

Gandhiji in South Africa

Reminiscences of his Contemporaries

Compiled by: E S Reddy

[NOTE: This compilation consists of selected articles and short passages in books. For additional information, please see appendix.]

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APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL SOURCES

C. F. ANDREWS¹

[The Reverend C.F. Andrews described Gandhi at Phoenix Ashram one evening in January 1914.]

The strain of a long day of unwearied ministry among the poor was over, and Mahatma Gandhi was seated under the open sky, tired almost beyond human endurance, but even at such a time he nursed a sick child on his lap who clung to him with a pathetic affection. A Zulu girl from the school on the hill beyond the *Ashram* was seated there also. He asked me to sing "Lead kindly Light" as the darkness grew deeper and deeper. Even then, though he was much younger, his frail body was worn with suffering that could never be laid aside even for a moment: yet his spirit within was radiant when the hymn broke the silence, with its solemn close,

And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since and lost a while.

I can remember how we all sat in silence when the hymn was finished, and how he then repeated to himself those two lines which I have quoted.

¹ From: Andrews, C.F. "The Tribute of a Friend" in Radhakrishnan, Dr. Sarvepalli, *Mahatma Gandhi*, fourth edition. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1977.

MRS. CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT²

[Mrs. Catt, a prominent American suffragette, met Gandhiji in Johannesburg in 1911. An account from her diary was published in 1922.]

An English lady insisted upon giving me a letter of introduction to an Indian in Johannesburg, assuring me that I would not regret any trouble taken to make his acquaintance. By the time I arrived here (Johannesburg) I had forgotten what she had told me about him and I was not particularly interested to meet him, but I sent the letter nevertheless and asked him to call upon me at the hotel if convenient at a stated time. At the hour named a pretty, intelligent young Russian Jewess³ called and explained that she was Mr. Gandhi's secretary and that no Indian was permitted to enter a hotel to call upon a guest.

A prominent lawyer to whom I told the tale offered the use of his office for the purpose of an interview, so again I wrote, stating the time and place when I would be glad to receive him. Again the pretty little Jewess came to the lawyer's office to say that Mr. Gandhi had come but the elevator operator refused to take him up and he would not so far demean himself as to walk when the European was carried. This challenged my curiosity and I told the young girl to tell him to go back to his office and that I would call upon him.

Directly Miss Cameron and I, escorted by the secretary, were on our way. She took us into quarters apparently occupied exclusively by Indians. We found his office much the same as any of the less prosperous sort. The outer room was filled with Indians awaiting their turn to consult Mr. Gandhi, who was a lawyer. We found the man seated behind an American desk - a small very black man with his head wrapped in a very white turban. He was not particularly prepossessing in appearance, but we soon engaged him in conversation and were amazed at his excellent and correct English; he was a gentleman. He told us that he had been in prison because he had evaded signing a registration paper which is made compulsory for all Indians for police purposes. He then spoke of his hope that India would be independent one day. His eyes lighted with an inner fire and

² Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, "Gandhi in South Africa" in *The Woman Citizen*, March 1922. Reproduced in Blanche Watson, *Gandhi and Non-violent Resistance, The Non-Co-operation Movement in India: Gleanings from the American Press*. Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1923.

³ Apparently Miss Sonja Schlesin

he spoke with such fervour that we recognised that we were in the presence of no ordinary man. Directly he quoted from the Declaration of Independence, from Emerson and Longfellow. Proud, rebellious, humiliated, he may earn his livelihood by law, but he dreams of naught but India's independence.

LIONEL CURTIS⁴

I have a vivid recollection of my first meeting with Mr. Gandhi about 1903. I was then a young official under whose department came the vexed and difficult question of Indian immigration. I have since been privileged to meet a large number of Indian and Chinese friends, but Mr. Gandhi was I believe the first Oriental I met. He was dressed in European clothes except for his Indian cap and gave me the impression of being an exceedingly able young lawyer. He started by trying to convince me of the good points in the character of his countrymen, their industry, frugality, their patience. I remember that after listening to him I said, "Mr. Gandhi, you are preaching to the converted. It is not the vices of Indians that Europeans in this country fear but their virtues." In my subsequent dealings with Mr. Gandhi, the characteristic which most impressed me was his tenacity of purpose. I have since come to think that few qualities count more in this world than tenacity.

Years later, about Christmas 1916, I again met Mr. Gandhi in the Congress camp at Lucknow. The contrast he made with the smart young Johannesburg attorney I had known in the Transvaal is something I shall never forget. He was now dressed in a ragged Indian garb, and had on his face, which was considerably aged, the marks of an ascetic. The morning was bitterly cold and we talked by a brazier, over which he was trying to get some warmth into his hands as he spoke. He was doing his best to explain to me the inner meaning of caste as viewed by the Indian mind.

Few men, if any, in any generation have commanded so great a following, have so changed the course of events, and so influenced thought in more than one continent than Mr. Gandhi. I must humbly confess my own failure to guess that such spiritual powers were latent in the alert young lawyer I met in 1903.

⁴ Lionel Curtis, "Two Meetings with Gandhi", in Radhakrishnan, Dr. Sarvepalli, *Mahatma Gandhi*, fourth edition. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1977.

Lionel Curtis was an official in the Transvaal after the Boer War. When he wrote these reminiscences he was at All Souls' College, Oxford.

PRAGJI DESAI⁵

[Pragji Desai was a satyagrahi in South Africa.]

It was in the year 1906 that I went to South Africa at the age of 22. My sole purpose was to earn money and help my family which had seen very hard days because of poverty. But fate seemed to have ordained something quite different for me. Within three days of my landing in Durban I was led to throw myself into Gandhiji's hands. A well-known doctor of Bombay, Sir Bhalchandra Krishna Bhatavdekar, who was a friend of my uncle, had given me a note of introduction to "Barrister Gandhi." I had imagined that I should be able to earn money with the help of this barrister. In Durban I came to know that Gandhiji had just returned from England to Durban. At about 1 p.m. I went to the house of the late Haji Omar Amod Zaveri where he had put up. I peeped into the house from the window on the verandah, and saw more than a dozen Muslim gentlemen having a lunch at a table, at the head of which sat a man with a peculiar black turban which distinguished him from the others. I at once guessed who he was, and sent in the note of introduction with a servant with instructions to give it to "Barrister Gandhi." The servant placed it into his hands, while I kept on looking in from the window. He opened the note, read it, and at once got up. I was standing on the verandah. My heart was throbbing. A charming and lovable person came out to the verandah with the note in his hand, and asked me if I was the bearer of this note. I said, "Yes," with a respectful bow. He at once said: "Come, come," took me to the drawing room, and asked me to be seated on a sofa. He sat next to me, and asked me detailed questions as to when I had arrived in Durban, what I had been doing in Bombay, how far I had studied, and so on. I gave suitable replies to all the questions. For a couple of minutes he sat thinking, and then asked me: "What has brought you to South Africa?" I said: "I have come here to earn money. I am a very poor man, and I request you to help me in fulfilling my wishes." He at once said: "What chance is there for earning money here? Our countrymen here are undergoing terrible hardships. Their very existence seems to be in danger. In a day or two I will leave Durban for Johannesburg, and I think of presently launching a struggle of passive resistance against the Transvaal Government.

⁵ "Satyagraha in South Africa" in Shukla, Chandrashanker, *Reminiscences of Gandhiji by Forty-eight Contributors*. Bombay: Vora & Co., 1951

You are a young man. You are fairly educated. You ought not to think of earning money. You ought to be helpful to our countrymen and to serve them."

No one in India had ever spoken to me in this strain. The advice to serve our countrymen I heard for the first time in my life. It set me thinking. "I will go to Phoenix in the evening," Gandhiji went on to say. "Come here at about 4.30 p.m., and we will go together. If you like the place, you may settle down there and work in the press, where *Indian Opinion* is printed." I promised to join him. During our conversation I happened to look right into his eyes twice or thrice, and saw the love-light in those eyes. It was this deep-seated love that attracted me forcibly to him. I felt comforted and happy, as if I was talking to the head of my own family.

I went with him to Phoenix. Next day he was to leave for Johannesburg. I requested him to take me with him. He explained to me that under the Immigration Act of Transvaal I had no right to enter that territory. I could go there later, he said, and join the struggle against the Government which it was his intention to start before long. He asked me to write to him as often as I liked, and gave me his address at Johannesburg.

Later, under his leadership, the Indians in Transvaal put up a heroic fight. Hundreds of them went to jail. The struggle was naturally prolonged. While it was going on, the Government passed an Immigration Act which prohibited even highly educated Indians from entering that province. Gandhiji considered this to be an insult to India, and he appealed to the educated Indians in South Africa to join the fight.

This was the second phase of the struggle of passive resistance. In a letter to him I expressed my willingness to join the struggle. He wrote back to say that he would soon go to Durban where I might meet him. He also gave me a warning that, if I decided to join the struggle, I must be prepared to face all the consequences. I met him at Durban a little later; and with a few other educated Indians he left for Transvaal. We were arrested on the Transvaal border as prohibited immigrants and were sentenced to six months' hard labour. Gandhiji was not arrested, and was allowed to proceed to Johannesburg. Till the end of the final phase of the struggle in 1914 I had the privilege to go to jail seven times in company with several other comrades.

Bapu's views on education were well known even in those days. Of his four sons three were never sent to any regular school. Whatever education they have received was given at home. The eldest son, Harilal, had some schooling at Rajkot. He was not satisfied with the education that he had when he came to South Africa. He felt that *Bapu* was neglecting his duty as a father to give modern education to him and his brothers. He often pleaded with *Bapu* to give the brothers a higher education so that they could become barristers or doctors. *Bapu* refused to give such education to his sons, because he did not set much store by it. Harilal argued in reply that, if *Bapu* himself had not become a barrister, he would not have been able to do the work that he was doing. *Bapu* answered by saying that it was not necessary to become barristers and doctors to qualify for service of the people. He cited the examples of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Shivaji, Pratap, Dayanand - none of whom had English education, and who were yet among the greatest Indians of their times. Harilal retorted by citing the examples of Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak, Malaviya and Lajpatrai who had equipped themselves with higher English education and had served the country so well. Such arguments would often go on between father and son, but with no concrete result.

When the great passive resistance movement was started by *Bapu*, Harilal joined it and took a prominent part in it, undergoing several imprisonments. But he was dissatisfied with the life of simplicity and poverty which *Bapu* had adopted. Harilal was in those days a friend of mine. We went to jail together, and shared a common life of hardship and labour inside the prison. He often poured out his heart before me. I saw that his discontent was very great.

The passive resistance struggle was postponed by *Bapu* temporarily in 1911. Harilal took this opportunity, and disappeared from Johannesburg without informing anybody. He had left a very pathetic letter for *Bapu* who told us that this was the result of reading the Gujarati novel *Sarasvatichandra*, in which the young hero disappears in a similar manner, leaving a letter of farewell for the father. Shri Surendra Medh and I, who were friends of Harilal, had no previous knowledge of his plan. A search was made in vain all over Johannesburg. A Parsi friend gave the information that Harilal had gone to him and borrowed twenty pounds from him. The news of Harilal's disappearance spread quickly, and many friends of *Bapu* rushed to his office which remained crowded for the whole day. Several Muslim merchants remonstrated with *Bapu*, saying: "You should have sent him to England for further studies. We would have paid all the

expenses." In the evening we left the office with *Bapu* to go to the Tolstoy Farm at Lawley where we were living. *Bapu* said to us in the train: "Don't you say anything about Harilal's disappearance to *Ba*. I myself will reveal the fact to her in my own way." *Ba's* grief can be imagined when she was told what had happened.

On the third day a friend of ours told us that he definitely knew Harilal was in Lourenco Marques. We conveyed the news to *Bapu*. Mr. Kallenbach offered to go to Lourenco Marques and bring back Harilal to Johannesburg. Harilal had changed his name so that no one might recognise him as Gandhiji's son. He came back and the tension was relieved both in the city and at the Tolstoy Farm. At the latter place, father and son alone walked all night over the farm and had a long exchange of views. Next morning at breakfast *Bapu* announced that Harilal would leave for India the next day. He was to live at Ahmedabad and prosecute his studies in a school.

Next day we all went to Johannesburg to bid goodbye to Harilal. When the train was about to start, *Bapu* kissed Harilal, gave a gentle slap on his cheek, and said: "Forgive your father, if you think he has done you wrong." It was a most touching scene, and these words of *Bapu* moved me so deeply that I could not restrain my tears. I said to myself: "What a hard-hearted father! And at the same time how kind, meek and lovable!"

On the Tolstoy Farm we lived as one big family. As passive resisters we lived mostly on public funds and the small produce of the farm. *Bapu* was the chef. He was also the server. Each one of us had been given a wooden bowl and a wooden spoon. He once decided to give us olive oil in the place of *ghee*. Olive oil was healthy but costlier. Before serving it to us *Bapu* delivered a little sermon to us: "We are passive resisters. We have willingly adopted a life of simplicity and poverty. Moreover we live on public charity. We must therefore be very careful in using costly things. We must not use them in large quantities. We may thus not take any more of this oil than the minimum necessary." We all sat in a line, and went to him at the table one by one with our bowl and spoon, when he would serve out the food to us. I happened to be first in the line that day. I went to him and he served me rice, *dal* and vegetables, and then asked me: "How many teaspoonfuls of olive oil shall I give you?" His sermon was quite fresh in my mind, and I said: "One." I got one teaspoonful, and went back to my seat. Then the next man went to him. He asked for three spoonfuls and got three. The third one

wanted four, and got four. The fourth man asked for five, and got five. Then *Bapu* looked at me and had a hearty laugh. "Pragji," he said, "you have to thank yourself for the small quantity of oil that you got!" I replied: "Well, *Bapu*, I am satisfied with my one teaspoonful." It was apparently a trivial incident, but it made a lasting impression on my mind, and taught me to keep a detailed account of public funds, and to use them economically and for no other purpose than the one for which they were earmarked. I had often to collect funds both in South Africa and in India, and this lesson stood me in good stead on all those occasions.

Gokhaleji visited South Africa in 1912. According to the report that he gave to Gandhiji, General Botha, the then Prime Minister of the Union, had given him a promise to repeal the three pound tax. After his departure for India, however, General Botha denied having given any such promise to Prof. Gokhale. Gandhiji cabled to Gokhaleji, who replied that General Botha had given him a definite promise to this effect. Gandhiji felt that this involved the honour of Gokhaleji and, therefore, the honour of India...

During this period of suspension (of passive resistance) the question of the legality of Indian marriages suddenly cropped up. In an Indian's case the Supreme Court at Cape Town decided that his marriage, not having been performed according to Christian rites, could not be considered legally valid. Indian marriages, performed according to Hindu, Muslim or Parsi rites, would thus be legally invalid. The judgment came as an earthquake shock to the Indian community. The three pound poll tax and the marriage question became life and death problems to Gandhiji. These questions came up at a time when the spirit of the Indian community was at its lowest ebb. People were tired of going to jail again and again. The struggle had been a prolonged one. Life in jail was very hard. But Gandhiji was made of a sterner stuff. He came to Johannesburg from Phoenix, and immediately on arrival called a meeting of about a dozen old passive resisters who had proved their mettle in the previous campaigns. He had come with an inflexible resolve to "do or die." I was present at this memorable meeting. This was the gist of what he said (of course I am quoting from memory):

"I have made my own decision. The legality of our marriages and the three pound poll tax have become religious questions to me. With me they are life and death questions. A fire is raging in my heart. These two acts must be repealed. They involve the honour

of our great country. This time no mass meetings are to be held, no resolutions are to be passed, no deputations are to be sent anywhere. We are not going to beg and collect money from anybody. We will not carry on any press propaganda. I know that the spirit of the community is at its lowest ebb, but that does not worry me. We have proclaimed to the world that in the code of *satyagraha* there is no such word as 'defeat.' Can truth ever suffer defeat? I certainly want every one of you to join the struggle. But this time my conditions are very strict. If you wish to line up with me, you must first of all forget your wife, children and other members of the family. You must forget even India. You must decide to fight, though non-violently, till death. If you join me, well and good. If, however, you don't join me, I do not care. I have often said that one true *satyagrahi* can carry on the struggle, because it is a struggle to be carried on with soul force. If you don't join, I have decided to carry on the struggle single-handed but with the utmost vigour. I will wander like a mad man throughout South Africa. I will go from house to house and will rouse our people to join me in this sacred cause. I will fight till the end of my life, and will get the three pound poll tax and the marriage act repealed. I must do or die. I am also considering whether our women folk should take part in the struggle or not. Their own honour is also at stake. Up till now we have not asked them to join the struggle. I ask your opinion on this question too. I should now like to know your own decision."

While I was listening very attentively to the fiery words which came from the very depth of his heart, I had decided to take a plunge. I felt that even death in this great cause under the leadership of such a brave and fearless man would be glorious. The stalwart *satyagrahis*, who were present, all said "yes." No one wavered for a moment. The result immensely pleased the leader. Finally, before we parted, Gandhiji said: "I will now go to Phoenix and chalk out our programme. This time we are going to fight in such a way that even gods will descend to see us fighting!" The meeting decided, after a full discussion, that our womenfolk also should be invited to participate in the struggle and court imprisonment. The subsequent events, ending in the Gandhi-Smuts agreement of 1914, have been described at length by the leader of the movement himself in his *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

Salej
October 10, 1948

MANILAL GANDHI⁶

[On the occasion of the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi his son, Manilal, who is completing the mission of his father, in eradicating racial discrimination in South Africa, gave some of his reminiscences. -Editor, *Indian Review*.]

During my life-time I was able to spend very few years actually with my father. Unlike my other brothers, I had to live away from him in exile, in South Africa. I have been in South Africa for the last thirty years and more almost at a stretch. From August 1914, till the beginning of 1917. I went on a month's visit to India. I went again at the end of 1924, on a month's visit. In 1926 I was there. I got married in March 1927 and returned almost immediately to South Africa and paid a visit to India once in about three years.

The longest period I was able to spend in India and most of it with father was the whole of 1945 and half of 1946. Those were the precious months I spent with father and had the rare opportunity to be with him during the long tour of Bengal and Madras. Those who nursed him and looked after his personal requirements were able to have the best time with him. Though I seemed to be encroaching upon the preserves of others, father lovingly gave me as much opportunity as was possible in the circumstances, to be with him. We had many free and frank discussions on various matters including his own surroundings and on his own attitude which had so vastly changed since the time we were under him in childhood.

It seemed to me as though he had spoilt those near him by his extreme love and affection. They had become as his spoilt children as it were and much more so after my mother had been called away from his life. She acted as a check on my father and filled the gaps left by him especially on the social side of life. After my mother had gone, father had to act both as father and mother to those close to him but none in return were able to fill the gap left by mother and by Mahadev Desai, who next to mother was the nearest and dearest to him. They were both his right and left hand.

⁶ "Memories of Gandhiji" by Manilal Gandhi, in *Indian Review*, Madras, March 1952

Extremely Soft

One of the things that struck me was the extreme softness in father's attitude compared with what it was when we, four brothers, were under him. He was, of course, always forgiving though he was a very severe task master. But he had grown extremely tolerant which he was not in our time. That was partly due to his bitter experiences of the world in latter years and partly to the development of the spirit of non-violence in him. When I saw this, many a time I chafed and said to father: "Bapu, you have vastly changed from the time we were under you. You never pampered us. You were very severe with us. I remember how you made us to do laundry work and chop wood; how you made us to take the pick and shovel in the bitter cold mornings and dig in the garden, to cook and to walk miles. And I am surprised to see how you pamper these people around you."

Bapu would listen and burst out with his usual hearty laughter: "Well children," he would say "are you listening to what Manilal is saying?" And yet he would love and caress them. No wonder India sobs at the very thought that that loving soul in whom both father and mother were personified, was no longer with them.

Though father was ever with us, never was there a time when we felt his severity. The reason was that he did not tell us to do what he himself did not actually do and surpass everyone in doing. There were times at Phoenix whenever he would go out hoeing in the field, the strongest among us would get tired but he would go on plodding steadily and unceasingly till the stipulated time. That was his great energy and will power.

When I think of that past, I bless it. For that indeed, has sustained me to this day and saved me from becoming a physical wreck.

I have passed through many a vicissitude in my life and have had love lavished upon me by father as also punishment from him. But I do not remember having felt bitter over his punishment at any time. No father could have nursed his child with more loving care as my father did when typhoid fever had gripped me at about nine years of age. A vivid description of it is given in father's Experiments with Truth, every word of which is true.

