a free country as South Africa is and are members of the same Commonwealth, which implies that we should all live like brothers and equals. But if they consider Indians their enemies and deprive them of their basic civic rights, then they are not behaving as friends

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<sup>387</sup> A new stage of the passive resistance campaign was begun on January 15, 1948, with defiance of the restrictions on inter-provincial movement by Indians under the Immigration Act of 1913. Twenty-five volunteers crossed the Natal-Transvaal border on that day, but were not arrested.

None of the volunteers was arrested until February 10th. Shortly after, Dr. Y. M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker were charged with organising the defiance of the Immigration Act and were each sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour.

but as enemies. It is something which is difficult to understand. Why should they look down on the Coloured people? Is it because they are industrious and thrifty? I shall tell the Government of South Africa through this meeting that it should men its ways. I have myself lived in South Africa for twenty years and I can therefore say that it is my country.

*Hindustan Times*, January 29, 1948, and *Prarthana Pravachan-II*, pages 348-351;  
*Collected Works*, Volume 90, pages 515-517

THE SMUTS-GANDHI AGREEMENT, JUNE 30, 1914

(The agreement consists of a letter from E. M. Gorges, Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, to Gandhiji on behalf of the Minister of the Interior, General J. C. Smuts, and the reply of Gandhiji)

*Letter from E. M. Gorges to Gandhiji*

Cape Town,

**June 30, 1914**

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Adverting to the discussions you have lately had with General Smuts on the subject of the position of the Indian community in the Union, at the first of which you expressed yourself as satisfied with the provisions of the Indians' Relief Bill and accepted it as a definite settlement of the points, which required legislative action, at issue between that community and the Government; and at the second of which you submitted for the consideration of the Government a list of other matters requiring administrative action, over and above those specifically dealt with in that Bill; I am desired by General Smuts to state with reference to those matters that:

1. He sees no difficulty in arranging that the Protector of Indian Immigrants in Natal will in future issue to every Indian, who is subject to the provisions of Natal Act 17 of 1895, on completion of his period of indenture, or re-indenture, a certificate of discharge, free of charge, similar in form to that issued under the provisions of Section 106 of Natal Law No. 25 of 1891.

2. On the question of allowing existing plural wives and the children of such wives to join their husbands (or fathers) in South Africa, no difficulty will be raised by the Government if, on enquiry, it is found, as you stated, that the number is a very limited one.

3. In administering the provisions of Section (4) (1) (a) of the Union Immigrants' Regulation Act, No. 22 of 1913, the practice hitherto existing at the Cape will be continued in respect of South Africa-born Indians who seek to enter the Cape Province, so long as the movement of such persons to that Province assumes no greater dimensions than has been the case in the past; the Government, however, reserve the right, as soon as the number of such entrants sensibly increase, to apply the provisions of the Immigration Act.

4. In the case of the "specially exempted educated entrants into the Union" (i.e., the limited number who will be allowed by the Government to enter the Union each year for

some purpose connected with the general welfare of the Indian community), the declarations to be made by such persons will not be required at Provincial borders, as the general declarations which are made in terms of Section 19 of the Immigrants' Regulation Act at the port of entry are sufficient.

5. Those Indians who have been admitted within the last three years, either to the Cape Province or Natal, after passing the education tests imposed by the Immigration Laws which were in force therein prior to the coming into effect of Act 22 of 1913, but who, by reason of the wording of Section 20 thereof, are not regarded as being "domiciled" in the sense in which that term is defined in the Section in question, shall, in the event of their absencing themselves temporarily from the Province in which they are lawfully resident, be treated, on their return, as if the term "domicile" as so defined did apply to them.

6. He will submit to the Minister of Justice the cases of those persons who have in the past been convicted of "*bona fide* passive resistance offences" (a term which is mutually understood) and that he anticipates no objection on Mr. De Wet's part to the suggestion that convictions for such offences will not be used by the Government against such persons in the future.