Seven Days' Fast

I must confess to my utter shame that I was the cause of father having had to undergo a fast for seven days in 1912. I had tried to deceive him. Father was at that time in Johannesburg and I was in Phoenix. There was an exchange of letters between us. He was pained at certain reports he had received about me. He wanted an admission from me but I persisted in denying until at last I received a letter from him which was signed "Blessings from your father in Agony." I could no longer bear it. I wanted to confess but I had not the courage to approach him direct. I, therefore, enclosed the letter in a letter to Mr. Kallenbach, who was to us like a member of our family. I asked father to forgive me in the letter. I received a telegram from him: "I forgive you. Ask God to forgive you." He came immediately to Phoenix and he and I together underwent a fast for seven days and Mr. Kallenbach also joined us. I can truthfully say that there was not a trace of bitterness in me then or after over the painful incident. Father was at that time conducting a school at Phoenix and had children who were boarding and lodging there. As a result of this incident, he wrote to all the parents who had entrusted their children to him informing them of this episode and asked them to withdraw their children if they so wished. None however did so.

Another incident took place in India in the beginning of 1916 when an untruth slipped from my mouth. It seemed a trifling thing to all around us. But to father, it was a Himalayan mistake. He disclosed the fact to the inmates of the *Ashram* and I was to be banished from the *Ashram* the next day. I was to go wherever I chose to but father made some suggestions. He said I could go to Madras to a certain place where hand-spinning and hand-weaving was carried on and ask to be apprenticed there. I was, however, not to make use of father's name. In addition to this, father was also contemplating a fast but I sat all night entreating him not to do so and in the end my prayer was heeded. I left my dear mother and my brother Devadas sobbing. Father did not throw me out completely empty handed. He gave me just sufficient money for my train fare and a little extra. I wrote a letter to father from the train with tears in my eyes regretting the pain I had caused him.

I had the experience of my life during the two months I thus spent which would make another story. After that father sent me a letter of introduction to one of our close friends and I spent the rest of my seven months in Madras in happiness and none the worse for what I had undergone.

I bless those days with loving memory of my dear father whose gentleness had no bounds and yet could he be as hard as steel. I thank him for what he has given me and millions of my fellow countrymen in India and in my adopted country, South Africa, which has become the centre of world-wide attention, as a result of her suicidal racial policy. At this crucial hour of South African Indians' struggle for human rights and turmoil and strife threatening to engulf humanity with another fearful and deadly world war, may his spirit guide us all in the right path, and may the world enjoy a long spell of peace.

F. E. T. KRAUSE⁷

[F.E.T. Krause (1868-), a barrister, held responsible positions in the Transvaal Republic. He was a Special Commandant and Military Governor of Johannesburg during the Anglo-Boer War. Subsequently, he was a member of the Transvaal Parliament , 1907-10 and Judge of the Supreme Court for several years. He first met Gandhiji in Pretoria in 1893, and they became friends especially in Johannesburg after the Anglo-Boer War. Mr. Krause represented Indians in many cases in court.]

It is a trite but true saying that small things often have great repercussions, and I have been wondering whether the incidents I am about to relate may not have influenced the future life and activities of Gandhiji in South Africa, - the spark, as it were, which set ablaze the fires of self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of his people.

It was in 1893 that I returned from Europe where I had been studying law, and started practice as an Advocate of the Old High Court of the South African Republic at Pretoria. I had taken a law degree in Holland, and had also been called to the English Bar, having been a student at the Middle Temple, London. Gandhiji had, likewise, about that time become an English barrister, and had gone to Natal, where there was a large colony of Indians - mostly descendants of the cheap Indian labourers recruited by the sugar planters of Natal...

I believe it was in 1893 when I met him in Pretoria. A brother of mine, Dr. A.E.J. Krause, was then the Attorney General of the Republic. The law at that time was that no native was allowed to be at large, especially at night, without being in possession of a pass from a white man. The police had a right to stop any native and to demand his pass and, if he could not produce one, he could be arrested, fined or imprisoned as if he had committed a criminal offence.

Gandhiji was liable to the same restrictive laws and so, to protect him, my brother granted him a Certificate of Exemption. I remember an incident which occurred when my brother had invited him one night to dinner. The natives, serving at the table, protested at being called upon to attend to an Indian, and it was only after it had been

⁷ From Shukla, Chandrashanker (ed.) *Reminiscences of Gandhiji, by forty-eight contributors*. Bombay: Vora & Co., 1951

explained to them that Gandhiji was a great man, just like a native chief, that they were prepared to continue their services.

In 1896, I was appointed the State Prosecutor at Johannesburg, and since that time and until the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, I had many opportunities of meeting Gandhiji.

The impression I formed was that he resented the fact that his people should be and were placed in the same category as the uncivilised and primitive native, and that they should consequently be subject to the same restrictive laws. I believe the inference is justified that when on his first visit to the Transvaal he found that the civilised and educated Indian, by reason only of the colour of his skin, was looked upon as an inferior human being, that it was this circumstance which was the spark which fired him with that resolution to devote all his life and energy to right the wrongs of his people. Small beginnings often lead to great things.

Devotion to a cause, and self-sacrifice, are the outstanding attributes of him who is determined to right an unjust wrong done to his race or people!

Gandhiji's life was one of unselfish devotion and sacrifice for the Indian people, irrespective of race, colour or creed!

I believe it was what he experienced and saw on his first visit to the Transvaal that was the determining factor of that life of devotion!

VINCENT LAWRENCE⁸

[Mr. Lawrence, born in Madras on September 10, 1872, taught in missionary schools in Madras, and then went to Natal on six months' leave. There he was employed as a confidential clerk, or private secretary, of Gandhiji for six years. He lived with Gandhiji in Beach Grove, opposite the house of Harry Escombe, for several years.]

In 1895 Mr. Gandhi paid a visit to the Marianhill Monastery where he found the missionaries deep in prayer and labour in the fields true to their motto, "*Orare et labore*" and was amazed at their sincerity, piety and devotion and wrote a complimentary article in the *Natal Advertiser*, now *The Daily News*... praising their work of missionary zeal and devotion and ever after he became imbued with Christ's Sermon on the Mount, following and practising the sublime doctrine with the indomitable courage. He at that time used to visit the missionaries of the South African General Mission in Ash Lane off Point Rd. and at the request of the Superintendent Mr. Walter Spencer Walton and on the direction of Mr. Gandhi [I] taught Tamil to two young European lady missionaries, Misses Day and Hargreaves during the day at St. Aidan's Indian Girls School at the corner of Cross St. and Prince Edward St. which is now the Hindu Tamil Institute which was subsequently converted into flats and shops, to enable them to labour among the Tamilians.

At the persistent request of the prominent and influential merchants Mr. Gandhi founded the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 in Dada Abdulla and Co.'s premises upstairs, next to Harvey Greenacre's Wholesale merchants in West St. in the days of Sir Benjamin Wesley Greenacre who was the Mayor of Durban...

Mr. Gandhi had his business at the corner of West and Field Streets, known as Ferguson's Corner, the owner being Mr. James Ferguson who carried on a jewellers business and was at one time a Deputy Mayor of Durban and after the anti-Indian demonstration in 1896 the office was removed to 14 Mercury Lane opposite to *Natal Mercury* editorial dept. and Mr. Gandhi and I used to walk to and from the house to the office, the office hours being 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with lunch break between 1.00 and 2.00. Mr. Gandhi also formed the Natal Indian Educational Association, after the founding of

⁸ Extracts from "Sixty Years Memoir of Vincent Lawrence of 67 Gale Street, Durban, Natal" in UNISA Documentation Centre for African Studies.

There are many typing errors and grammatical errors etc., in the original. I have not tried to correct all the errors or to improve the English in this extract of passages which relate to Gandhiji.

the Natal Indian Congress, for the purpose of training Indian youth and adults to become public speakers and future leaders and its meeting place being the same as for the meetings and public activities of the Congress in an upstairs hall adjoining Camroodeen's Passage off Grey St... In that hall the N.I.C. arranged welcome reception to Lord Roberts, which I attended, who was Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces with Lord Kitchener as second in command. As a member of the N.I. Voluntary Ambulance Corps I was present at the battle Colenso where Lieutenant Roberts, son of Lord Roberts was killed...

When the Natal Indian Congress was founded, the subscription for membership was fixed at three pounds a year or 5/- per month. Except the merchant class the other members of the Indian community were unable to meet it because of their financial circumstances and agitated against it. I took up their case and formed a Committee and put before the officials the Committee their complaint and pleaded for an amendment of the subscription clause which was altered to 5/- per year. During my office hours I translated the first two years' Annual General Reports of the Congress into Tamil and when Mr. Gandhi went to India in 1896 to espouse the cause of the Indians here he took these translations with him and submitted them to the Madras High Court translators and they complimented the translation and when Mr. Gandhi returned to Natal he was highly elated and very pleased with me. When he returned to Natal unfortunately for him two ship loads of Indians particularly of the artisan class came with him and when they reached the harbour a case of small-pox occurred and they were quarantined. After the expiration of the period of quarantine, they came inside the harbour but were not allowed to land. In the meantime the European colonists, after hearing Mr. Gandhi's campaign in India which was flashed across Natal by Reuter that Mr. Gandhi was dragging the names of the colonists in the gutter, they formed a committee of important men, such as Lieutenant Colonel Wiley, L.C. Harry Sparks and others. On hearing the arrival of two ships with the passengers they took with them a batch of kraal natives with their *assegais* and shields and made them dance on the wharf to frighten the life of these Indians and when Harry Escombe heard of this demonstration and the commotion he went up to the Point and pleaded with the demonstrators to disperse as the Govt. was taking the necessary steps to meet the situation. Meanwhile, Mr. F.A. Laughton of the firm of Goodrick, Laughton and Cook, a very great friend of Mr. Gandhi took a ferry boat and with the permission of the immigration authorities went up on the boat and persuaded Mr. Gandhi to land with his family, as he was taking the

initiative to land them safely. When they reached the Gardener St. jetty there were a lot of young Europeans playing about in the water and recognised Mr. Gandhi with his peculiar turban with two tails hanging behind and they chased him from there through West St. with mud and rotten fish and started assaulting him. Just at that moment Mrs. R.C. Alexander, the wife of the Superintendent of Police, passed by and protected him with her open parasol and drove the crowd away, took him over to the Central Police Station next to the Medwood Gardens and handed him over to the Superintendent. He took him over to the Officers' Mess upstairs. During the course of this demonstration I was locked up in my office upstairs the windows facing West St. and cried for help and people came and freed me. Towards the evening of that day the Superintendent took Mr. Gandhi away to Mr. Parsee Rustomjee's house in Field St. I left him inside with Mr. Rustomjee. The demonstrators having heard of Mr. Gandhi's removal there they gathered there in great numbers and wanted to set the place on fire. The Superintendent was there with some of his European and Indian constables to prevent them from doing so. In the meantime the Superintendent went inside with some of his constables and got an Indian constable to divest of his uniform and made Mr. Gandhi wear it and sent him away through a side door to his place of residence. The Superintendent went out with great agitation and told the demonstrators that Mr. Gandhi was not inside, that he had looked for him everywhere, and if they didn't believe him they had better take some of them inside and look for him and if they found him they were at liberty to do with him what they liked...

[Mr. Lawrence went to India at the end of 1900 with letters of introduction to Indian leaders by Mr. Gandhi. He went to Madras and Bombay during his six months' leave, meeting leaders and speaking of the situation in South Africa.

[Before going to India, on December 8, 1900, he was engaged to Miss Josephine Gabriel; they were married on his return in June 1901. Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Rustomjee spoke at the wedding reception. She was the daughter of an old Indian colonist. Her brothers Lazarus, Brian and Bernard served in the Anglo-Boer War and the two former were members of the Natal Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps and were noted photographers. The last brother was a barrister and a well-known criminal lawyer.]

P. J. MEHTA⁹

[Mr. Mehta was a friend of Gandhiji since his college days in England.]

It will not be out of place to mention here the sort of life that Mr. Gandhi usually leads in South Africa. His life is really very simple, and he manages to live on 15 rupees a month in the Transvaal where everything is expensive. He prefers country life to city life. He has a positive dislike for city life on account of its environments and its vices. In such a cold climate as that of Johannesburg, he takes two purely vegetarian meals, and takes no other beverage than pure water or milk. He usually takes his first meal at about one or half-past one in the afternoon. It consists mostly of fruits and nuts. The second meal comes off at about seven in the evening, and as a rule it is of his own cooking. He has given up taking tea, coffee, cocoa, etc., as these articles are mostly prepared with the help of indentured labour. He generally performs his own domestic services, such as cleaning cooking utensils, sweeping the house, making up his bed, etc. In these matters also he acts on the principle of equality for all and would not allow any one to render him such services as could be rendered for him by himself. His dietary is very simple as a rule, consisting only of bread, vegetables and fruits, and he never allows himself anything that is not absolutely required for health. In his younger days, he made various experiments on his person to find out the bare minimum required to keep his body and soul together, and ultimately he has hit upon this dietary. He believes that by meeting the bare necessities of life, the soul is better purified. Writing to me lately from Tolstoy Farm, where he is now living with a number of passive resisters' families, he says:

"I prepare the bread that is required on the farm. The general opinion about it is that it is well made. Manilal and a few others have learnt how to prepare it. We put in no yeast and no baking powder. We grind our own wheat. We have just prepared some marmalade from the oranges grown on the farm. I have also learnt how to prepare caramel coffee. It can be given as a beverage even to babies. The passive resisters on this farm have given up the use of tea and coffee, and taken to caramel coffee prepared on the farm. It is made from wheat which is first

⁹ From P.J. Mehta, "M.K. Gandhi and the South African Indian Problem" in *The Indian Review*, Madras, May 1911, pages 367-8.

Mr. Mehta, a close friend of Gandhiji since his student days in London, visited him in Durban in 1890s and was in regular contact with him by correspondence.

baked in a certain way and then ground. We intend to sell our surplus production of the above three articles to the public later on. Just at present, we are working as labourers on the construction work that is going on, on the farm, and have not time to produce more of the articles above mentioned than we need for ourselves.”

In the bitterest cold, he bathes in cold water and sleeps in the open verandah. When he goes out, he is obliged to dress in European style, but at home his dress is mostly of Indian style...

What a vast change there is in his present life, and that of twelve years ago, when I put up with him, as his guest in his home situated not far from the Durban beach! The late Mr. Escombe, for a long time Attorney-General of Natal, was almost his next-door neighbour. Even then, so far as he himself was concerned, his life was simple enough; but now it is much nearer the natural life than ever.

AGNES M. PHILLIPS¹⁰

[Agnes M. Phillips was the niece of the Rev. Charles Phillips, who supported the Indian cause and became a close friend of Gandhiji. She stayed with her uncle in South Africa from 1907 to 1909.]

My first recollections of Mr. Gandhi date back to 1907. At that time I was staying with my uncle, Rev. Charles Phillips, in Johannesburg. One day he said that he had invited Mr. Gandhi to lunch, that he was a vegetarian and that we must be very particular about this. As I knew practically nothing about vegetarianism at that time, I became very interested but was rather afraid of doing anything wrong. However, when Mr. Gandhi questioned me about it, luckily everything was correct. He came several times again to meals and to small gatherings at my uncle's house.

I wish I could convey my ideas about Mr. Gandhi clearly. Much to my surprise, I began to regard him as a much revered and at the same time lovable elder brother. Also, that this was no ordinary man, but a master. His simplicity and integrity were very manifest; yet they were such an integral part of him that he could not be otherwise. He made one think of the deeper things of life and religion without any apparent effort on his part. Truth and uprightness were his watchwords. His courage was beyond question. His influence was such that it was impossible to do or even to think meanly. This feeling of affection and reverence has remained with me during my life.

Later, much to my family's and my horror, he was sent to prison on account of the Indian question. When he was released, my aunt and I went to the station to welcome him. He was carried from the train shoulder-high by his compatriots, after being garlanded. I was glad to be there to offer my mite of understanding and welcome. A more tragic memory was when he was attacked and nearly killed by some misguided countryman of his. He was looked after by the family of another Christian minister, a friend of ours, Rev. Joseph J. Doke.

In 1909 I came back to England to train as a nurse at Guy's Hospital. During that year, Mrs. Polak wrote to me to say that Mr. Gandhi would shortly be in England. I went to see him at the Westminster Palace Hotel, where he had a room. He welcomed me warmly, and asked me to sit down, as he had ordered tea for me. There were innumerable people in and out to see him, but in between he found time for a little conversation

with me. It was eventually arranged that I should go to him on Wednesday afternoons, during my off-duty time. He was always very busy and inundated with visitors.

One Wednesday I felt that my visit must interfere with his work, so I did not go. Next morning I had a letter from him asking why I had not done so. This astonished me very much, as I had really thought that he would not miss me in the throng and bustle. I resumed my visits...

10 Agnes M. Phillips, "Recollections" in Shukla, Chandrashanker, *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*. Bombay: Vora & Co., 1951.

HENRY S.L. POLAK¹¹

I. Reminiscences in 1925¹²

It was a wonderful day, that on which I landed at Cape Town, a young man not yet of legal age, under the shadow of Table Mountain, intent upon making a fortune that would take me back to England in five years' time. The whole world of South Africa was before me. All I had to do was to conquer it, an easy enough task for a youthful dreamer. Little did I realise what South Africa was to mean for me, what of pain and sorrow and hardship, of joy and hope and idealism, it was to bring forth for me in the next thirteen years.

A year later I had begun to take my bearings and to learn something of the tragic problems of the country. Chief of these was the colour problem. I saw racial and colour prejudice enshrined around me. Pigmentation was not merely a physical defect; it was a moral and an economic crime, for which the non-white was daily punished throughout the greater part of the land, then still divided into separate administrative units, two of them, the Cape and Natal, self-governing Colonies, the remaining two, the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, as it was then renamed, Crown Colonies under Colonial Office administration.

And I had become both a vegetarian and a journalist, in both of which capacities I acquired proclivities which later stood me in good stead, the one as the means of introduction to Mr. Gandhi, the Indian leader, who was to change the whole current of my life, the other as the principal means of my public service in South Africa during the ensuing years. It was in a Johannesburg vegetarian restaurant kept by an enthusiastic Austrian that I first saw Gandhiji. He was pointed out to me by my friend who did not know him well enough to introduce. That was reserved for a few weeks later, when I was introduced to him by an English lady then running another vegetarian restaurant, which Gandhi had encouraged and later helped, at considerable financial loss, to expand. We found one very entrancing subject of conversation which brought us close together - our common vegetarianism and the fact that I was almost the only other

¹¹ Shukla, Chandrashanker (ed.) *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life by Fifty-Four Contributors* (Bombay: Vora & Co., 1949), pages 230-47.

¹² "South African Reminiscences" by H.S.L. Polak in *Indian Review*, Madras, February, March and May 1925

person that he knew that had read a certain book on nature-cure. It was a remarkable evening for me; but little did I imagine that fate was, in this way, using us for the great purpose of future history making.

Another four months had passed, with pregnant happenings. In my journalistic reading, I had constantly come across a large broadsheet, entitled *Indian Opinion*. It gave me much news about India, ancient and modern, but still more, it gave me detailed information about the disabilities of the Indians of the country. I found them to be substantially similar to those suffered by my own co-religionists in Eastern Europe and much the same arguments were used against the former as against the latter, by their respective opponents. My sympathies were readily aroused and my active support for the Indian cause already enlisted, when Gandhi, to whom revelation of the conflict between the claims of the simple life and the complexities of the civilisation had already come, and who thought he had found the solution of the problem through the combined teaching of Ruskin and Tolstoy, invited me to throw up my work, which had already become irksome owing to the Anti-Indian policy of the paper on whose staff I was serving, and join his new Phoenix settlement of Indians and Europeans anxious to render service to the country by establishing better relations between the two communities upon a basis of mutual sympathy and understanding and the living of the simple life. The prospect of expressing my idealism in beautiful and inspiring surroundings attracted me strongly, and the New Year's Day, 1905 (just twenty years ago), found me on my way to take up the joint English editorship of *Indian Opinion*. My sojourn in Elysian fields was, however, of short duration. Gandhi's managing clerk had left him, and he invited me to take articles of attorneyship under him and study law, for the better service of our common cause. With much demur I accepted the call, upon the express condition that I was not to be expected to practice a profession that I strongly disliked. How time works changes in our methods and outlook!

A year later I was married to the lady who subsequently, by her many sacrifices, made it possible for me to engage so largely in public work of a peculiarly exacting character, and who, during the great days of the Passive Resistance Struggle, enabled me to assume heavy responsibility and took a large enough share of her own.

What great days there were in store for us. They were well heralded. The hateful Registration Draft Ordinance had come in 1906 as the sequel and climax of much that

was hurtful to the welfare and dignity of the Transvaal Indian community. Gandhi felt, and made others feel with him, that this affront and injury was wholly unacceptable, and the community met in mass meeting at the Empire Theatre, Johannesburg to tell it to all the world and announce its resolve never to submit to Indian degradation. It was a wonderfully impressive occasion with old Mr. Abdul Gani, then Chairman of the British Indian Association presiding with dignity and courage. Business losses and ill health later caused him to withdraw from the leadership, but in those earliest days of the struggle he played a fine and inspiring part. It was a historic event, for a new moral weapon was being forged to combat injustice and prejudice. The Fates celebrated it by reducing the theatre to ashes that very night, as though the old building should never stage a less worthy scene.

Then came Gandhi's first visit to England as the head of a deputation as spokesman for his people, I playing the humble part of locum *tenens* at Johannesburg, with the scene of action shifted to London. Being an untried novice and as yet not known to a large part of the Indian community, I was somewhat timid of my unexpected responsibility. Fortunately, it did not last long, thanks to Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, whose Government disallowed the Ordinance, and Gandhi soon returned to South Africa to await the next attack.

It was not long forthcoming, for the very first action of the new Transvaal Parliament (Responsible Government having been conceded to the Colony by the British Liberal Administration) was to re-enact the offending Ordinance, as Act 2 of 1907, with its implied challenge to the Imperial Government. It was obviously impossible for the latter to advise refusal of the Royal assent to the very first legislation of a Colony that had just received the privilege of self-government, and no steps were, in fact, taken to disallow the Act or the subsequent Immigration Act the penalties of which were later invoked to bring recalcitrant Asiatics to heel. It was evident that Passive Resistance could no longer be avoided, and it was accordingly launched in the middle of 1907.

* * *

The first round in the Passive Resistance Struggle was short and sharp. When the registration offices were opened in Johannesburg and Pretoria under the Asiatics Law Amendment Act, as the hated statute was formally described, the officials sat there twiddling their thumbs. They had nothing to do; there were no "clients." A complete boycott had been proclaimed and was carried out rigidly up to the last day notified for registration. It having been maliciously

suggested in hostile quarters that the explanation was fear of intimidation by the volunteer pickets stationed outside the registration offices in the vicinity, the organisers undertook to withdraw the pickets from the neighbourhood for a whole day, in order to give a public test of the community's feeling. I personally supervised those arrangements and subsequently vouched for the fact that, at Johannesburg, that day there was only one application made by an unfortunate servant brought to the office in a trap by his European mistress.

As scarcely an Indian or a Chinese (for both communities were affected and had united in their opposition to the Act) had applied for registration, the authorities made a virtue of a necessity, and extended the time limit. The only result was that, under cover of darkness, and in the privacy of their stores whither, with an extraordinary lack of dignity and in breach of the terms of the official notification, the Registrar of Asiatics and his myrmidons had repaired, a small group of frightened traders at Pretoria, numbering about 500, made their application for servitude, with the full complement of compulsory finger-prints, against the will of the community. Thereafter, the boycott extended to these weak-kneed brethren, whose timidity and greed might have resulted in irreparable injury to all. Fortunately, 95 per cent of the Transvaal Indian population numbering over 12,000 stood firm.

The Government not unnaturally alarmed at this display at virtual unanimity, and irritated, on the one hand by the gibes of the small but satirical pro-Indian section of the press, and, on the other urged on by the anti-Indian majority section, felt obliged to make its power known. Accordingly, stronger measures were adopted and a haphazard collection of Indian and Chinese leaders and nobodies was arrested and brought before the Pretoria-Johannesburg magistrates, charged with breach of the Act in not producing a registration certificate when duly called upon. Thus the Government fell into the trap so carefully laid for it. It could not be pretended that any of those arrested was unknown to the authorities or that he had no rights of residence in the Colony, apart from his not being in possession of a certificate of registration to which he was legally entitled and which could not have been denied him had he thought fit to make application under the Act. Thus, it was made clear from the commencement that what the Government was aiming at was not identification of the Asiatic population, in order to deal with those who had no rights of residence and were therefore liable to removal from the Transvaal; but the degradation and humiliation of the Indian community upon a pretended issue, and in order to justify the foolish theories of young and inexperienced administrators,

who had been hypnotised by the perfection of Colonel Henry's finger-print system. Quite a good deal of knowledge of this subject, be it said parenthetically, was acquired during the struggle by a number of us laymen, official and non-official. Some of us were greatly fascinated by its amazing accuracy and I believe I still possess somewhere a complete set of my own impressions taken by a friendly police expert.

I can well remember the scene when, in the hostile surroundings of the Court (for the magistrate was obviously a partisan pretending to be judicial, who deemed it his duty not merely to carry out the law but also to interpret for the benefit of the accused its underlying purpose and policy), Mr. Gandhi was brought forward, having surrendered to his recognisance, and pleaded guilty to the technical charge. He disdained to raise a defence, but made a statement, for purposes of subsequent publication, of the circumstances under which Passive Resistance had been adopted. Even the aggressive magistrate was abashed by the unusual and dignified address of the accused, who concluded by demanding the highest sentence that the outraged majesty of the law required, to solace him for the severity of the sentences that, he had just heard, had been imposed upon some of his followers in Pretoria. But the Court, whilst willing enough to obey the official behest and make an example, nevertheless did not consider that a first offence merited the utmost degree of martyrdom, and passed a sentence of three months' imprisonment without hard labour, in consequence of which the Pretoria sentences were promptly reduced to decent proportions.

Evidently the police, who realised the great tension under which the Indians, who crowded the Court and its purlieus, laboured, feared a demonstration that might have had ugly results, for they managed cleverly to spirit the distinguished prisoner away to jail by a cab driven from another exit. Foiled of its purpose of according a respectful farewell to its leader, the crowd marched in orderly array to the usual place of communal meeting, at the historic Johannesburg Mosque grounds, where it encouraged itself with strong speeches and stirring resolutions to remain united till the end, which meant the complete repeal of the hated Act.

It was at this stage that I first had real responsibility thrust upon me. In the natural course of events, I became the community's trusted adviser, my previous associations with Mr. Gandhi and the British Indian Association having, during the period of

preparation, become so close that I had been appointed the Association's assistant secretary, it being understood that I was to replace him in the direction of the movement in the event of his imprisonment. That event having now taken place, I got busy at the task of organisation and encouragement and then began my painful education in public speaking and responsible public work. During the next three weeks, in the press and on the platform, I thundered defiance of the authorities in terms of youthful indiscretion and the community nobly backed me. I do not suppose that any serious notice of me was taken by the said authorities at that time; what was more to the point was that they had conclusive proof of the continued unanimity of the Indian and Chinese populations and their refusal to be intimidated into acceptance of the Act by imprisonment or the threat of it.

What appeared to be the end soon came. One day agitated messages came over the telephone from Pretoria to the busy offices of the Association that Mr. Gandhi had been seen by an Indian cyclist taken from a train that had been stopped at a suburban station and driven with a warder to the Government Buildings. I at once got into touch with my old friend, Mr. Albert Cartwright, the Editor of the *Transvaal Leader*, and now the Editor of *West Africa*, whom I knew to be sympathetic and in close touch with the Pretoria officials. We were all most anxious lest an attempt should be made by General Smuts to bring about a misunderstanding between Mr. Gandhi and his followers by making him falsely believe in their weakness and I urged Mr. Cartwright to make it clear to all concerned that the community was as resolved as ever upon carrying on the struggle unflinchingly. He, however, reassured me, but would give me nothing explicit. On the following day, however, Mr. Gandhi and his fellow-prisoners were released and upon his arrival that night from Pretoria, a public meeting was forthwith held, at which he explained that he and certain of his colleagues had come to a provisional Agreement with General Smuts, subject to confirmation by the community. The principal terms of the Agreement were that the Act was to be repealed, the people, as they had previously publicly offered to do in its absence, were to submit themselves to voluntary, instead of compulsory, registration, and this was subsequently to be validated by statute, in order to give legal effect and protection to the certificates of registration thus issued. This offer of voluntary registration had been made before the Act had been passed, in order to demonstrate to the general public and to the officials that the Indians had nothing to conceal as to their numbers or the legitimacy of their entry into the Colony, both of which had been challenged and used as a justification for the obnoxious legislation.

Hence the provisional Agreement was regarded as a victory for the passive resisters, whose *bona fides* were thus publicly acknowledged by the capitulation of the Government, and in spite of some opposition, the Agreement was adopted by the community.

But there are always fanatics who cling to the word rather than the spirit, and these, worked upon by a belief that there was something inherently impious in finger-prints, even though given voluntarily, as an act of faith, instead of under compulsion, as a jail-bird would do, were not to be conciliated. They threatened Mr. Gandhi with physical harm unless he withdrew his promise to lead the community in submitting voluntarily to registration, and when he proceeded to fulfil it in disregard of the threat, he was set upon in broad daylight by a small gang of Pathan ruffians, who left him for dead almost at the door of the Registration Office.

I shall not easily forget my consternation when news of this was brought to me there, I having gone by another route. I rushed to the place of assault and found that Mr. Gandhi had been taken into the business office of a friend and was there being tended, having just recovered consciousness. Blood was all about him, but, though in great pain, he managed to give us a twisted smile and reassured us that all was well. I remember, too, how those devoted friends the Rev. Joseph Doke and his wife nursed him back slowly to health, what time the facial wounds, which he would not have stitched up till he had fulfilled his promise, healed, and I recall his refusal to tender evidence against the Pathan leader who had dealt the murderous blows.

We had fondly thought that, with the acknowledged success of the registration voluntarily conducted under such tragic auspices, the Government would carry out its part of the bargain by repealing the objectionable Law. But when the Bill was published, though it validated all that had been voluntarily done, it made no mention of repeal, and Mr. Gandhi, in the name of the community, warned the Government that without this, there would be a grave breach of faith on its part, and passive resistance would be resumed. Unfortunately, he had trusted to General Smuts' personal assurance on this vital point, which had not been reduced to writing, and, fearful of his political prestige and none too scrupulous in his statesmanship, General Smuts denied the promise and was

upheld by General Botha, who had relied upon his colleague. A revival of passive resistance was thus rendered inevitable, until the Act of 1907 was repealed. Such was the position in August, 1908.

* * *

In anticipation of successful outcome of the negotiations with the Transvaal Government, the Chinese community, who were likewise victims of anti-Asiatic legislation, and had made common cause with their Indian brethren, had, a little earlier, decided to commemorate the forthcoming final settlement by a pleasant entertainment, at which the Chinese Consul-General was present, when occasion was taken to present address and gifts to the most prominent among the European public workers, to whose advocacy was largely attributed the happy result that was being celebrated. It was a little difficult to recognise ourselves in the heroes whose exploits were lauded to the skies that day, and although we naturally cherished the kind things said and the presentations made, it was for the good of our souls, if not to the advantage of the two victimised communities, that our noble deeds were placed in something like their proper perspective when it was seen, soon afterwards, that the negotiations with the Government had fallen through and the whole question was reopened by a revival of Passive Resistance. Nevertheless, there have been moments of pessimism and self-depreciation when it has been some consolation to look upon the Chinese community's address, beautifully illuminated by a local Chinese artist in the hope that certain hieroglyphics in either margin may hold the key to wisdom and future success.

I do not know whether the Chinese community was less well balanced than the Indian, or whether it had been worse led and inadequately instructed in the tenets of Passive Resistance. Certain it is, however, that a great wave of passionate anger took hold of it when the grim news came that the Government had broken faith. They were divided into two bitter factions, one of which backed the Chairman of the Transvaal Chinese Association, Mr. Leong Quinn, whilst the other denounced him as a traitor to the cause by agreeing to the provisional arrangement at the time of the release of the prisoners, of whom he was one. Fierce faction fights were often with the utmost difficulty prevented, and for long it was hardly safe for Mr. Quinn to sleep two consecutive nights in the same place. At a later date, he was somewhat rehabilitated, when, among a number of others, Indian and Chinese alike, he was deported from South Africa as a passive resister, and subsequently returned with them, to resume his leadership of the Chinese community

until the end of the second period of the struggle. It fell to me, at the time of these internal discords, to attend and address infuriated Chinese meetings in order to explain the situation and try to pour oil upon the troubled waters. I did not know that several of my friends had gone armed to these meetings, to protect me from possible attack, partly for my unpopular views, partly as the host of their unlucky chairman, against whom a vendetta had been proclaimed by the opposite faction. Had I been aware of this at the time, I should have been decidedly more uncomfortable than I was. It ought, however, to be recorded that the European friends were always quite safe from molestation, and often acted as a moderating influence.

That some individual members of the Indian community were out of hand, and did not hesitate to resort to personal violence was evident from the attack upon Mr. Gandhi in Johannesburg, already mentioned, and a further one upon him, in Durban, at about this time. So far, however, as the Indians were concerned, it was only in exceptional cases that there was a resort to violence, and the offenders were severely disciplined by the rest of the community. It is to the credit of the Indian population that, in spite of the intense bitterness felt by the great majority against the small number of its members that were considered to have betrayed it, by helping the authorities to impose a racial stigma upon it, the worst that happened to these was that they were virtually boycotted; whilst the violence and factional quarrels of the Chinese rendered them impotent during the greater part of the next three years, and operated as a barrier between the two communities.

When the true nature of the Government's decision was known and the anti-Asiatic legislation fully understood, it was recognised that not merely were the rank and the file of Transvaal Indians affected by it, but that it was also aimed at preventing the entry into the Colony of even Indians of high educational qualifications. It was clear to all that a racial insult was intended, in spite of protests, and it was necessary to take up the challenge. Sorabji Shapurji, a young Parsi, well connected and educated, and serving as a book-keeper in a country store, at Charlestown, just across the Natal border, whence a splendid view of the historic Majuba Hill is to be had, felt the call to come to the aid of his countrymen in the Transvaal. He defied the law and entered the Colony, fully prepared to suffer the consequences on behalf of the Motherland, whose dignity, he felt, was being dragged into the dust by the Transvaal Government. He gave due notice of his

intentions to the authorities, and he was promptly arrested, tried, and imprisoned for a few weeks. Upon his release, he repeated the offence immediately, and was re-arrested. Then ensued one of those judicial comedies that brought the authorities into so much disrepute in the public eyes, by exposing their folly, tactlessness, and inefficiency.

The administration of the anti-Asiatic laws at this time was in the hands of a retired Anglo-Indian tea-planter of Irish extraction, but of little sense of humour. He held the triple office of Chief Immigration Officer, Registrar of Asiatics, and Protector of Asiatics. No one ever knew exactly what functions he performed to justify the last title. He had been appointed Immigration Officer after a ridiculous episode, in 1905, when a Japanese merchant had been refused, by his predecessor in office, an extension of his permit, issued under the old law, to reside in the Transvaal, on the ground that, as the office instructions precluded the extension of permits issued to Indians, who were British subjects, he ought not to give to alien Asiatics preferential treatment. The Transvaal Governor, whether Lord Milner or Lord Selborne I do not now remember, failed to appreciate this kind of logic at its proper worth, presumably because it was feared that it might some day lead to an international incident, and the officer was at once retired and replaced by the ex-tea-planter. Whatever the latter's virtues may have been, they included neither modesty nor clarity of thought, and he took it upon himself, without consulting the legal advisers, to draft and publish the statutory notifications under the anti-Asiatic Acts. Unfortunately for him, he had to deal with one of the acutest legal minds in the country. When Sorabji was again put upon his trial, Mr. Gandhi, who defended him, pointed out that the charge as framed, with reference to the gazetted notification, the terms of which were alleged to have been infringed, disclosed no offence in law, and the magistrate (the same that had sentenced Mr. Gandhi himself earlier and was to do so again not long afterwards) held that he had no option but to discharge the accused, to the immense merriment of the entire Indian community, who thenceforth knew exactly the quality of their "Protector" and the value of his self-importance. He thereupon set himself to the task of rectifying his blunder, and drafted and gazetted a fresh notification, but apparently once more without safeguarding himself with legal opinion as to its adequacy for the intended purpose, and the now notorious Sorabji, in his modest role of scapegoat, was again arrested and charged. Once more Mr. Gandhi appeared on his behalf, and once again he challenged the validity of the notification. The unhappy magistrate glared at the "Protector" and Registrar of Asiatics, who had come to Court quite satisfied that this time he had "bagged" his victim

and deprived the Indians of an excellent advertisement. He was already prepared to celebrate his triumph in the usual way with his friend on the Bench, whose convivial habits were well known even to the unsophisticated. Then, turning to Mr. Gandhi, the magistrate mildly asked him how, in his opinion, the notification should have been worded. Always willing to assist the Court, Mr. Gandhi promptly responded with an explanation that made it abundantly clear that Sorabji should have been immediately discharged. The magistrate, however, recognised the seriousness of the position for the Government if he took such a course, and ordered an adjournment till after luncheon.

We reassembled at the appointed hour, with pleased and expectant smiles upon our faces in the anticipation of once more congratulating the accused upon his release and ourselves upon a fresh tactical defeat, of the authorities, who had, until then, displayed some sort of sportsmanship. But we had reckoned without our hosts. General Smuts and his colleagues could not afford another public laugh at their expense. The Pretoria telephone was kept busy in the interval. Officials hurriedly consulted each other. In the end, the Bench, which had hitherto been looked upon as the palladium of the weak and the humble, regardless of the dictates of political expediency, fell to official influence, and when the proceedings were resumed, the magistrate blandly announced, to the stupefaction of all in Court, including the press representatives, who had as Mr. Gandhi sat down, that morning, expected Sorabji's acquittal, that as the Court was now aware of the correct wording of the notification, he would permit the amendment of the charge. He there and then convicted and sentenced Sorabji, who quietly fulfilled his ambition to return to prison on behalf of his compatriots. Mr. Gandhi, true lawyer that he was, was scandalised by the Court's action, and vehemently protested against the gross irregularity, pointing out that it was he that had given the Court the correct wording of the notification and that the proper course was to issue a fresh notification, in proper terms, and to proceed anew thereon, but his protest fell upon the unheeding ears of the magistrate, who had already risen in order to avoid what he not unnaturally felt would be an uncomfortable scene. I recall vividly my conversation with the public prosecutor in his private room, a few minutes later. My honest indignation at this display of official unscrupulousness was voiced in terms that almost exceeded the limits of courtesy. He was shamefaced to a degree and remained silent under my vehement reproaches. Shortly afterwards, he sought and obtained a transfer to another Court, which did not have the unpleasant task of trying passive resistance cases. As we had announced a policy of suffering silently whatever penalties might be imposed, we

decided not to appeal on Sorabji's behalf against his unjust conviction, though, had we done so, there is no doubt but that the conviction would have been quashed and the magistrate rebuked. It only remains to add that Sorabji remained true as steel to the end of this period of passive resistance, when he went to London to study for the Bar. Shortly after I had returned to settle in London, he took his finals, and early in 1918 he returned to South Africa, to practice there and to assume the leadership of his community that his character and qualifications entitled him to. Unhappily, he was one of the first victims of the terrible influenza scourge that swept the country, and passed away to the immense loss of the South African Indians.

II. Reminiscence written in 1926

I was in England when the negotiations between General Smuts and Mr. Gandhi had finally broken down in the late summer of 1913. I had gone home from South Africa at the summons of the late Mr. Gokhale who was resolved to have the question of the position of South African Indians raised in the House of Lords, and he paid me the compliment of inviting me to be his expert adviser. It may be remembered that the debate was raised by Lord Amptill, and among those who intervened on the Indians' behalf were Lords Sydenham and Curzon, whilst Lord Crewe replied on behalf of the Government. So soon as Mr. Gokhale received the news of the revival of the Passive Resistance Struggle he determined, upon his forthcoming return to India, to organise the most energetic campaign on behalf of the South African Passive Resisters, and asked me to return to South Africa, study the situation there, and then proceed to India with the latest news to assist him in the organisation of the campaign. He then went to Vichy for a cure and later left for India, whilst I returned to South Africa driving there to find the Struggle already in full swing with several friends and colleagues in prison and others, including a number of ladies whose names have since become well-known in connection with the events of those days, preparing to share that imprisonment.