7. A document will be issued to every "specially exempted educated entrant" who is passed by the Immigration Officers under the instructions of the Minister issued under Section 25 of Act No. 22 of 1913.

8. All the recommendations of the Indian Grievances Commission enumerated at the conclusion of their Report, which remain over and above the points dealt with in the Indians' Relief Bill, will be adopted by the Government;

and subject to the stipulation contained in the last paragraph of this letter the necessary further action in regard to those matters will be issued without delay.

With regard to the administration of existing laws, the Minister desires me to say that it always has been and will continue to be the desire of the Government to see that they are administered in a just manner and with due regard to vested rights.

In conclusion, General Smuts desires me to say that it is, of course, understood, and he wishes no doubts on the subject to remain, that the placing of the Indians' Relief Bill on the Statute Book of the Union, coupled with the fulfilment of the assurances he is giving in this letter in regard to the other matters referred to herein, touched upon at the recent interviews, will constitute a complete and final settlement of the controversy which has unfortunately existed for so long, and will be unreservedly accepted as such by the Indian community.

I am, etc.,  
E. M. Gorges

M. K. Gandhi, Esq.

Cape Town

*Letter from Gandhiji to E. M. Gorges*

Cape Town,  
June 30, 1914

Dear Mr. Gorges,

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of even date herewith setting forth the substance of the interview that General Smuts was pleased, notwithstanding many other pressing calls upon his time, to grant me on Saturday last. I feel deeply grateful for the patience and courtesy which the Minister showed during the discussion of the several points submitted by me.

The passing of the Indians' Relief Bill and this correspondence finally closes the passive resistance struggle which commenced in the September of 1906 and which to the Indian community cost much physical suffering and pecuniary loss and the Government much anxious thought and consideration.

As the Minister is aware, some of my countrymen have wished me to go further. They are dissatisfied that the trade licences laws of the different provinces, the Transvaal Gold Law, the Transvaal Townships Act, the Transvaal Law 3 of 1885 have not been altered, so as to give them full rights of residence, trade and ownership of land. Some of them are dissatisfied that full inter-provincial migration is not permitted, and some are dissatisfied that, on the marriage question, the Relief Bill goes no further than it does. They have asked me that all the above matters might be included in the passive resistance struggle. I have been unable to comply with their wishes. Whilst, therefore, they have not been included in the programme of passive resistance, it will not be denied that some day or other these matters will require further and sympathetic consideration by the Government. Complete satisfaction cannot be expected until full civic rights have been conceded to the resident Indian population. I have told my countrymen that they will have to exercise patience and by all honourable means at their disposal educate public opinion so as to enable the Government of the day to go further than the present correspondence does. I shall hope that, when the Europeans of South Africa fully appreciate the fact that now, as the importation of indentured labour from India is prohibited and as the Immigration Regulation Act of last year has in practice all but stopped further free Indian immigration and that my countrymen do not aspire to any political ambition, they, the Europeans, will see the justice and, indeed, the necessity of my countrymen being granted the rights I have just referred to.

Meanwhile, if the generous spirit that the Government have applied to the treatment of the problem during the past few months continues to be applied, as promised in your letter, in the administration of the existing laws, I am quite certain that the Indian



community throughout the Union will be able to enjoy some measure of peace and never be a source of trouble to the Government.

I am,  
Yours faithfully,

**M. K. Gandhi**

APPENDIX II

**LETTER DATED JULY 7, 1914, FROM GANDHIJI TO E. M. GORGES**

Phoenix,  
Natal,  
July 7, 1914

Dear Mr. Gorges,

I have now got a moment to submit my note upon the Gold Law. As you know, after *maturer* consideration, I refrained from pressing for the insertion of a special clause defining "vested rights" in connection with the Gold Law and Townships Amendment Act, because I felt that any definition in the correspondence might result in restricting the future action of my countrymen. However, so far as my interpretation of "vested rights" is concerned, I think that I shall reduce it to writing. General Smuts was good enough to say that he would endeavour to protect vested rights as defined by me. The following is the definition I submitted to Sir Benjamin Robertson, who, I understood, submitted it to General Smuts. My letter containing, among other matters, the definition, is dated the 4th March, 1914.<sup>388</sup> "By 'vested rights' I understand the right of an Indian and his successors to live and trade in the townships in which he was living and trading, no matter how often he shifts his residence or business from place to place in the same township." I am fortified in my interpretation by the answer given by Mr. Harcourt in connection with the matter, in the House of Commons, on the 27th June, 1911:

Complaints against that legislation (the Gold Law and Townships Amendment Act) have been made and are now being investigated by the Government of the Union of South Africa, who have lately stated that there is no intention of interfering with any

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<sup>388</sup> Letter to Benjamin Robertson in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 12, p. 371

business or right to carry on business acquired and exercised by Indians prior to the date of the legislation.

I have also now traced the note by Mr. de Villiers which I alluded to in our conversation. It is contained in a White Paper published in London in March, 1912, and has the following:

No right or privilege which a Coloured person has at the present time is taken away by the new Act (Act 35 of 1908).

And again,

Section 131, which, before the Bill was introduced into Parliament, formed the subject of questions in the English House of Commons and of despatches from the Secretary of State to the Governor, has been amended in Committee so as to safeguard any rights which a Coloured person may, at the present time, have of occupying land in mining areas.

Certainly, prior to the passing of the Gold Law, no restrictions were, to my knowledge, placed upon the movement or the trade of British Indians in the Gold Areas. There can, therefore, be no justification for any restriction now, especially in regard to those who are already settled in their respective townships.

I am,  
Yours truly,

M. K. Gandhi

E. M. Gorges, Esq.  
Pretoria

### **APPENDIX III**

#### **THE CAPE TOWN AGREEMENT, 1927**

Joint Communiqué issued by the South African and Indian Governments, February 21, 1927

1. It was announced in April, 1926, that the Government of India and the Government of the Union of South Africa had agreed to hold a Round Table Conference to explore all possible methods of settling the Indian question in the Union in a manner which would

safeguard the maintenance of Western standards of life in South Africa by just and legitimate means. The Conference assembled at Cape Town on December 17th and its session finished on January 12th. There was, in these meetings, a full and frank exchange of views which has resulted in a truer appreciation of mutual difficulties and a united understanding to co-operate in the solution of a common problem in a spirit of friendliness and goodwill.

Both Governments affirm their recognition of the right of South Africa to use all just and legitimate means for the maintenance of Western standards of life.

2. The Union Government recognises that Indians domiciled in the Union who are prepared to conform to Western standards of life, should be enabled to do so.

3. For those Indians in the Union who may desire to avail themselves of it, the Union Government will organise a scheme of assisted emigration to India or other countries where Western standards are not required. Union domicile will be lost after three years' continuous absence from the Union, in agreement with the proposed revision of the law relating to domicile which will be of general application. Emigrants under the assisted emigration scheme who desire to return to the Union within three years will only be allowed to do so on refund to the Union Government of the cost of assistance received by them.

4. The Government of India recognise their obligation to look after such emigrants on their arrival in India.

5. The admission into the Union of the wives and minor children of Indians permanently domiciled in the Union will be regulated by paragraph 3 of Resolution XXI of the Imperial Conference of 1918.

6. In the expectation that the difficulties with which the Union has been confronted will be materially lessened by the agreement now happily reached between the two Governments, and in order that the agreement may come into operation under the most favourable auspices and have a fair trial, the Government of the Union of South Africa have decided not to proceed further with the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Further Provision) Bill.

7. The two Governments have agreed to watch the working of the agreement now reached and to exchange views from time to time as to any changes that experience may suggest.

8. The Government of the Union of South Africa have requested the Government of India to appoint an agent in order to secure continuous and effective co-operation between the two Governments.

(The Annexure containing the summary of conclusions reached by the Round Table Conference is omitted here).