In the course of my duties it became necessary for me to go to Newcastle-in-Natal, to attend the trial of some of these ladies and to appear on their behalf before the local magistrate, and a few hours later it fell to my lot to attend and address a meeting of Indian strikers from the neighbouring coal mines who had concentrated upon Newcastle when the Indian workers at the mines in the north of the province went on strike in protest against the iniquitous 3 pound annual Poll Tax, the promise of whose repeal, given by the Union Ministers to Mr. Gokhale, was still unredeemed. It will be remembered that, with the consent of his associates, the repeal of the Poll Tax had been added by Mr. Gandhi, as a special case and a matter of honour, to the list of those particular grievances the removal of which was the object of Passive Resistance. The fact that I had addressed this meeting stood me a little later in god stead.

I returned to Durban in order to make arrangements for my approaching visit to India, and Mr. Gandhi discussed with me his plans for the organisation of the strikers in the

north of Natal and informed me of his intention thereafter to march with them into the Transvaal and there to court arrest, in order by this striking demonstration of mass-suffering, to appeal to the sense of righteousness of the Union Government and the conscience of the white population of South Africa. This consultation, however, was simply for my better information, as it was realised by Mr. Gandhi that participation in that matter would inevitably bring all concerned within the reach of the law, and he agreed with Mr. Gokhale as to the desirability of my being left free to join the latter in India and work there by his side for the relief of distress in South Africa and the more rapid termination of the Struggle. Mr. Gandhi thereafter left for the North, in order to take up his task and form a concentration camp for the benefit of the Strikers who had either left or been driven away from the mine. The arrangements for feeding the refugees in this camp were left in the charge of our colleague Mr. H. Kallenbach. A few days later, Mr. Gandhi announced to me his intention of leaving immediately for the great march into the Transvaal and to continue the march until his small army of Passive Resisters were arrested and imprisoned. As I was to have a final interview with him before I left for India just before taking my passage, I telegraphed to him for an appointment. He was, however, already on the march and replied by telegram that I could meet him at a certain place in the Transvaal, but that if I went there to meet him it might happen that I should render myself liable to arrest. This telegram reached me in the middle of a committee meeting in Durban. I immediately handed it over to my colleagues who were curious to know what I should do in the light of the warning that it contained. I told them that I had no choice in the matter, as it almost appeared, as though a challenge had been thrown down to me, and a test had been offered of the sincerity of my oft repeated lamentations that whilst on my advice and encouragement, so many of my Indian fellow workers had gone to jail, I, presumably because of my European status, had been left unmolested by the authorities.

The same night I left for the Transvaal. On my arrival the following morning at Volksrust station I found, among other persons on the platform, Mr. Jooste, the Magistrate, who informed me that Mr. Gandhi had already been arrested in the neighbouring magisterial division, but had been released on bail, and he earnestly advised me to go back and not to put my head into the lion's den. I deeply appreciated his friendly advice, but I pointed out that I had no alternative but to proceed, and explained that I was not taking any active part in this march but was merely obtaining

certain information from Mr. Gandhi prior to sailing for India. We shook hands very cordially.

The conductor of the train was an old friend, who knew Mr. Gandhi very well, and he told me that if, instead of going on to the place which had been appointed by Mr. Gandhi, I got out at an earlier halt and walked a mile or so across country, I should probably meet the invading army, with Mr. Gandhi at its head, some hours earlier. I accepted the suggestion and thereby, though not at the moment realising it, I altered all my plans.

At the indicated halt I left the train, carrying with me a sleeping bag with a few personal effects. After crossing a few fields, I reached the main road and there learnt that the marchers had not yet arrived. Half an hour later a cloud of dust in the distance heralded their approach, and as it came nearer I could distinguish a bent and labouring figure, carrying a staff, at the head of the long and straggling column. It was with difficulty that I realised that this was no other than Mr. Gandhi himself. He had been living for weeks on one meal a day and he showed the physical marks of this combined with the arduous labours of organisation, the heavy anxiety of the responsibilities that he had undertaken in leading his army to victory, and the fatigue and weariness of a long march on a dusty and hot road. But he grimly and resolutely held on his way, intent only upon sacrifice and suffering.

We greeted each other affectionately and at once resumed the march. My intention had been to spend a couple of hours in conversation and then to take the mail train from the next station back to Natal. Man proposes, but God disposes! We had hardly conversed for more than half an hour, as we trudged slowly along side by side, when there appeared driving rapidly towards us, a Cape cart from which there descended Mr. M. Chamney, the Principal Immigration Officer of the Transvaal, and a couple of police constables. We at once guessed that a further arrest was in store for Mr. Gandhi, who turned to me and said that if he were arrested he left the care of those leaderless people in my hands, a charge that I at once accepted. Our anticipations were speedily realised. Mr. Gandhi was arrested, placed in the Cape cart, and rapidly driven away.

I at once assumed the responsibility of taking the marchers to their camping ground arranged for them that night, expecting to hand them over, as had been arranged, to the chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association, that brave and honoured

Passive Resister Ahmed Mohammed Cachalia. Unfortunately he and his host, Mr. A. M. Bhyat, had missed the road, so we did not meet, and there was nothing for it but to camp out that night in the open just beyond the station of Greylingstad, from which I had expected to take the train back to Natal en route for India. We had been shepherded during the latter part of the afternoon by a couple of mounted police in the distance, but they had not molested us in any way.

I shall not readily forget that night! Our small campfires gradually flickered out as we lay down to rest and sleep after a very frugal meal that had been cooked in the early morning. The clouds rolled up heavily and a thunderstorm played in the distance. A light rain fell at intervals during the night and a cool wind blew in gusts, increasing the general discomfort. I had not slept in the open for years, and the blanket that I carried with me was little protection against the roughness and inequalities of the ground upon which we lay. On either side of me was a poor wretched striker in the early stages, apparently, of consumption, and they coughed continually throughout the night. It was therefore, with considerable relief that I rose with the dawn, and we struck camp after a hurried wash and without eating for we were due at the township of Balfour, where we understood arrangements had been made for the next meal. I learnt afterwards that this final march (as it turned out) was one that would have done credit to a well-drilled army since we did the distance to Balfour at the rate of three and a half miles an hour, arriving at eight o'clock in the morning. Those mine coolies were splendid fellows, full of courage and strong of purpose. We were passed on the way by Mr. Chamney alone in the Cape cart, and there was no sign of the police. At Balfour we received the hearty greetings of Mr. Cachalia and Mr. Bhyat, to whom, as arranged, I handed over charge and proceeded to enjoy a much needed bath. Before I had completed my toilet I was informed that Mr. Chamney wished to see me immediately. I at once assumed that he had a warrant for my arrest and sent telegrams of warning to my wife and friends in Durban. I was surprised, however, to find, although I offered myself for arrest, that Mr. Chamney had had no such instructions, but that he had orders to arrest the marchers and would be grateful for my co-operation in enabling him to do his duty. I told him that I would cheerfully do this, provided that I had the assurance from him that the arrested men, who were to be taken back to Natal, were to be kept in custody and to be dealt with by Law, as it was their desire to suffer imprisonment for the cause that they held dear, and also because I feared that, if they were taken back across the Natal border and there released without further

proceedings, they would at once endeavour to recross the border into the Transvaal, where, according to the threats I had heard expressed when I was at Volksrust by the white townsfolk, there was a grave risk of bloodshed if the local farmers took the law into their own hands. Mr. Chamney gave me this assurance and, after foodstuffs had been distributed to the marchers and they had had their meal, it was arranged that they should be gathered together and they should then be summoned to produce their authority to enter and remain in the Transvaal, and upon their failing to produce it they would be arrested as prohibited immigrants and, upon arrest, would be removed to the trains that were already awaiting them. The marchers, however, had got it firmly fixed into their heads that they were going to Johannesburg and from there to Tolstoy Farm, and they were unwilling to be diverted from that intention.

Fearing some such misunderstanding, and having learnt that Mr. Gandhi was shortly passing through Balfour by train under arrest on his way from the Standerton Court where he had been convicted and sentenced, and was being taken to Natal where another charge awaited him, I suggested to Mr. Chamney that it would be very useful if, as I was hardly known personally to any of the marchers I was able to assure them that I had Mr. Gandhi's express authority for urging them to submit peacefully to arrest and return to Natal, there to await their trial. I had a brief conversation with Mr. Gandhi, who was in the train in charge of a policeman, obtained the authority that I had sought and then returned to the awaiting army. Immediately upon the proclamation by Mr. Chamney of their being prohibited immigrants and the announcement of their arrest as such, a few of the more headstrong shouted to the rest that they should start off at once for Johannesburg. Mr. Cachalia and I saw at once how dangerous it would be if once these two thousand people started on their way. The thirty policemen present were unarmed and would have been powerless to cope with such numbers, whilst the marchers, having once got out of hand, would get scattered over the country with grievous danger to their safety and even to their lives. We rushed at the head of the column and, fortunately, I was able to use as my interpreter a man who had been one of the leaders among the strikers that I had addressed at Newcastle some days before. He added his persuasions to ours and the magic of Mr. Gandhi's name working wonders, the little army eventually calmed down sufficiently to listen to reason. With a wisdom born of experience the local Chief Constable, who was present in charge of the police operations, suggested that I should pass through the crowd and

persuade them, as I did so, to follow me to the trains which ultimately they were induced to enter with great good humour.

Mr. Chamney took the opportunity of thanking me personally for the assistance that I had rendered to him, and which he volunteered to communicate to the Government. I told him that I was not very much interested in this, but thought that it might be advisable, in the interests of the strikers themselves, if I were to accompany them across the Natal border. At the Transvaal border town of Volksrust I received the news that my colleague, Mr. Kallenbach, had already been arrested, but as he had been engaged in organising the concentration camp for the strikers and their families at an earlier stage, this did not altogether surprise me. We reached Charlestown just before midnight, and there I found an armed guard on the platform to prevent any of the strikers from leaving the trains. I also found my friend, Mr. Jooste, the Magistrate. I learnt then that there was a warrant issued for my own arrest and I was urgently implored by a friend not to wait for its being served upon me but to proceed upon my journey. I replied that since I knew of its issue, I must take my chances. If it were not served upon me before the arrival of the mail train by which I had originally intended to travel I should consider myself free to fulfil my programme as already laid down. A few minutes after the warrant of arrest was served upon me by my friend the Chief Constable, with many apologies, and I was escorted in custody back across the border to Volksrust, the merry party consisting, among others, of the Magistrate, the Public Prosecutor and the Chief Constable. Upon arrival at the station, we bade each other a cheery good-night, and I slept that night, much more comfortably upon the bare floor of the police station, and was conducted the following morning to the local gaol there to await my trial.

The rest is history. As is known, the brave Passive Resisters went back to their mines, which were converted for the purpose of their imprisonment into gaols, by proclamation, whilst I spent a quiet five weeks enjoying His Majesty's hospitality on a somewhat meagre diet and although we were all released before the Congress met at Karachi, it was too late for me to keep my appointment with Mr. Gokhale in India.

III. Memories written in 1948¹³

I was a young journalist in Johannesburg when I first met Gandhi in 1904. He was then living the quiet life of a middle-class professional man. He was a vegetarian, a student of nature cure, and a lecturer as well, of course, as a legal practitioner and his compatriots' political adviser. I soon learnt that his non-violence was derived from ancient Hindu teachings and practice. Tolstoy, whose writings on the subject had greatly attracted him, had merely emphasised an inherent trend in his character. For the next ten years our relations were most intimate. Shortly after our meeting he was much worried by the finances of his weekly paper, *Indian Opinion*, and he went to Durban where it was printed and published, to see what could be done about it. I gave him to read on his journey Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. In his *Autobiography* he says that he was so fascinated by the book that he decided to take immediate steps to live as a peasant and handicrafts man. He did, in fact, buy a small estate near Durban, to which he transferred the printing plant and where he organised a "simple-life" settlement of British and Indian friends, confident that, despite racial differences, they could collaborate. Later, he sent his family there, but he himself could only pay occasional visits, owing to growing political difficulties in the Transvaal.

I became the editor of the paper and was professionally articulated to him. His constant admonition was moderation and objectivity. Three years later he gave up his legal activities, partly to devote himself entirely to the service of his countrymen, then in the throes of the seven years' passive resistance struggle, and partly because of his conviction that as a devotee of non-violence he should no longer earn a livelihood from a profession in which the decrees of the courts might ultimately have to be enforced by police action. His retirement was much regretted by all who knew him and had admired his high integrity.

The great struggle began in 1907, when the Botha-Smuts Government secured the enactment by the new Transvaal Legislature of the very measure which, under the Crown Colony administration, had been rejected only shortly before by the British Colonial Secretary. I do not think that either then, or later, when the Union Government continued to enforce anti-Asiatic laws, Gandhi fully understood that the essence of responsible Government was the constitutional freedom to act wrongly as well as

¹³ "Memories of Gandhi" by H.S.L. Polak in *Contemporary Review*, London, March 1948

rightly. It was not until much later that he realised that the grant of “the key of the door” had its dangers as well as its useful possibilities.

His campaign of “passive resistance”, apart from his natural attraction to non-violence, was much encouraged by two events. One was the arrival, at a critical moment, of a pamphlet entitled *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, by the American pacifist Thoreau. His argument that a man must obey his own conscience even against the will of his fellow citizens, and be ready to undergo imprisonment in consequence (for, after all, it was only his body and not his spirit which was in custody), appealed strongly to Gandhi. He pressed me to publish it as a supplement to *Indian Opinion*. The other event was his observation, during a brief visit to England, in 1909, of the methods used by the British suffragettes, involving imprisonment, in furtherance of their cause. His keen sense of humour was often displayed, but never more appropriately than when he told my wife that he had learnt more of “passive resistance” from Mrs. Gandhi, when she disagreed with him, than from any other source.

It was in South Africa, too, that he learnt what it was to be an “untouchable”, both racially (as I knew from direct experience as a member of his household), and from the practice of elementary scavenging which he undertook at his “simple life” colonies at Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm. Hence his powerful advocacy, upon his return to India, of the removal of “untouchability,” which he condemned as a disgrace to Hinduism. Ever since his arrival in Natal he had seen the necessity of Hindu-Muslim unity, and among his closest colleagues, during the South African period, were Muslims as well as Hindus. Indeed, he always held office under a Muslim president. His earliest fasts, for self purification and as contrition for wrong-doing, were undertaken in the Union. I had many opportunities, during those formative years, of discussing with him these fundamental ideas as well as of appreciating the sufferings of his people. I realised even then that his advice was always welcomed by them, because they were assured of his desire for service and his capacity for personal sacrifice.

It was at his request that I first went to India in 1909 to explain to the leaders and the Government the South African Indian disabilities. Before I left he urged me to do my best to persuade them to terminate the evil indenture system. As a result of these efforts, led by G. K. Gokhale, this was done, as regards Natal, in 1911. It was not until January 1st, 1920, that, after an agitation in India under Gandhi’s leadership which

began in 1916, the system was ended throughout the Empire. During the last phase of the great struggle,¹⁴ when he was arrested, I shared his imprisonment, for he left to me the leadership of the ex-indentured Indians whom he had persuaded to cross the Transvaal border and court imprisonment, in order to secure the repeal of the tax to which they were annually liable as the price of the freedom. Its abolition had been promised by the spokesman of the Union Government to Gokhale, when on a visit to South Africa in 1912 - a promise which had been violated.

Gandhi's own part in the long campaign had been admired even by those opposed to his views. It had brought him into close contact with General Smuts, who had greatly appreciated his suspending activities at the time of the general strike in 1913. From the time of his first imprisonment, in 1907, when the General had sent him some books to read, until his departure from South Africa, in 1914, after the signing of the historic Gandhi-Smuts Agreement which had brought the campaign to an end, the personal relations of the two men, so different in their outlook and methods, remained friendly. It was, therefore, not without meaning that, when he left the Union, his parting gift to his old opponent was a pair of hand-made sandals, or that, after Gandhi's tragic death, the great South African described him as "a prince among men."

Of the deepest religious convictions, Gandhi held his prayer meetings even in those days with the singing of Hindu, Muslim and Christian hymns and devotional readings from the world's Scriptures. I often questioned him, having regard to his insistence upon non-violence at all times whatever the provocation, about Lord Krishna's adjuration, in the *Bhagavad Gita* (his own favourite Scripture), to his soldier-pupil, Prince Arjuna, to fight. Gandhi's reply was that he regarded the story as a poetic description of the eternal conflict within man between good and evil. I was never quite convinced by this explanation. Indeed having organised an Indian Ambulance Corps (which he led as sergeant-major) in the Boer War, and a stretcher-bearer unit in the Zulu Rebellion of 1906, because he insisted with his countrymen that claims to the rights of citizenship were insufficient without acceptance of the corresponding responsibilities, he not only did so again, with his compatriots in England, at the outbreak of the first Great War, but, on his return to India, he even took part in a recruiting campaign for fighting soldiers among his followers, on the ground that many of them were refraining from joining up not from an honest belief in non-violence but from cowardice, and he argued

¹⁴ In November 1913

that death whilst fighting with courage was far better than refraining from its risks through fear.

He was never merely quiescent or negative, but always dynamic and energetic. His non-violence he translated as utter belief in the *power* of the spirit and in Truth-*force*, or *Satyagraha*, as he called it. Nor was his simplicity of life due so much to an aesthetic preference as to a mystical strain combined with an urge to relate himself intimately to the sorrows, the needs and the way of life of the humblest peasant. A loyal friend and a loving brother, never once did I hear from him a personal attack even upon his most aggressive opponents, to whom he would always attribute the better motive rather than the worse. On one occasion, shortly after his return to India, I told him that people were describing him as a saint lost in politics. "No," was his instant reply, "I am a politician trying my best to become a saint - and only too often failing in the attempt."

My last important contact with him was in 1937, when I asked him what was his personal definition of the slogan Hind Swaraj, which he had invented many years earlier, and to which different interpretations were being given by his Congress followers. He gave me authority to publish a letter in which he defined the phrase as meaning Dominion Status under the Statute of Westminster, which gave the right - whether exercised or not - of separation from the Commonwealth. He regarded that as equivalent to "complete independence."

IV. Reminiscences contributed in 1949

Not long before I first met Gandhiji, in Johannesburg, in 1904, I had joined the editorial staff of the *Transvaal Critic*. Until then I had no knowledge of the existence in South Africa of an important Indian community. I had come to learn of it from reading, among the exchange papers that came to me, *Indian Opinion* (then published in English, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil) which I later came to know, Gandhiji had financed and which was largely under his control, though he never edited it. From it I gathered some valuable information concerning Indian culture, history, and political affairs. Moreover, I discovered mainly from this interesting source that there was a local Indian problem, and that the Indian community was complaining loudly of the many disabilities imposed upon it. Its leader and spokesman was Gandhiji, who had just come prominently before the Johannesburg public once more because of his outspoken criticism, in a newspaper controversy with the Medical Officer of Health, of the Johannesburg Municipality for its serious neglect of the Indian Location of the city, where the Indians were segregated, resulting in a bad outbreak of plague. This he had ascribed to the denial to his countrymen of the municipal vote, despite their payment of rates and taxes in common with the white population. I thought that he had the better of the argument, and as a faithful journalist, I wanted to see him and to find out more of the Indian community and its needs.

My desire was increased when he was pointed out to me one day by a friend as we entered a vegetarian restaurant shortly after my conversion to a non-flesh diet by the great Russian, Tolstoy. He was a pleasant-looking man, sitting alone. Apart from his black lawyer's turban and his rather *dark complexion*, *there was nothing specially to mark him out. I could not guess that I was then gazing at the man who was to become the best-known Oriental of his time.*

A few days later, I mentioned my desire to meet this interesting personality to the proprietress of another vegetarian restaurant which I frequented. It was my lucky day. She responded immediately. "That's easy," she said; "come to my 'at home' tomorrow night. He always comes, and I will introduce you to him." So we met, and the meeting changed the current of both our lives. I did not then know, as I came to know later when I had become closely associated with him, that, being himself an ardent

vegetarian, Gandhiji had largely helped to finance these two restaurant-keepers, and when subsequently they failed in business, he lost heavily thereby.

Strangely enough, my real card of introduction to him was not that of a journalist, but because I was almost the only other person he had met who had read a book on the subject of nature-cure of disease by one Adolf Just, entitled *Return to Nature*. Upon learning this, he welcomed me with open arms, and we had a long talk on this and cognate subjects. He was interested in my vegetarianism and was delighted to learn that, like himself, I was an ardent admirer of Tolstoy. "I have a shelf full of his books at my office. Come and look at them," he said. I took the opportunity of his cordial invitation to ask for an early appointment, in order to learn from him more of the Indian question and of India, and to make a certain suggestion that I had been turning over in my mind for some time.

Gandhiji was then practising as an attorney (solicitor) of the Transvaal High Court. Though a barrister of the Inner Temple, he had chosen a branch of legal practice which brought him into direct contact with the lay client. I had already heard that he was held in high esteem by his fellow-lawyers and with respect by the Courts before whom he practised. Later I came to know that he would never sue a client for his unpaid fees or take a case involving appearing in Court without first warning the client that he reserved the right to return the "brief" if he should find that the client had been deceiving him. He held strongly that, as an officer of the Court, which had confidence in him, he could be no willing party to deception. I have, on such an occasion, seen him throw down his "brief" and walk out of Court, with due apology to the presiding officer. And, if a matter in dispute could be properly compromised, he would always urge this upon his client, rather than that heavy legal expenses should be unnecessarily incurred by taking the matter to Court. That, indeed, was how he settled the dispute which first took him to South Africa. It will be recalled that, later, when he decided to withdraw from practice and become a "farmer", he did so partly because he wanted to devote himself entirely to his public activities, of which the "simple life" was one; and partly because he wished to be logically faithful to his belief in non-violence, by refusing any longer to earn his living from a profession in which resort was ultimately had, through the use of the police, to force for giving effect to the decrees of the Courts.

At the time of our first meeting, as his family was still in India, he was living in a

modest room behind his chambers in Rissik Street. A little later, and when he had settled down with the family as a small householder, he offered me its use, which helped to bring me into closer contact with him.

The day of our appointment arrived, and he received me in his office. As I sat down, I drew a mental picture of my host's surroundings, a picture which presently became so familiar to me that it remains unblurred to this day. Above his desk I noticed a large and beautiful picture of Jesus Christ. This at once indicated to me where some, at least, of his sympathies lay. Though I knew already that he was a Hindu, I at once realised that he was very tolerant in his religious approach. On the political side of his interests, another wall held large portraits of Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, and Gokhale - his political *guru*. If my memory does not deceive me, there was also a fine portrait of Tolstoy. In a small bookcase beside his chair were a number of volumes very familiar to me, but also some as yet unknown. There were the Bible, Arnold's *Song Celestial* (the *Bhagavadgita*), and an array of Tolstoy's works, many on non-violence. I also noticed a copy of *India: What Can It Teach Us?*, by Professor Max Muller, which I quickly borrowed.

Gandhiji welcomed me pleasantly and with what I presently came to recognise as traditional Indian courtesy. His manner at first was quiet and restrained. As he told me something of the background of the South African Indian question, however, he warmed up. His voice took on a more serious tone when he described some of the hardships and disabilities under which his countrymen lived in this land of their exile. He told me how by their labour, originating in the evil indentured labour emigration system, and by their varied enterprise during nearly half a century, they had helped actively in the country's development and had saved Natal from economic ruin. I may here mention that he felt the tragedy of indentured labour so strongly that when, five years later, he asked the Transvaal Indian community to send me to India to make representations to the Indian Government and people on their behalf, he urged me to do everything possible to get the system brought to an end, at least as regards South Africa. I took his advice very deeply to heart, with the result that, because of Mr. Gokhale's activity on the subject upon the information that I had given to him, Lord Minto's Government did refuse to permit further indentured emigration to Natal in 1910. And I was one of the small band of workers under Gandhiji's leadership, of whom *Dinabandhu* Andrews was another, who helped Lord Hardinge's Government to end the system altogether ten years later.

Gandhiji, in those early days, had a curious hesitation in rapid speech, which took the form of a slightly sibilant in drawing of the breath, as he sought for the right expression. Later, when I had come to know him well enough to do so, I drew his attention to this, and I suggested that it would be useful to correct it in public speech so as not to distract attention from his argument. He promptly took the matter in hand, and the peculiarity soon disappeared.

Throughout our conversation, I never heard him utter one angry word or make an attack upon any individual, though several anti-Indian personalities were mentioned between us. I soon learnt that he had no animus against individuals and that, though he could be indignant at injurious action or policy, he was always objective and impersonal in his exposition of its background. To him the Indian question was a human problem, like so many others, and I heard no hint in his tone or language, either then or later, of any bitterness at the many affronts that had been put upon himself because of his race and colour. His philosophic self-control aroused great admiration and respect among the few Europeans who knew him well as a man. It was never difficult to get close to him, for he was of a simple, friendly, and informal nature. But his mind worked with a political astuteness and a metaphysical subtlety which often baffled even his closest associates.

I had already told him that, even before going to South Africa, I had been attracted to Indian culture and philosophy by some books that I had bought at a second-hand book-shop in London. I mentioned some of them that I had brought with me overseas - Dutt's summaries of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and Arnold's *Light of Asia* among them - and he had been delighted to hear this. He now showed me many more works along the same lines of thought.

I informed him that I had lately become deeply interested in Indian political problems, both in the Motherland and in South Africa, as I had strongly differed from my own paper's policy on the Indian question, and that I had taken up the matter with my editor who, after listening to my objections, had generously informed me that I need not write in support of the paper's policy on racial and colour questions. Gandhiji beamed as I told him this, and congratulated me warmly upon my independent stand. I also told him that I had agreed with his side of the published correspondence with the

Medical Officer of Health on the causes of the spread of the plague outbreak. He then told me many details which had not appeared in the press; but never a word did he utter of the great risks which he had personally taken in nursing plague-patients - of which I learnt indirectly only later - though he had much to say of the self-sacrificing service of others of his countrymen.

Having by now reached the stage of mutual understanding, I felt the time had come to offer him my services as a writer for *Indian Opinion*, though at the time I had no intention of giving up my regular job on the *Critic*. He said that, if I were willing to do so without remuneration, which his paper could not afford, my contributions would be very welcome. As no thought of payment had entered my mind, I told him that I should be proud to do something to help to make the South African Indian question better understood among my own countrymen, both there and in England, with which I had professional contacts, as well as through the recognised organ of the Indian community. So began an editorial association with the paper which lasted till I left South Africa twelve years later.

I recall one interesting early experience of journalistic collaboration with Gandhiji, which has its amusing side. About this time, Paul Kruger, the ex-President of the South African Republic, had died in exile in Europe. He had been Hitler's prototype in describing black men as no better than intelligent apes, who should have no equality with the whites. Now his mortal remains had been brought back to South Africa, to be buried at Pretoria. To me was assigned the task of reporting the funeral proceedings for *Indian Opinion*. Having noted in the paper many printer's errors, I made an urgent request to Gandhiji that he would personally revise the "proof" of my article before publication, which he promised to do. In those days I was rather proud of my "style". My description of the ceremony opened thus: "He is dead and is buried." I thought that this looked impressive. Imagine, then, my horror when, on receipt of the issue containing the article, this is what I read: "He is dead and is burned." I wrote to him at once to complain that he had not carried out his promise. I pointed out further that, if any orthodox Boer were to read that his dead hero had been consigned to perdition, it would arouse strong indignation and resentment, which would do the Indian community no good. I do not suppose that any Boer did read the article; but I received from Gandhiji a prompt and very humble apology. He explained that he had in fact faithfully carried out his promise, that he had read every line and word of the "proof", and that,

when he came to the word "burned", it had seemed quite natural to him, a Hindu, whose dead were habitually cremated!

As in his professional work, which I shortly came to know intimately as his articulated clerk, so in all that applied to public affairs Gandhiji always maintained a high standard of responsibility. He was always exact in his facts, and he would never magnify his case for the sake of argument. He had noted a too emphatic tone in some of my editorials. I had commented vigorously and somewhat acidly upon certain happenings specially relating to the Indian community or involving racial relations. He suggested to me, on one such occasion when he thought that I had been unnecessarily aggressive and flamboyant, that it would be much better for me, as a matter of professional self-discipline, and would have more desirable results for the cause that we were both seeking to serve, if I were to model my style rather upon the moderation and objectiveness of the London Times than upon the more picturesque if less accurate ways of the "cheaper" press. I tried thereafter to follow his excellent advice.

In those days, too, he had not gained that remarkable command of vivid, terse English which he showed in later years. Often he wrote hurriedly, in the midst of interruptions, and then his articles, for which I had asked him occasionally on some matter of special complexity or involving some particular legal technicality requiring careful analysis, came to me in somewhat unliterary language. I remember telling him once, with mock editorial gravity, that I could not send his "copy" to the printer unless he rewrote it, which he did with due humility - and with an amused twinkle in his eye. He had a great sense of humour!

I always found Gandhiji insistent that one should act according to his conviction, whether spiritual or political. "Keep your standards right," he wrote me during my first visit to India, in 1909-10, on behalf of the Indian community. "Everything else will follow, sooner or later." An illustration of his ready regard for another's independence of judgement occurred shortly after I had joined his office, at his own early request. There had appeared in a well-known English magazine an article by a South African journalist in which, unintentionally as I afterwards learnt, he had made several serious misstatements regarding the Indian situation in the Transvaal. I felt that unless these were at once and authoritatively corrected, they would give rise to much misunderstanding in England, which was then still responsible, under the Crown Colony

administration, for Transvaal affairs, and the Indian cause would thereby greatly suffer. I urged this vigorously upon Gandhiji, but he seemed unimpressed by my argument. Deeply disappointed, I spent the rest of the day in stony silence, which he noted quietly. Then he sent for me and asked me what was the matter. I told him somewhat curtly, and added that, of course, this was primarily his cause and he must be the judge of what should be done. He gently suggested that, if I felt so strongly about the matter, I should myself send an article in reply. I did so, and to my great satisfaction it was published in London immediately and was later reproduced in the Indian press. It proved to be my first direct introduction to the Indian public, and shortly afterwards I received an urgent invitation to contribute a further article on the subject to a well-known Indian magazine.

It was about this time that Gandhiji amazed me by informing me one day that he had come to the conclusion that *Indian Opinion* should no longer depend upon advertisements for its support. It seemed to me the death-knell of the paper, and I asked him whether that meant that he intended to close it down. "By no means," was his reply. "Let us try to get a substantial increase in the number of subscribers, to make up for what we shall lose by dropping the advertisements." "But", I said, "how are we to do this?" "Well", he replied, "you can yourself travel around the country and get to know the Indian people better. You can bring the paper to the notice of many who are not already subscribers, and if you can convince them that they ought to be, they will certainly persuade others to subscribe. Explain that this is a non-profit venture for the community's service, and that all the workers responsible for it are performing a labour of love. In this way, too, you will yourself become better known and better able to understand the people's problems and living conditions." This was, indeed, the fact. I set out on a most interesting series of journeys, in which I made many friends; which brought me into direct contact with individual Indians whose hospitality I shared, thus enabling me the better to understand the Indian way of life (Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, and Christian); and which gained for the paper a considerable number of new and enthusiastic subscribers at what proved a critical period of the community's history.

Not long before this, a deep and fundamental change in Gandhiji's own mentality had occurred. It had been developing quietly for some time, but it had not yet crystallised. This seemed to occur by some mysterious chance and in a moment of time. But there was more than mere chance to it. Gandhiji refers to it in his own writings of the South

African days. The financial position of the paper, under its then ownership, was causing him much concern. He had contributed generously to its establishment and maintenance. But it was not so much the fear of heavy pecuniary loss that troubled him as the prospect of the disappearance of the community's organ of expression, with the consequent loss of public service which this would entail. At last the crisis came, involving a hurried journey to Durban. As a result, and in order to save the concern, he decided to take over the complete financial responsibility and general control, thus, with wise foresight, preventing a serious setback for the Indian community.

On the night of his departure for Durban, I saw him off at the Johannesburg station. He was seated in the "reserved" compartment in which coloured persons were required to travel. The "coolie lawyer" (by which foolish epithet he was commonly known) was a well-known passenger, as he went about the country on professional or public business, and he generally had the compartment (a first-class one, in those days) to himself. Full of my social and economic enthusiasms, in which he had been much interested but with which he had not always agreed, I handed him a book that I had just finished, and which I felt sure he would much enjoy. Little did I realise how far-reaching would be the consequences! The book was John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. Gandhiji always regarded the perusal of this book as one of the great turning points of his life. He describes how he was so fascinated by the book that he could not put it down all night until he had finished it, and he declares that, upon his arrival at Durban, it had changed his outlook for ever. He determined immediately to adopt and to advocate the "simple life", with all its attendant consequences.

He bought a small estate of some 100 acres about twelve miles north of Durban, to which he transferred the printing press. It was there that the historic Phoenix settlement (significant name!) was established, in the midst of sugarcane and timber plantations. The colony consisted of Indians and Englishmen, able to rise above racial differences, and willing to live the simplest life, as advocated by Tolstoy and Ruskin, away from urban surroundings and industrial influences, and receiving only a trifling monthly stipend for their barest needs. They were to help to build their own and each other's tiny cottages and to cultivate with their own hands the two-acre plots allotted to each settler and from which they hoped to grow the crops suited for a vegetarian dietary. In addition, they were to undertake, without pecuniary reward, the production of the weekly newspaper.

It was here that Gandhiji later brought his family to live, after giving up his small middle-class home in Johannesburg. Here, too, began those inter-religious exercises which later became so famous. On Sunday the settlers would meet at the Gandhi house, when he was with them, and would sing with him not only Hindu and Muslim chants, but also Christian hymns, of which the favourite was "One Step Enough for Me". It was here, too, that Gandhiji came to appreciate the meaning and the peculiarities of machine-industry at first hand. The printing press, where the type-setting was done by hand, was run by a decrepit oil-engine which frequently broke down. When this occurred, the settlers had to resort to hand-power to turn out the paper in time for the usual despatch mails, often until the middle of the night. More than once, when this happened during one of his occasional visits - he could not permanently reside there, as his public and professional work in the Transvaal then occupied almost all his energies - I can recall Gandhiji literally putting his shoulder to the wheel as energetically as any of us.

In our "bachelor" days, before the return to South Africa of the Gandhi family, Gandhiji and I used to lunch regularly at one of the vegetarian restaurants. I had decided to undertake a three days' fast, partly as an exercise of will-power and partly as a health-cure. I used, however, to visit the restaurant as usual and sit with our small party, consisting of Gandhiji, a Jewish Theosophist, and a third, who prided himself upon being a rationalist and an agnostic and was a man of the highest integrity. They tried unsuccessfully to persuade me to give up my fast, lest it should do me harm. This was some years before Gandhiji himself took his own first long fast, for self-purification, in South Africa. Our meals on these occasions consisted mainly of fresh salads and other uncooked foods. The salads usually contained plenty of onions. Someone suggested that the four of us should form ourselves into the "Amalgamated Society of Onion-eaters", and Gandhiji fell in with the idea with much amusement. He was the President and I the Treasurer. There was never any "treasure" - unless, in the light of recent British war experience, onions can be so described! I may add here that, when my Theosophical friend tried to persuade me to join the Johannesburg Lodge of the Society, and I showed signs of hesitancy, Gandhiji added his own earnest persuasions. Though an occasional lecturer to the Lodge on Indian religion and philosophy, Gandhiji was not himself a member of the Society, though, as a Bar student in London, he had become an associate member of the Blavatsky Lodge, during H.P.B.'s lifetime and shortly after Dr.

Annie Besant had joined the Society. In his *Autobiography*, he recalls that it was two Theosophical brothers who first truly interested him in the *Bhagavadgita*. It was they who probably introduced him to Sir Edwin Arnold, who translated that immortal work in his verse rendering, *The Song Celestial*. Arnold subsequently became an officer of a branch of the London Vegetarian Society, of which Gandhiji was secretary. "Rooming" at the same boarding-house in London then was Dr. Josiah Oldfield, the veteran "fruitarian", who told me recently that Gandhiji helped to design the badge of the Vegetarian Society, and it was his own badge that Gandhiji gave me, when I joined his household in Johannesburg.

Gandhiji's prompt and self-sacrificing action in saving *Indian Opinion* from extinction was soon to be amply justified. Within eighteen months of the plague outbreak, which had resulted in the scattering of a large part of the Johannesburg Indian population throughout the Transvaal and had raised the suspicion in the country areas that widespread illicit Indian immigration had occurred, the aggravated political situation came to a head. The paper played a very great part in keeping the community together during the Passive Resistance Struggle, which was about to commence. The leading figures on either side, for nearly eight years, were Gandhiji and General (now Field Marshal) Jan Christiaan Smuts. And it was from the paper that the chief events of the long struggle, the sacrifice of its Indian participants, men and women alike, and the personality and philosophy of life of its indomitable leader became known to India and to the world at large. As Mr. Gokhale later declared, Gandhiji had shown that he had the supreme gift of making heroes out of common clay.

I well recall his impassioned appeal, at a public meeting of his countrymen, in 1906, in a Johannesburg theatre, which was burnt out the same night by an accidental fire (some may think that a good angel had decided that the building should not be put thereafter to a less honourable use!), in which he successfully urged them to take an oath to resist by all non-violent means the new anti-Asiatic law that had just been passed if all representations for its disallowance failed. I remember, too, the scene, some months later, when he was first charged with deliberate breach of the law, and he explained courteously to the Court, after pleading guilty to the charge, that he had felt it his duty to do so in the interests of his South African countrymen and for the honour of his Motherland.

I recall, again, how, after his conviction, and upon his return to Johannesburg some time later, upon being transferred to the local jail, several of us awaited his arrival at Park Station. Among the many watchers were a number of Madrasi hawkers. There descended briskly from the train, attended by a prison-warder in uniform, this small, slim, dark-complexioned man, with calm eyes and a serene countenance. He was clad in the garb of a Native convict - small military cap (the already forgotten original of the famous "Gandhi cap") which did not protect from the sun, loose coarse jacket, bearing a numbered ticket and marked with the broad-arrow, short trousers - one leg dark, the other light - similarly marked, thick grey woollen socks, and leather sandals. He was respectfully saluted by us all, as he turned quickly to the warder for instructions. He was carrying a white canvas bag, which held his clothing and other effects found upon him when he was received by the jail authorities, and also a small basket containing books. A brief consultation took place between the two. The warder appeared to realise the incongruity of the situation, for he bore himself towards the prisoner with every reasonable mark of respect. For this was evidently a person of some importance, to whom a certain degree of deference must be shown. The subject of conversation was whether the prisoner preferred to go by cab or to walk to the jail. If the former, he would have to pay for it. He, however, declined the easier way, and being a practised and easy walker he chose to march the three-quarters of a mile, in broad daylight in his convict suit. Resolutely shouldering his bag, he stepped out smartly, we shamefacedly following at a respectful distance. Later he disappeared behind the grim portals of the Johannesburg Jail, above which was carved in Dutch the motto: "Union Makes Strength." It was exactly Gandhiji's charge to his people at the time. It was his motto to the end.

I recall how, almost exactly forty years before that tragic end, he nearly fell to a murderous assault upon his life by some of his countrymen who had entirely misunderstood the spirit of compromise with which he entered into an arrangement with General Smuts to suspend the struggle and to undergo voluntary registration, upon the condition that the offending anti-Indian Act should be subsequently repealed. They awaited him as he left his office in order to be the first to offer voluntary registration, and when he refused to go back upon his undertaking, they struck him down. Being a few minutes late for my appointment with him, I just missed being personally involved in the attack, but I saw Gandhiji a little later at the home of the Rev. Joseph J. Doke (the writer of the first book dealing with his life and philosophy, entitled *M.K. Gandhi:*

An Indian Patriot in South Africa) and arranged for the visit to him of the Registrar of Asiatics to take his application for registration, with finger-prints, before he would allow himself to be medically attended to. It may be added that he refused to give evidence against the culprits when, against his will, they were subsequently prosecuted by the Crown authorities. The evidence that convicted them was given by European eye-witnesses who had come to his rescue.

I may here add that among the books that Gandhiji had with him in jail had been some sent to him by General Smuts himself, who bore no personal animus in causing to be locked up, for the first time, his Indian opponent. On Gandhiji's retirement from South Africa six years later, he reciprocated General Smuts's courtesy by sending him, in token of the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement, through Miss Sonia Schlesin (Gandhiji's enthusiastic secretary) and myself, a pair of hand-made sandals from Tolstoy Farm, which Mr. Hermann Kallenbach, a devoted believer in his philosophy of the "simple life", had placed at the disposal of the passive resisters. Not long before the end of the struggle, both Kallenbach and I had been fellow-prisoners with Gandhiji. I have reason to believe that General Smuts, who himself lived the "simple life" in his own way on his own farm at Irene, near Pretoria, made an excellent use of the sandals, which 25 years later, he returned to Gandhiji in proof thereof.

I have already mentioned my living with Gandhiji as a member of the family, before he began his experiments in asceticism. Our relations were those of Bhai and Chhotabhai. At his persuasion, my wife later joined me there, and Gandhiji was the chief witness at our marriage. He had to assure the officiating magistrate that we were both Europeans (I had been so often taken for an Indian because of my close association with him and his community), our marriage in the Transvaal being otherwise unlawful.

I used to study Gujarati with him at this time, and I have recently come across my Gujarati notebook that I then used. After dinner each night we would read verses from the Song Celestial, which Gandhiji stated that he had always greatly admired and which not long since he admitted that he regarded as the first among the many English renderings of the Bhagavadgita. Remembering that, as an act of duty, he had donned the uniform of a British sergeant-major in the Boer War and, again, at the time of the Zulu Rebellion, I was somewhat surprised at his insistence that the *Gita* story must be taken metaphorically and not literally. I was the more astonished when I read

Shrikrishna's constant admonition to Prince Arjuna that he should do his duty as a *Kshatriya* and that a man should perform his own duty only, even though with fault, rather than another's duty, though done perfectly, for the latter brought with it spiritual danger. But in these matters, partly because of my own temperamental unwillingness to resort to physical force, and partly because of his superior authority where, as a Hindu, he was the *guru*, and I, an Englishman and a non-Hindu, was the *chela*, I could not question beyond a certain point.

And yet it is known that, during the First World War, he took an active part in recruiting fighting soldiers for the Indian Army. Indeed, for the very reason that Shrikrishna had given, I was one of those of his friends who strongly dissuaded him from joining up as such, in order to set an example to others. It was about this time that I received from him a letter in which he wrote as follows:

"What do you say to my recruiting campaign? It is for me a religious activity undertaken for the sacred doctrine of ahimsa. I have made the discovery that India has lost the power to fight - not the inclination. She must regain the power and then, if she will, deliver to a groaning world the doctrine of ahimsa. She must give abundantly out of her strength, not out of her weakness. She may never do it. That to me would mean her effacement. She would lose her individuality and would be like the other nations - a worshipper of brute-force. This recruiting work is perhaps the hardest task yet undertaken by me. I may fail to gain recruits. I shall still have given the best political education to the people."

It is difficult to believe, looking back at the events of recent years, that even Gandhiji would have included indiscriminately all the non-Indian nations engaged in the late conflict as "worshippers of brute-force"!

About 1913 he received an inquiry from India whether he would allow himself to be nominated as President of the next session of the Congress. We discussed the matter, and I told him that I thought that it would be useless his doing so, as his views were, in my opinion, much ahead of Indian opinion at the time, and misunderstanding might result, especially as he could do no more than pay a very short visit to India, in view of the South African circumstances. After consideration, he decided to decline the invitation. Another occasion when he accepted my view was with regard to the

appointment by General Smuts of the Commission of Inquiry after Lord Hardinge's protest. At first he was inclined to tender evidence before the Commission, but I felt strongly that the Commission as appointed was one-sided, with two of the three members well-known anti-Indians, and there being no one to represent the Indian community. After discussion, we agreed that the Indian community should refuse to appear before the Commission unless at least one independent member, besides the chairman, was appointed. In the end and to break the stalemate, Lord Hardinge sent out Sir Benjamin Robertson who made the necessary representations to the Commission.

And, finally (for all good things come to an end at last), let me close these reminiscences of those days by recalling another historic event in both our lives. It had been agreed and clearly understood between us that, when at length the Passive Resistance Struggle should end, I should return to my own homeland, where our children could be brought up in an atmosphere free from racial and colour prejudice, in the South African sense of the term. After long negotiations, the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement of 1914 was at length signed. But it still had to be implemented. Imagine, then, my feelings when Gandhiji came to me one day with the urgent plea that I should stay in South Africa to serve the Indian community as its adviser in his place - as I had done so often during his periods of imprisonment or absences in England - since he felt the call to return to India, from which he had been absent for so long (he had not been there for twelve years), there to undertake such public work as would serve his countrymen in some of the many ways that we had discussed from time to time. One of us, he insisted, must stay to see the Agreement through, for we had already had two experiences of breach of faith in carrying out agreements with the Government. What could I do about it? We referred the matter to my wife, who told him that, in all the circumstances, though it was a terrible disappointment, she felt that I must free him for his great mission. Who can say what might have been the course of political events in India, had the decision been otherwise and he had been obliged to remain in South Africa?

London,
March 10, 1948

MILLIE GRAHAM POLAK

I. Reminiscences contributed in 1949¹⁵

Many of us who knew Gandhiji in the days of long ago were aware that he had long had a deep interest in trying to heal a sick body - not only his own, though with that he was always experimenting, but also that of the many who were near or came to him for help. At one time he might have interested himself in orthodox medical science, though I cannot say that he had ever made any real study of it. But orthodoxy was not for him, for, like all other things in his life, he sought to get back to what was to him the fountain-head of life and health. So he sought to treat an ailment by what was known as nature-cure methods.

After reading Just's *Return to Nature*, in which the author had devised a special simple method of nature-cure, Gandhiji was convinced that here were to be found healing and absence of ills. It was about this time that an unhappy experience made a profound impression upon him, and deepened his suspicion of the orthodox medical schools of thought and practice.

An Indian trader had a dearly loved son, who had become seriously ill. Only an immediate operation, said the doctor in charge of the case, could cure the boy. The operation was not considered to be a serious one, but the father was filled with fear and anxiety. He consented at last to the operation, but begged Gandhiji to be with him during the ordeal, and to help the family at the time of trial. Gandhiji consented to do so. The operation was performed at the boy's home one Sunday morning. When, later that day, Gandhiji returned to us - my husband and I were then living with the Gandhi family - it was evident that he was still labouring under a severe emotional strain. We learned, upon inquiry, that the boy had died under the operation. Gandhiji seemed to feel that the boy need never have undergone it - and, in any case, that it had been incompetently performed - and that he might have recovered under other treatment. He worried about this considerably, and I think that he felt that his agreeing to be present on the occasion was tantamount to advising, and, therefore, being partially

¹⁵ Millie Graham Polak, "In the South African Days" in Shukla, Chandrashanker (ed.), *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life, by Fifty-four Contributors*. Bombay: Vora & Co., 1949.

responsible for, the operation and the unhappiness of the bereaved family.

This experience certainly increased his bias towards "unorthodox" methods of healing, and engendered a strong dislike of the surgeon's knife. Several of us who were closely associated with him at the time underwent experiments with earth-poultices, cabinet steam-baths to be followed by a plunge into a tub of cold water, colonic irrigation, acid fruit cures, fasts, many different types of diet, and several other trials. Always these experiments were first carried out on himself and the members of his own family. Many cases of illness or discomfort were quite successfully treated in this manner - a poisoned finger or a severely suppurating wound having made a remarkably quick recovery when treated with a clean, fresh earth-poultice. This same type of poultice, however, when applied to the stomach of my six-weeks old baby (who, like most infants, had a slight digestive trouble) proved not only a failure, but a real danger to the poor child. The shock of the cold compress produced a rigor, and after my ministrations had restored him to normal, I refused to have the method tested on him again.

The cure that seemed almost miraculous to those of us who watched it was that for which he was responsible in respect of Mrs. Gandhi. She was at the Phoenix Settlement, in Natal, and Gandhiji was at Johannesburg, in the Transvaal. After having been ailing for some time, she became very ill, and the doctor, who lived twelve miles away, had to be sent for late one night. Upon examination, he found her suffering from a bad attack of pernicious anaemia. He considered her condition so serious that he asked for her husband to be sent for at once. Upon Gandhiji's arrival, and after being closeted with *Ba* for some time, he told us that she had placed herself entirely in his hands for treatment, and that he was going to look after her himself. The doctor, who had been urging orthodox dietary treatment, which involved breach of the customary vegetarianism, was dispensed with, much to his indignation, and Gandhiji set to work and treat his wife. She was given frequent small quantities of acid fruit and practically no other food at first, and, contrary to the expectations of those of us who feared the consequences of such drastic treatment of a weak and desperately sick woman, the trouble was arrested. After a week or two, simple, non-stimulating food was taken, and *Ba* commenced to improve. In due course, a complete cure was effected.

In those days, Gandhiji accepted cow's milk as a valuable food, though already he

was saying that it was not a proper food for adults. Presently, he insisted that it stimulated the lower passions of man's nature. This line of argument aroused strong opposition in me. "If that be so," I said, "then young children, who are principally fed on milk, would be nothing but horrible little brutes, and you do not certainly believe that to be the case." However, he smiled tolerantly. Neither of us believed that the other was right. Shortly afterwards he took a vow never to drink again the milk of the cow and the buffalo.

Since those days, doctors and surgeons played a bigger part in Gandhiji's life. Even his fasts had to be carefully watched by his medical advisers, and probably only such medical care enabled him to retain for so long a hold on his physical body. And, too, he later learnt to distinguish between the moral consequences of taking cow's milk and goat's milk! I expect that he must often have thought back to the past and, in a way, felt that those days, full of hope and belief and strenuous endeavour, were rich in experiences and the knowledge that grew from them.

Our dietary experiments were many and various. For some time, upon his advice, Ba and I cooked without ordinary refined sugar. Cooked fruits, puddings or cakes were sweetened with raw cane syrup. When this phase passed, we had a saltless table. Salt, Gandhiji contended, other than that contained in natural foods, was bad not only for health but for the character. But years later, he conducted the great anti-salt tax campaign in India, and he and many others endured imprisonment therefor. Tea was not to be used, nor any other stimulant. Abstention from tea was, I think, a real deprivation for him, for, until my husband had denounced it to him as a stimulant or a narcotic, he had much enjoyed his afternoon cup in his office. When in London on one of his missions on behalf of his countrymen, his tea-parties were a delight to many. He would then be his most human self, teasing, laughing, and seemingly enjoying the friendly intercourse and the tea. An imitation coffee, made from roasted and ground cereals or peanuts, was the usual evening beverage. I personally struck against some of these austerities and refused to be bound or worried by them; whereat Gandhiji, with his usual affectionate smile, would cease to argue with me, though keeping strictly to his own regime, intent on working out his own dietary theories.

When Mr. G.K. Gokhale paid his historic visit to South Africa in 1912, to investigate the Indian grievances there, my husband and I were no longer sharing a home with the

Gandhi family, who were then living at Phoenix. A house had been placed at Mr. Gokhale's disposal by an Indian merchant. In all the arrangements for the distinguished visitor's comfort and convenience, Gandhiji entered minutely. When he discovered that Mr. Gokhale was suffering from diabetes, he and I used to char the bread and potatoes in hot ashes, so as to extract as much starch as possible. Mr. Gokhale never knew of these culinary efforts to preserve his health. Nothing was ever too small for Gandhiji, and the more menial the task, the greater dignity he imparted to it by his own great earnestness and simplicity.

In our talks in the South African days, I came to realise that Gandhiji believed very intensely that man's essential nature was divine, and that if it were to be allowed to develop naturally from birth, the divine in him would expand as a flower and his natural wisdom would grow and manifest direct from God. This being his profound belief, it is understandable that education, in its ordinary sense, namely, the imparting of information along scholastic lines, was of secondary importance to him. Many were the arguments that I had with him. Yet we did have a little school at the Phoenix Settlement for a short time, which the children of the settlers attended. The teaching was very rudimentary and amateurish, for the teachers were without much training or skill. Nevertheless, it was something in the right direction, and Gandhiji was interested in the work.

A question that troubled him somewhat during this period was how to convey the right kind of sex-knowledge to the children under his influence as they were reaching puberty. He realised that children growing up in a free life close to nature might misunderstand the right use of the procreative faculties and that experimenting and abuses might easily take place. At length he procured what at that time were regarded as standard works on what a boy and a girl should know and how they should be informed. The then teacher at the school was an unmarried woman, so Gandhiji did not feel that he could ask her advice on the books without embarrassing her. Being the only other Englishwoman there, and a married woman, he asked me to help him. Soon after, owing to his rapid immersion in the political struggle, the little school was closed, and nothing further was done in the matter.

London
March 12, 1948

II. Reminiscences published in 1964¹⁶

MY SOUTH AFRICAN DAYS WITH GANDHIJI

By

MILLIE GRAHAM POLAK

[Mrs. Polak who gives in these pages her Reminiscences of Gandhiji was associated with *Mahatma* Gandhi in his South African activities along with her husband the late H. S. L. Polak. This article was sent to us before her death. These reminiscences are altogether personal and intimate and are now revealed for the first time. (Editor, *Indian Review*)]

On looking back over my South African days I think of the many things seemingly so cruel as acts of man, yet if looked at with deeper insight, carried a blessing.

The many times Gandhiji was arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment, how we deplored them at the time and suffered because of them. Later on I could see that which seemed so cruel was for him a release from the strain and turmoil of the circumstance of the day. During those troubled years the community rarely gave him an hour's respite nor quietude. One incident so often comes to my mind. It was a time of crisis in the early days of the struggle, a time of arrests and confusion, wives and children being left bewildered and feeling lost. The nerves of all were getting frayed. Day and night Gandhiji, with the nearest and most understanding of his followers, were wearied with striving with officials and the troubles of the Community.

My husband, Gandhiji, and I, with my baby, had a miserable little house in a fairly busy part of Johannesburg. We could not afford a better one. Money for my family life was very scarce and we had to be near the centre of the struggle. In his house there was no proper plumbing, and a make-shift bath-room had been fixed by previous tenants under the stairs; the waste water from the bath ran down the wall outside into a kind of gutter, which ran along a dark passage, and thus the walls were always damp. These conditions helped to produce big slimy slugs that got into the house.

¹⁶ Millie Graham Polak, "My South African Days with Gandhiji" in *Indian Review*, Madras, October 1964

Gandhiji came home after midnight weary and thirsty and before going to bed went to the kitchen to get some lemon water which was kept prepared for him. He trod on a fat slimy slugs that got into the house.

Gandhiji came home after midnight weary and thirsty and before going to bed went to the kitchen to get some lemon water which was kept prepared for him. He trod on a fat slimy slug, of course, in bare feet. This seemed just more than he could bear, and in a quiet but penetrative voice exclaimed, "Thank God I will be in jail tomorrow;" and he was. It was a rest and refuge, a time of comparative quietude, a blessing for him. Fortunately, before he was free again we had been able to secure a better house, the property of one of our good European friends who put the house at our disposal.

The friends and followers of Gandhiji were presented with problems, theoretically easy to deal with, but practically difficult. One such occasion - one of many - arose as follows. The Chinese community in the Transvaal, not a large one, that had been brought to South Africa largely to work in the mines, but one difficult to handle, also had a very few educated men with them who acted as their leader. They, like the Indian community, were having trouble with the Government. Though the two communities were not working officially together, their troubles, being much alike, brought them into close contact.

At a certain time, two or three of the violent ones in this community thought that their leader, Mr. C., was letting them down and betraying them to the Government; therefore he should die. He went into hiding in various places to avoid being murdered. Then one day, Gandhiji and my husband, having worried about Mr. C., thought it would be a good plan if he came to us for refuge and hiding. His enemies would not be likely to look for him there. That would give Mr. C. a little respite and the hot heads time to cool if they did not find him. So they gravely, but happily, proposed to me that they invite him to our house and that I should do the best I could to protect him.

"But," I said, in dismay, "I cannot agree to that. Here am I alone in a house with a little child, boycotted by the neighbours, and murderers come to search for someone presumably I would have in hiding. What do you suppose I could do or say

if men came to me and threateningly asked me, 'Where is C?' You know he could not escape through the back of the house, and no neighbour would help if trouble arose."

"You would be able to do something," my husband said.

"And if I were asked, 'Where is C.?' should I be truthful and say where he is, or should I lie, and say, not here, and endeavour to shut them out. If a fight ensued, more than one person would probably be killed, you know."

We argued the latter over in relation to truth and humanity, then came to the conclusion we should leave the whole matter to God.

Fortunately, our Chinese friend did not come. The heat of the moment calmed down and soon arrangements were made for the whole of the Chinese community to be returned to the homeland.

Another incident presenting an interesting problem and one that puzzled me considerably at the time because of Gandhiji's insistence of separating the sinner from the sin. The sin we must condemn, but the sinner needs our understanding and compassion.

I was asked by the wife of a prominent member of the Muslim community to visit her. She was European, a beautiful woman who kept a nice house. When, on the evening in question, I told my husband and Gandhiji that Mrs. M. had visited me, and asked me to go to her to tea, they exchanged glances, then Gandhiji said gravely, "I think you should know, Mrs. M. was divorced from her first husband because of her association with Mr. M. It may create a difficult situation if you go. However, you must use your own judgement."

He uttered no condemnation of her, but obviously could not accept her with approval, nor of my visiting her, and I wondered how he could separate the action from the actor, for the action was the outcome of the actor's character that belonged to her. I did not go then; it would have caused complications in the

community and elsewhere. I did, however, much later on visit her, my husband also.

This attitude of his was exemplified by another incident. We had been to a crowded meeting in which Gandhiji was the chief speaker. As he and I came out alone from a side door in a dark street, a man darted out from the shadows with a knife half hidden in his sleeve. Gandhiji stopped abruptly, faced the man and in a quiet, yet firm voice, remonstrated with him. A largely one-sided conversation took place which I could not follow, but soon the would-be attacker passed the knife he was carrying to Gandhiji and rather slouched off alone.

As soon as he had gone, "What happened," I asked. "What was that man going to do?"

"It is alright," he replied. "That man thought I was badly advising his people and betraying them, and so you saw what he intended to do."

"But he might have killed you," I exclaimed indignantly. "He is not safe; he ought to be put under restraint."

"But he didn't, you see. We need not disturb ourselves any longer."

"But he might try again if he does not like something you say or do."

"No, I think not. I think he understands better now. It was not me he wanted to kill, but the things he believed I was standing for. It is finished." And it was for that time, but his life was attempted again later on, not by the same man, and - then again, though badly injured, he refused to prosecute though strongly pressed to do.

During that period, coming home one afternoon after taking my baby for an outing, I found my little house filled with a number of people who had tramped into the town from outside districts, and not knowing where to go, had come to our place with their little children and bundles. I tried to deal with their situation, but without success, so when Gandhiji and my husband returned home to a meal, they

found me in the bedroom in distress, nothing readily to eat, and not even my baby's food ready, as the only stove I possessed was being used for making a hot curry. My Negro maid had run away, I learned afterwards frightened by the invasion. Gandhiji took things in hand, talked to the people and soon they gathered their possessions together and tramped off to various addresses they were advised about.

Soon after that Gandhiji took up his headquarters at Tolstoy Farm, a few miles out of Johannesburg, with a place in the town to work from, which situation continued until he left South Africa.

H.S.L. POLAK AND MRS. POLAK

Reminiscences published on the 60th birthday of Gandhiji¹⁷

[NOTE BY EDITOR OF INDIAN REVIEW: The 60th birthday of *Mahatma* Gandhi was celebrated all over the country with becoming enthusiasm on the 2nd October. Men of all parties irrespective of political predilections joined in the celebrations. The Rt. Hon. Sastri, whose friendship with and esteem for Mr. Gandhi, in spite of obvious differences in their outlook, is well known, presiding over the demonstration at Madras, paid a fitting tribute to the genius and versatility of the *Mahatma*. He rightly laid stress on the many striking features of his character, and added: "Wherever high character, noble ideals of conduct, utmost piety and resignation to nature are appreciated, Mr. Gandhi's name will be known and sincerely revered. The people of thought always recognise in the man, whom we honour to-day, as one of those rare souls who are born from time to time to redeem mankind from their sins and failures." In paying tributes to his greatness, said Mr. Sastri, the speakers had spoken according to their natures. "To each person", he continued, "some side of Gandhi's nature had appealed most." Thus in the two pen-pictures of the *Mahatma* that follow, we have two vivid studies of a great personality. Mr. and Mrs. Polak who have contributed these special articles at the request of the Editor have known Mr. Gandhi intimately for many years and had worked with him in South Africa. Much has been said and written of the *Mahatma* as saint and politician, his lofty idealism, his iron will, his contempt of consequences and his heroic virtues; but these intimate studies from two such friends reveal Mr. Gandhi in all the simplicity and beauty of a character at once affectionate and thoroughly human, and will doubtless be welcome to readers of the *Indian Review*.]

I. By H.S.L. Polak

There may be more than one opinion as to Gandhiji's profundity as a teacher, his insight as a leader, his wisdom as a guide. There can hardly be two opinions as to his merits and qualities as a man, and it is as a man that he would, I imagine, prefer to be judged. Indeed, it is to his human weaknesses and demerits that he always points when he explains to his audience how and why it is that he fails to reach the goal that he has set himself to, how and why he has failed to satisfy their hopes and his own aspirations. He is *Mahatma* because small, weak, humble as he is, it is instinctively recognised that here we have the type and example of the man striving with all his might to reach the heart of the Divinity within him. Again and again, he implores us and his Creator, to

¹⁷ "Gandhi, the Man" in *Indian Review*, Madras, October 1929

take him with all his limitations (which he eagerly exposes to our gaze), and yet to measure him by the heights that he would attain with every effort of his sleeping and waking hours. It is thus that we come to realise the majesty of manhood, and because he insists that he is a mere man striving to be perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect that we have agreed to call him a great soul. Can any higher tribute be paid by us to one in the flesh? He forces us to understand clearly, what we but dimly perceived before, that Man is a Spirit, and that, in addressing the best in us, it is Spirit calling to Spirit. I doubt if any can make a higher practical contribution to life than this.

It was my own high fortune and privilege to be closely associated with Gandhiji when the *Mahatmaship* was less insisted upon, and its glamour did not partly hide him from us, when he was allowed to be among us as a man among men; and then it was that we, who were close to him, could see him as he really is - tender, affectionate, humorous, generous, always eager to serve, never hasty to condemn. Did you feel like shirking? Who readier to do the work than Gandhi? Who made you more ashamed than he by his very unconsciousness of your slackness?

Who more dependable in an emergency? Who readier to overlook your faults - even to ignore them? Who more eager to attribute to you high motives of which you were all too ashamedly unaware? To live with Gandhi was an education in the whole art of manhood. Courage, with him, has stood for something more than a mere physical attribute, Truth has been an urgent and immediate reality, not a vague and misty dream-figure whose proper habitation lies at the bottom of a well. Another's need has been his occasion. He once said to me in mild rebuke: "Sunday is no day of rest for the sorrowful or those who suffer." And for him, Sunday was, accordingly, a day of harder work than any other.

Gandhi has proved beyond dispute the theory that the best men and the best women combine in themselves the best qualities of each other. No woman could excel him in patience or endurance, none could be more long-suffering. I leave to another pen the task of elaborating this point on the domestic side, and content myself with its application to his public life. Abuse has left him completely unmoved. The difficulty of the task has inhibited him not at all. The faithlessness of fellow-workers has merely stimulated him to greater endurance for them as well as for the others who have stood and waited upon events. Disappointment has but encouraged that invincible patience

with which he has taken up the task anew, sure of his goal, certain of the rightness of his cause, with the words "one step enough for me" ever upon his lips.

The true test of leadership is not when the cause is won and the flowing tide carries it to victory; but when the leader of a cause forlorn, facing treachery and disaster, nevertheless keeps his inner eye upon the distant vision, and conveys something of that vision and his own assurance of its realisation to his colleagues, associates, and followers. That is where Gandhi's true greatness as a man lies. To the young man, at the threshold of life, in the midst of struggle, all untried, Gandhi has ever been a source of inspiration and encouragement. However wearied by the incidents of the fray, however frequent the disappointments, however hurt by the failures, Gandhi never failed. He understood human weakness, human sorrow, human incapacity, human folly - and made yet one more sacrifice in order to retrieve their consequences. He has been the exemplar of high courage, of chivalry, of hope, of faith. His soul soars high above his human weakness. Strength has come to him and flowed from him because the human man has ever been in close contact with the things of the Spirit.

By perseverance in overcoming, man climbs from the shadows of the lowlands to the bright mountain-tops of the Spirit. For how many of us have Gandhi marked out the way and, alas! how many of us has not this great pioneer left far behind, conscious of our lost opportunities, staggering with fatigue at the pace that he has set, laying down our burdens for just a little rest, taking breath where he has gone serenely forward, doubtful of our capacity to endure, realising that our hero is already acclimatised to higher altitudes than any that we can hope in this life to reach, that there rings in his ears a harmony to which we cannot attune ourselves, that for him there burns a light that is still hidden from us by the intervening distance, that he already converses with those Higher Spirits with whom we cannot yet commune!

II. By Millie Graham Polak

Most women love men for such attributes as are usually considered masculine. Yet Mahatma Gandhi has been given the love of many women for his womanliness; for all those qualities that are associated with women - great faith, great fortitude, great devotion, great patience, great tenderness and great sympathy. Women could sense

that in him they found a fellow-traveller, one who had passed ahead along the road they, too, were travelling, and could give him an affection deep, pure and untouched by any play of sex emotion. Women of all kinds have turned to him in perplexity and trouble, and no problem of their lives but could be discussed with absolute frankness, if they desired to do so. They could be sure that some light would be thrown upon their difficulties and the path made to look not too arduous to travel. He seemed to understand how easy it might be for a woman to do what appeared to be evil for love's sake, to sympathise with the soul-surrender which prompted the action, and yet to condemn it unflinchingly and point out that the way of love's service could not be through ministering to anything but the highest. I have known many occasions when a woman has gone to him deeply troubled because she had to acquiesce in some seriously dishonourable action of her husband. *Mahatmaji* has sympathised with her difficulty, never suggested that she should betray her knowledge of her husband's action, but advised her to use all her love and woman's power to get the man to amend his ways. For himself, he chose the path of the ascetic, yet I have always known him to make allowances for those who could not tread the cold austere path of denial. If comforts and objects of beauty seemed essential to the woman who discussed such a question with him, he would, had it been in his power, have given them to her; but, at the same time, he would try and persuade her to seek beauty in the things of the spirit and not to identify herself with the things of the world. Perhaps, sometimes he did not quite realise that so many women, while having great possessions, can yet stand outside of them. So often the woman herself does not realise it until she is called upon to give them up. Then she knows they have very little real meaning to her, neither are they the things that matter most.

I often see in imagination *Mahatmaji*, as I frequently saw him in South Africa, walking up and down a room with a young child in his arms, soothing it in the almost unconscious way a woman does, and, at the same time, discussing with the utmost clearness pressing political questions, communal strife, or abstract problems in philosophy; and children instinctively knew this side of his character; they would nestle up to him, sure of the comfort they desired. In some ways, I have thought it was easier for him to deal with the needs of young children than those of adolescence, with its warring emotions, its struggle for liberty and self-expression, and its developing mind. During that period in the life of the developing individual, he did not so easily realise the strength of the storms that can sweep reason aside, and when, as it unfortunately

sometimes happened, he was deceived by the youth around him, it was because in his own great simplicity, he did not appreciate the amazing complexity of the character of youth. He saw so clearly the straight path that should be trod, that he seemed to find it somewhat difficult to deal with the dual nature that becomes apparent during those years when one passes from childhood into adulthood. When, however, the individual had taken upon himself his adult character, then again for *Mahatmaji*, contact and understanding were once more easy and could be complete.

Another of the many pictures of life in South Africa arises clearly in my mind. It was during the early years of life in Phoenix. *Mahatmaji* had at this time come to definite conclusions about sex-abstinence. He had written and spoken on the subject very decisively. I had had several discussions with him about the continuance of human life on this planet, and had, on one occasion, remarked that he must surely consider that God was wrong in having created men and women with their senses and emotions, since, were they to accept and adopt *Mahatmaji's* dictum, then God's expression through creation would cease; self-control, I contended, being the goal of developed humanity and not the denial of God's method of peopling the world. Very soon after this conversation, one of the members of the little settlement at Phoenix gave birth to a child. I purposely refrained from speaking of the matter when I visited Phoenix two or three days later. I thought that perhaps *Mahatmaji* might feel the fact displeasing. After a short time, and having talked of other things, he said in a surprised voice: "You have not asked about the mother and babe. Do you not want to see them?" He then came with me to see the baby and talked in a quiet, joyous way to the mother, and I realised in a flash that, even as a woman does, he differentiated between abstract principles and human needs and affections.

Only once have I known him fail to comprehend the deep emotions of a woman's life, and that was in not understanding the depth of absolute sorrow into which a woman, bereft of her dearly beloved by death, was plunged. Perhaps it was the one experience that he had not until then fully entered into, and he could not, therefore, realise how sick the soul of such a woman could be. Or it may have been that his belief in woman's consciousness of her touch with the All Father precluded him from knowing that women also have their periods of standing alone in an empty universe, where God has ceased to be and man is a vanishing shadow.

THE RT. HON. J.C. SMUTS M.A., LL.D., D.C.L.¹⁸

It is fitting that I, as an opponent of Gandhi a generation ago, should now salute the veteran as he reached the scriptural limit of three score years and ten. May the further allotment which the Psalmist grudgingly allows also be his, and may they be years of fruitful service to the world and of a peaceful mind to himself! I join most heartily with the other contributors to this volume in recognition of his great public services and in paying tribute to his high personal qualities. Men like him redeem us all from a sense of commonplaceness and futility, and are an inspiration to us not to be weary in well-doing.

The story of our clash in the early days of the Union of South Africa has been told by Gandhi himself and is well known. It was my fate to be the antagonist of a man for whom even then I had the highest respect. That clash on the small stage of South Africa brought out certain qualities of Gandhi's character which have since become more prominently displayed in his later large-scale operations in India. And they show that while he was prepared to go all out for the causes which he championed, he never forgot the human background of the situation, never lost his temper or succumbed to hate, and preserved his gentle humour even in the most trying situations. His manner and spirit even then, as well as later, contrasted markedly with the ruthless and brutal forcefulness which is the vogue in our day.

I must frankly admit that his activities at that time were very trying to me. Together with other South African leaders I was then busily engaged on the task of welding the old colonies into a unified State, of consolidating the administration of the new national structure, and of creating, out of what was left after the Boer War, a new nation. It was a colossal work which took up every moment of my time. Suddenly, in the midst of all these engrossing preoccupations, Gandhi raised a most troublesome issue.

We had a skeleton in our cupboard in the form of what is called the Indian question in South Africa. The Transvaal had made an effort to restrict Indian immigration. Natal had an old tax on Indians intended to induce them to return to India after their period of service on the sugar plantations had been completed. Gandhi tackled this problem,

and in doing so showed a new technique - one which he afterwards made world-famous in his political campaigns in India. His method was deliberately to break the law, and to organise his followers into a mass movement of passive resistance in disobedience to the law objected to. In both provinces a wild and disconcerting commotion was created, large numbers of Indians had to be imprisoned for lawless behaviour and Gandhi himself received - what no doubt he desired - a short period of rest and quiet in gaol. For him everything went according to plan. For me - the defender of law and order - there was the usual trying situation, the odium of carrying out a law which had not strong public support, and finally the discomfiture when the law had to be repealed. For him it was a successful coup. Nor was the personal touch wanting for nothing in Gandhi's procedure is without a peculiar personal touch. In gaol he had prepared for me a very useful pair of sandals which he presented to me when he was set free! I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then, even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man! Anyhow it was in that spirit that we fought out our quarrels in South Africa. There was no hatred or personal ill-feeling, the spirit of humanity was never absent, and when the fight was over there was the atmosphere in which a decent peace could be concluded. Gandhi and I made a settlement which Parliament ratified, and which kept the peace between the races for many years. He left South Africa to undertake his Herculean task in India and to impress his spirit and personality on the masses of that great country to a degree which has no parallel in recent Indian history. And throughout it all, he was but largely carrying out the methods he had learnt in South Africa in our scurrillousness over the Indian question. South Africa was indeed a great training school for him, as it has been for other notable men who have from time to time shared our life in this strangely attractive and provocative subcontinent.

I say largely, but not quite. In addition to his old method of passive resistance - now renamed non-cooperation - he developed in India a new technical device of a very disconcerting but effective character. That technique of reform was persuasion by self-starvation. Fortunately we had been spared this development in South Africa where people have a horror of any unnecessary loss of life. In India it has worked wonders and carried Gandhi to success and heights of achievement which would probably have been unattainable otherwise.

¹⁸ "Gandhi's Political Method" in Radhakrishnan, S. (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*. Bombay: Jaico Book Edition, 1992.

It may be of interest to give closer attention to this novel technique - novel at any rate in political warfare. I cannot conceive the Leader of the Opposition in Great Britain starving himself to death in order to convince the Government of the day of the error of their ways. We are here in a strange region, remote from the ways of democracy and indeed of Western civilisation. I think the phenomenon is deserving of careful study. I can but direct cursory attention to it here.

It is not so entirely novel to Indian ways of thought and practice. In India it appears to be a recognised practice for the creditor to bring pressure to bear on his dilatory debtor by inflicting suffering, not on the debtor but on himself. Civil imprisonment of the debtor is or has been our Western way of forcing the hand of the recalcitrant debtor. Not so in India: there the creditor will himself go to prison or sit and starve on the doorstep of his debtor in order to soften his heart and open his or his friend's purse. Gandhi adopts this Indian technique and only alters its application and scale. He would sit and starve, if need be to death, on the doorstep of the Government or a recalcitrant section of the community whom he wishes to persuade or rather to coerce to better ways. And like the creditor he succeeds, not by reasoning or persuasion, but by arousing the much deeper-lying emotions of fear, of shame, of repentance, of sympathy, of humanity, and of other feelings below the threshold of conscious thought, which in their mass effect prove much more potent than reasoning or persuasion. The debtor - the opponent Government or community is morally undermined and finally overwhelmed by this emotional mass effect.

In some ways this technique is not very different from the methods followed by large-scale propaganda in our day. It has the same effect of overwhelming the public mind, not by reason but by play on the emotions, many of them of an irrational character. One might fairly conclude that this technique is dangerous and may be abused, just as propaganda today is being abused to debauch and poison public opinion in the Western world. Whether the objects in view are worthy or detestable, the method is a dangerous one, as it undermines reason and personal responsibility, and is an invasion of that inner sanctuary of the personality which is the final citadel of all human nature.

Gandhi's technique of self-starvation differs, however, in a very important respect from that of Western propaganda. The performer (if I may call him so) tries to rouse

the community to face the situation by the thought and the spectacle of his own suffering. The technique is based on the principle of suffering and the purifying effect of vicarious suffering on the emotions of others. It has the same purifying and ennobling effect which high tragedy has in accordance with the Aristotelian definition.

We touch here not only the Greek notion of tragedy but the deepest springs of religion. In particular the motif of suffering is central to the Christian religion. The Cross remains the symbol of the most significant tragedy in all human history. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah and the Great Sufferer on the Cross, pouring out his soul for his brothers, stir emotions whose dynamic is incomparably greater than that of all reason or rational persuasion. The argument from suffering is and remains the most effective in the world. In the welter of religions in the early Roman Empire the Christian religion won through by suffering, by martyrdom, and not by the arguments of the Apologists; nor was its progress impeded by the current philosophies of that enlightened age. And in the same way the large-scale sufferings which in our day a cruel and brutal inhumanity in Europe is inflicting on those who differ in race or religion or conviction may yet become the dynamite to explode the great systems now so proudly being reared.

It is this potent principle of suffering on which Gandhi has based his novel technique or reform. He makes himself a sufferer in order to move the sympathy and gain the support of others for the cause he has at heart. Where ordinary political methods of reasoning and persuasion fail, he falls back on this new technique, based on the ancient practices of India and the East. It is a procedure which, as I have said, deserves the attention of political thinkers. It is Gandhi's distinctive contribution to political method.

Let me conclude with one other thought. Many people, even some who sincerely admire him, will differ from some of his ideas and some of his ways of doing things. His style of doing things is individual, is his own, and, as in the case of other great men, does not conform to the usual standards. But however often we may differ from him, we are conscious all the time of his sincerity, his unselfishness, and above all of his fundamental and universal humanity. He always acts as a great human, with deep sympathy for men of all classes and all races and especially for the under-dog. His outlook has nothing sectional about it, but is distinguished by that universal and eternal human which is the hall-mark of true greatness of spirit.

It is curious how in these days of European confusion and decline Asia is steadily moving to the front. Among the greatest men on the public stage of the world today are two Asiatics - Gandhi and Chiang-kai Shek, both moving immense masses of men along noble lines to a destiny which in essence is one with the high Christian ideal which the West has received but no longer seriously practises.

[GANDHIJI AND SMUTS

Some years ago I visited, in the company of a high Government official, a reformatory for Indian and native boys just outside Johannesburg, which had once been a prison. My companion pointed out to me the room in which Gandhi had been incarcerated thirty years ago and recalled how he, then a junior magistrate, had taken to him books on philosophy, the gift of his ministerial chief, General Smuts. Happily the bonds of mutual respect and friendship between the two men prevailed over all disruptive forces and are still effective links today.

- Jan H. Hofmeyer, "Gandhi in South Africa" in Radhakrishnan, Dr. Sarvepalli, Mahatma Gandhi, fourth edition. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1977.]

ALBERT WEST¹⁹

[Albert West was an associate of Gandhiji in South Africa.]

Many books have been written about Gandhi, who has been proclaimed "The Greatest Man in the World". Writers have travelled from the ends of the earth to see and hear him. They knew him as a great man and they wanted to record his words and hear his views on matters of world importance. They have done well in spreading abroad their records and passing on to readers a knowledge of him and his example of living by the laws of love and self-sacrifice. I have ventured to call this great man my friend and I am glad that I was regarded as such by him. Gandhi gave expression to this feeling when, in his autobiography, he referred to me as "a partner of my joys and sorrows."

I first met Gandhi in a vegetarian restaurant in Johannesburg in 1903. Around a large table sat a mixed company of men comprising a stockbroker from the United States who operated on the Exchange in gold and diamond shares, an accountant from Natal, a machinery agent, a young Jewish member of the Theosophical Society, a working tailor from Russia, Gandhi the lawyer, and me a printer. Everybody in Johannesburg talked about the share market, but these men were food reformers interested in vegetarian diet, Kuhne baths, earth poultices, fasting, etc. I was specially attracted by this man from India, and Gandhi and I soon became close friends. I was then twenty-four and Gandhi just ten years older. We would talk as we walked together every evening to the top of Hospital Hill and back to Court Chambers, where he lived and worked, his wife and family being at that time still in India.

Very often we would continue talking later, and Gandhi would insist on my having a cup of cocoa, made by himself, before I retired to my room for the night. On the wall of his office was a framed engraving of the head of Jesus Christ, and it occupied a place over his desk. Perhaps this started off our conversations on spiritual matters, which showed me how Gandhi, a Hindu, could be, at the same time, one of the most thorough followers of Christ's teachings that I ever met even among professing Christians. He had a good knowledge of the New Testament, and he put into actual day-to-day practice the principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. These in no way conflicted with the

¹⁹ "In the Early Days with Gandhi" in *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay October 3, 10, 17 and 31, 1965

principles of Hinduism which he held sacred throughout his life. As our friendship grew, we had many opportunities of comparing our respective views and I came to realise that love and self-sacrifice could be the basic principles of all religions.

I was not favourably impressed with Johannesburg, which, just after the Boer War, was no better than a mining camp, many of the buildings being of wood and iron, including the Municipal Offices. The Market Square was a huge sandy area large enough for a span of sixteen oxen to swing around with its long wagon load of farm produce. Even the main streets were rough tracks which would often become impassable during a dust storm. There was a tramway running down Commissioner Street between Jeppe and Fordsburg, which was known as a "toast-rack". It was horse-drawn and passengers jumped on or off and paid six pence for the ride. Coppers were not used, the coin of the smallest value being a three penny piece, usually called a "ticky".

Johannesburg was known as the Golden City, and the glowing tales of its wealth led one to believe that its streets were paved with gold. I learnt when I visited a gold mine that gold was never found in nuggets in the reef mines, but in small particles contained in rocks which, by a milling process, came out in grains which were melted into gold bars. Some of this gold ore contained so little gold that it did not pay to process it. So this was used as road-making material and made the "streets of gold"!

At week-ends Gandhi and a small party of us would go for a picnic to some beauty spot in the Transvaal or bathe in the lake at Rosherville on the East Rand. These were happy gatherings and Gandhi was a most enthusiastic participator in all the fun. Troubles looming on the horizon did not depress him or prevent his being a normal young man able to enjoy life to the full. During our conversations I learnt a good deal of what Gandhi had to go through when he first arrived in South Africa in 1893, and especially during the period of a year when he lived in Pretoria working on the important legal case which was fought and won out of court. He told me of his childhood days in India and his life as a student in England.

One evening I attended an Indian meeting addressed by him in the Indian Location, Johannesburg. Gandhi was the only speaker. The language was Hindi, which was understood by the large audience and listened to with rapt attention. The speaker stood erect and spoke quietly, without gesture or raising of the voice. As I looked upon

that dark face in the dim light I felt that here was a leader of great power, but I could not foresee how great a national figure he was to become or how far and wide would be his influence throughout the world.

The Indian Location in Johannesburg was in a deplorable condition, being without proper roads, lighting or sanitation, the dilapidated buildings being mostly of wood and iron. The residents acquired their plots on a lease of ninety-nine years. People were densely packed together, the area of which never increased with the increase of population. Beyond arranging to clear the latrines in a haphazard way, the Municipality did nothing to provide any sanitary facilities, and they used the insanitation, caused by their own neglect, as a pretext for destroying the Location, and for that purpose obtained legislative authority to dispossess the settlers. This was the condition of things when Gandhi settled in Johannesburg.

The Indians were not removed from the location as soon as the Municipality secured its ownership. New quarters had to be found before dislodging them and, as this could not easily be done, they were allowed to stay on as tenants, when their surroundings became more insanitary than ever. While the Indians were suffering in this way, there was a sudden outbreak of pneumonic plague. The outbreak occurred in March 1904, on one of the gold mines amongst the workers. There were a few Indians on the mines and twenty-three caught the infection and returned to their quarters in the location with an acute attack of the disease. Mr. Madanjit, proprietor of *Indian Opinion*, who was up from Durban on business, happened to be there and wrote a note asking Gandhi to come immediately.

Madanjit boldly broke the lock of a vacant room and put all the patients there. Gandhi cycled to the location and wrote to the Town Clerk to inform him of the circumstances in which they had taken possession of the premises. Dr. Godfrey, an Indian practising in Johannesburg, ran to the rescue and became both nurse and doctor to the patients. Only one European nurse was provided by the Municipality. Four young Indian clerks in Gandhiji's office offered their services and they were installed as nurses.

It was a terrible night of vigil and nursing. The patients became violent and had to be held down in bed to prevent them from escaping in their agony. All the patients pulled through that night. The next day the Municipality placed a vacant warehouse at

their disposal, but did not clean the premises. This was done by the Indian nurses and, with beds and other necessaries provided by charitable Indians, a temporary hospital was formed. Instructions were issued that frequent doses of brandy had to be given to the patients. Gandhi had no faith in this and, with the permission of Dr. Godfrey, he put three patients, who were prepared to do without brandy, under earth treatment, applying wet-earth poultices to their heads and chests. Two of these were saved. The other twenty-one died.

Meanwhile the Municipality was busy taking other measures. There was a lazaretto for contagious diseases about seven miles from Johannesburg. The two surviving patients were removed to tents near the lazaretto and arrangements were made for sending any fresh cases there. The Indian nurses were thus relieved of their voluntary work. Later it was learnt that the European nurse had an attack and immediately succumbed. There were 96 patients, European, Coloured, Negro and Indian, who died in the lazaretto. The location residents were removed to Klipspruit Farm, near Johannesburg, where they were supplied with provisions by the Municipality. They lived in military tents for three weeks until other accommodation was found. The day after the people left the location the Municipality set fire to the buildings and destroyed everything, thinking, no doubt, that this was the best way of removing every trace of the plague.

A great change in my own life was brought about directly through the outbreak of the plague. As I did not find my friend as usual at the restaurant, I enquired at Gandhi's office, but he was away at the plague camp. So I went again in the early morning and found him there. I offered my services and said I was ready to help in nursing the patients. "No," he said, "I will not have you as a nurse. If there are no more cases we shall be free in a day or two." Then, without seeming to hesitate a moment, he said there was one thing I could do, go to Durban and take charge of the Indian Opinion press. Madanjit was detained in the plague camp. If I could go, he would feel quite relieved.

This was a rather startling proposition. I was engaged in business, having leased a printing plant. However, I felt that this was a call which I must seriously consider, and I said I would give a definite reply in the evening during our walk. Gandhi was delighted when I told him I was prepared to accept the suggestion. The next night I

boarded the mail train for Durban, having made certain arrangements concerning my business affairs. That was the beginning of my active association with *Indian Opinion*, which lasted fifteen years. I continued to interest myself in Indian affairs until my departure for England in 1949, and indeed have done so up to the present day.

Durban, Natal, in 1904 was not the fine city it is today. It was just a port, though beautifully situated. A number of Indian storekeepers and tailors had established themselves in a district around the market, which was held in an enclosure next to the Grey Street Mosque. Indian indentured labourers were introduced into Natal in 1860. After they became free, many of them and their descendants worked as market gardeners. As the sugar plantations developed and Indian gardens were extended around Durban, Natal became known as the Garden Colony. Fruit and vegetables were plentiful, thanks almost entirely to the Indian growers. In West and Field Streets a few Indian wholesale and retail merchants were in business as drapers and outfitters. This is the European shopping centre, and, although attempts have been made, from time to time, to exclude Indians, still there are some remaining to this day.

Indian Opinion was printed and published at the International Printing Press in Grey Street. General job printing was undertaken and the Theosophical Society's monthly magazine was printed there too. Other small books were printed, including Mrs. Besant's translation of the Bhagavad Gita. The paper was published weekly, in English, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil. The foreman was Mr. Oliver, a Mauritian, and there was a staff of compositors and machinemen. Besides Mr. Oliver and Mr. Orchard in the jobbing section, there was a French-speaking Mauritian, a St. Helenan and a Cape Coloured young man named Mannering, who were compositors of the English columns.

Kababhai, a Gujarati compositor, and Virji Damodar, who composed both Gujarati and Hindi, had come from India. The Tamil compositor, Moothoo, was a colonial-born Indian. He set the Tamil columns, and for the jobbing section set marriage invitations and other Tamil jobs. Govindoo, often called Mr. Sam, was in charge of the machine and binding sections. There were several young Indian printer's assistants engaged in the work of the newspaper and job printing. I took over the proof-reading and office work as well as reporting and sub-editing the paper.

I soon found that the expected profits I was to share were non-existent, and the

prospect of ever making the press a paying concern was not encouraging. I wrote to Gandhi and informed him of the financial position and said that I was prepared to work for a small salary, regardless of profits. During the next nine months the newspaper and job printing were carried on mainly by means of substantial financial subsidies sent by Gandhi from Johannesburg. Many leading articles for *Indian Opinion* were written by him and typed copy was sent to Durban for publication. Mr. M.H. Nazar was the responsible editor and helped us with friendly advice on the paper, but he preferred to leave important legal matters to Gandhi. It will be seen, therefore, that Gandhi had to bear the double responsibility of editing and financing the paper.

I lived in Durban with a French Mauritian family who had a boarding house in Berea Road. There I learnt a little of the French language through the flow of conversation, but not enough to speak it well. During this time I became acquainted with a good many members of the Indian community. One of the first was Dada Abdulla, whose firm brought from India in 1893 the young man, Gandhi. It is interesting to recall that he was not engaged as a barrister, but as a servant of the firm. He was told of the big case in the court, their claim being for 40,000. He would be able to instruct their counsel better than they could themselves. He was told: "You can be useful to us in our shop. Much of our correspondence is in English, and you can help with that too." The engagement was to be for not more than a year. The pay would be a first class return fare and a sum of 105 all found. This was a tempting opportunity of seeing a new country with new experience, and he accepted the offer.

When I entered the premises of Dada Abdulla & Co. eleven years later, I was entertained, as a friend of Gandhi, in the large room on the first floor of the shop at the corner of West Street and Greenacre's Passage. The furnishings were rich and oriental. I was invited to a chair. The host and several guests were reclining upon cushions on the carpeted floor at one end of the room. This was typical of what could be found among the well-to-do Muslim merchants of Natal. In this room was held the first meeting of the Natal Indian Congress, inaugurated by Gandhi.

I could give the names of many Indians - Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, and Christians - with whom I became associated, fifty to sixty years ago, but I can only name them when they become a part of my story. There was one particular friend, Parsee Rustomjee. He was one of a group of prominent men who in 1894 took part in obtaining

ten thousand signatures to the monster petition which was presented to Lord Ripon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in London, against the Bill then before the House of Assembly which sought to deprive the Indians of their right to vote. Others in the group were Dawood Mohamed, Adamji Miankhan and Amod Jiva.

Parsee Rustomjee was always known by that name, though his full name was Rustomjee Jivanji Gorkoodhoo. His residence could not be described as a house, for it was actually a part of warehouse or godown. The building was partly of brick and the rest of wood and iron. It was divided by means of partitions into offices at the entrance, a very large sitting room, bedrooms, bathroom and an area for dining in the centre of the warehouse, with a kitchen across the yard. This was the place where Mrs. Gandhi and the children were brought on their arrival from India in 1896²⁰ and when Gandhi's life was threatened by an angry mob. It became a centre of public activity and a resting place for strangers from India.

Meetings were held in the sitting room and nobody needed an invitation to drop in and join in the conversation. There were no inside doors and Mr. Rustomjee carried on business from his sitting room and gave instruction to his clerks in the office. Twice a day he lit a brazier of sandalwood and repeated Zoroastrian prayers with incense arising. This would go on undisturbed by people coming and going. Muslim visitors could be seen at times with their mats on the warehouse floor praying without any interruption. At meal times there were usually a few guests at the table. During all the years I spent at Phoenix I made this my quarters when in Durban for a day or perhaps a night. When later I had a family, they too enjoyed this wonderful hospitality and friendship. Later on I hope to tell something of Rustomjee's generosity and public benefactions for Indian education and relief in South Africa and India.

The decision to remove the printing press from the town to the country came about in an interesting way. My report on the financial situation had greatly disturbed Gandhi, and he decided to make a full investigation on the spot. The night he left Johannesburg the late Henry Polak, sub-editor of *The Critic*, who had made the acquaintance of Gandhi at the time of the plague and had become friendly, came to see him off at the station and left him with a book to read during the twenty-four hour journey to Durban. It was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The reading of this book, Gandhi

declared, brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life. He came to realise: that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all; that a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work; that a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living. So he decided to reduce these principles to practice.

Gandhi, on arrival, talked over the whole thing with me, described the effect *Unto This Last* had produced on his mind, and proposed that Indian Opinion should be removed to a farm, on which everyone should labour, drawing the same living wage, and attending to the press work in his spare time.

This scheme was idealistic, if not very practical. The idea appealed to me because I was accustomed to a country life. I loved to be on the farms when I was a lad, although I did not become a farm worker myself. So I did not have to wake up to the importance and value of manual work or come to realise that a lawyer's work was only as valuable as the barber's. I was convinced already of this truth. The scheme was attractive because, if it proved successful, we should be able to gain our subsistence from the soil and have no need to expect much from the newspaper. It would be spare-time work. A monthly allowance per head of 3 was laid down. In this way it was hoped to run the paper without loss. To say that I approved of the proposal suggests a certain amount of wishful thinking. I was certainly in love with the idea, and my love for Gandhi was sufficient to make me want to succeed in this venture. Had we stopped to consider such matters as trade-union rules, minimum wages and so forth, we might never have started the scheme. But we were blind to possible difficulties and went ahead.

The first thing was to search for a piece of land near a railway station in the vicinity of Durban. This we found in the valley of the Piezang river, two-and-a-half miles from Phoenix station and fourteen miles from Durban on the North Coast line to Zululand. Gandhi and I went to inspect the estate. After our walk from the station we sat on some rocks alongside a stream running through the property and ate our lunch. It was a beautiful scene with trees and date-palms along the river. On the hill just above was an old cottage and orange grove. Within a week we had purchased this piece of

²⁰ They arrived in December 1896 but were not allowed to land until January 1897 when they were taken to Parsee

land, in extent 20 acres, which we thought would be suitable for the press and other buildings. Adjoining was a further piece of 80 acres, which was bought later. The cost of the 100 acres was 1000. By the time Phoenix Settlement was established, that investment was increased to 5000.

Some of the workers in the press agreed to join up at Phoenix, others preferring to work elsewhere in town. Madanjit considered the proposal to be foolish and held that the workers would bolt, *Indian Opinion* would come to a stop and the press would have to be closed down. He did not stay to see this happen and soon went off to stay in India. A good many otherwise friendly Indians strongly disapproved of the scheme and were not at all helpful. Only Parsee Rustomjee remained a staunch supporter. He placed at our disposal a quantity of second-hand corrugated iron sheets and other building material, with which we started work. Other material was brought, and some Indian carpenters and bricklayers, who had worked with Gandhi as stretcher-bearers in the Boer War, set to work on the press building. The structure, 80 feet long and 40 feet wide, was ready in about a month. Then the problem was to get the printing plant removed from Durban.

Type and machinery being very heavy and the road rough, with three rivers to cross, over which there were no bridges, we engaged four large farm wagons, with spans of sixteen bullocks each, and by this means we managed to remove the whole of the plant and stock in a day. It took a good deal longer than that to get it all sorted out and put in place.

Meanwhile Mr. Booth and his engineers got busy with erecting machines, fixing shafting and putting together the oil-engine which I had bought from a farmer at Inchanga. This engine was necessary because we had no electric motor. With Gandhi's new-found gospel of handicrafts and manual labour he would have much preferred working the machines by hand, but, with my experience of machinery, I knew we must have power to drive heavy machines. I agreed, however, that we should have some means of working them by hand in case the engine failed. So I designed a hand machine with a driving wheel mounted on a stout wooden frame. Attached to the axle was a handle on either side, so that four persons could turn the wheel and drive the printing machine by means of a long belt. Gandhi was immensely pleased with this contraption.

Rustomjee's house. (Editor)

We very soon had to put this hand machine, which we called "The Wheel", to good use.

By working long hours we got the paper set up before the end of the week. As our big machine was not yet working, we locked up the formes in printing chases and sent them by train to Durban, where the Natal Mercury kindly printed the sheets for us. So we did not miss an issue. For the next issue we made a change in the size of the pages. Instead of eight newspaper pages, we printed sixteen, foolscap size, with covers, and folded them in book form. Apart from improving the style, we reckoned that, in case of desperate emergency, we could print single pages on small treadle machines, thus carrying out the ambition to do manual labour. At first we all slept on the floor of the press building or in tents out on the grass. Owing to the prevalence of snakes and mosquitoes, the press floor was generally preferred.

All was ready for printing the next issue, the formes were on the machine, and Sam had taken the first impression. But a report came through from the engine room that the engine could not be started. Great efforts were made by several of us, turning the great fly-wheel, to get it to fire, but without avail. This went on till well into the night, when I reported to Gandhi that I was afraid we could not issue the paper in time. "What about the hand-wheel?" he said. I pointed out that we were not enough to cope with the job. It required relays of four men each and our own men were all tired.

The carpenters were still with us. They were sleeping on the press floor. So Gandhi woke them up and requested their cooperation. They needed no pressure and said, "If we cannot be called upon in an emergency, what use are we? You rest yourselves and we will work the wheel. For us it is easy work."

This put new life into us, and our own men, including Gandhi, joined the carpenters at the wheel with a good spirit. The sheets were rolling off the press rapidly and the folders were hard at it. At 7 a.m. Gandhi suggested that the engineer might then be asked to try again to start the engine, so that if successful, we might still finish in time to catch the train with the papers. Almost at the first touch, the engine started, and the whole press rang with peals of joy. The copies were dispatched in time and everyone was happy. Gandhi regarded this failure of the engine as a test for us all, and its working in the nick of time as the fruit of our honest and earnest labours. To his mind, this was the day of the highest moral uplift for Phoenix.

II

We then had to consider the question of housing accommodation for the settlers. Gandhi had joined in the discussion of this matter. Various ideas were put forward, but it was generally agreed that we must have at least a roof over our heads. The plan to have just four poles supporting a thatched roof was a charming scheme if only the weather could be relied upon, summer and winter. Eventually we had to agree to have walls on four sides. In order to satisfy those enthusiasts who thought they would prefer to sleep out, flat roofs could be provided. This plan was adopted for several houses. After finishing the press buildings, the carpenters put up the houses, which were of wood and iron.

An acre of ground was allotted to each settler and a block of rooms for single workers was erected near the press. The settlers chose their plots and had their buildings erected according to their requirements. Among the first settlers were four who had the flat-roof style of house. Herbert Kitchin, nephew of the Dean of Durban, who came to know Gandhi whilst serving as an ambulance man in the Boer War, and who joined as English editor, was unmarried. He required a large living room, a bedroom and a kitchen. He was an amateur scientist and electrician. One end of his large room was filled with equipment for X-ray and radio experiments and he had a large library.

Next along the hillside were two plots for two brothers, Chhaganlal and Maganlal Gandhi. For their families they had suitable rooms and a kitchen built in the centre of the two plots. Next came one plot for me. I was then alone and needed only a single room. Lower down the slope was Anandlal Gandhi. He had a house with a sloping roof for his family. So had Sam's family, still further away. Another house was built for Mr. Orchard, who was not a settler. He remained only a short time. The three young Gandhis were all cousins of Gandhi. They had been engaged in store keeping at Tongaat, became very interested in our scheme, and joined us. Chhaganlal wrote Gujarati news and did office work. Anandlal quickly picked up Gujarati composing. Maganlal became an all-round press man, writing and composing in English and Gujarati as well as making himself generally useful.

Our roofs soon began to give us trouble. Heavy rain found its way under the flat iron sheets and through the wooden ceilings, causing flooding in the rooms. Mr. Kitchin

suffered much damage to his electrical equipment, but others, who had not much in the way of furniture, had not so much to worry about. We did what we could about the roofs and continued to survive. Sleeping out on top was quite a success, within limitations. When it came on to rain during the night we had to reluctantly pick up our blankets and retire below. This happened, too, when the prevailing early-morning wind from the Inanda Hills sprang up at about three in the morning. But on the whole we enjoyed those nights under the stars, in favourable conditions.

When Gandhi returned to Johannesburg after the establishment of Phoenix Settlement, Polak was delighted over the whole thing and told Gandhi he would like to join the scheme. Gandhi accepted him with pleasure and, after severing his association with *The Critic*, Polak soon arrived at Phoenix as assistant to Mr. Kitchin in editing the English columns. He lived with me, sharing my flat-topped bungalow.

We were a happy pair of bachelors, cooking our own food and living the simple life. Although this happy life did not continue for long, we remained close friends for over fifty years, until his death. Soon he was recalled to Johannesburg, and a great change came about. He joined Gandhi's office and qualified as an attorney, hoping thereby to realise more quickly the ideals we all had in common. In December 1905, I met Miss Millie Graham as she arrived from England, and saw her off by train for Johannesburg, where she was married to Polak, Gandhi acting as best man.

Earlier that year there had been a great storm and floods in Natal, when the rivers came down in torrents, drowning many Indians. A relief fund was at once started and a large sum raised. A committee was appointed to administer the funds and this sat weekly in the office of the Protector of Indian Immigrants. I was asked to join this committee and in the absence of Gandhi, I was glad to be able to assist in granting compensation to the poor Indians who had suffered so heavily in the death toll and so badly by the destruction of their market gardens.

Early in 1906 I began to consider the possibility of visiting my home in England, from which I had been absent for nearly four years. I discussed it with Gandhi, and he encouraged me in my resolve to sail for England in June. Arrangements were made and the passage booked, when there came a bolt from the blue. The Zulu "rebellion" was reported in the papers and this looked like war. Gandhi thought it his duty to offer his

services to the Government in forming an Indian Ambulance Corps, as he had done in the Boer War. His offer was promptly accepted and he at once began preparations. The possibility of my journey to England seemed now to be out of the question, as both Gandhi and Polak would be unable to help much with *Indian Opinion*, but Gandhi would not hear of my postponing the visit. On the death of Nazar, and later the retirement of Kitchin, the responsible position of editor fell to Polak.

During my stay in England I met the Hon. Dadabhai Naoroji, known as the Grand Old Man of India. He was a Member of Parliament for a London constituency, and he was doing all he could to help the lot of Indians in South Africa. I also met Dr. Josiah Oldfield, who had known Gandhi as a fellow member of the London Vegetarian Society, and Mr. L.W. Ritch, who was later to do so much for the South African Indians.

The rest of my stay in England was spent in my own home at Louth, and in other towns and villages in Lincolnshire where I had friends and relatives. Leicester was a town where I had lived and worked as a printer after my apprenticeship, and I had many friends there. One particular friend was Miss Ada Pywell, and our friendship developed still further and we became engaged to be married. Before leaving South Africa for England I had discussed with Gandhi the possibility of marriage, and he gave me full encouragement. However, the question of providing a home required serious thought and preparation, and so no date was fixed for the wedding, which did not take place until eighteen months later, at Phoenix.

My sister, Ada, who had always been very much my companion in and after my school days, was interested in what I told her of South Africa, and it did not take much persuasion for her to decide she would like to try the new life. We therefore prepared for our departure in September.

Meanwhile a serious position had arisen in the Transvaal. The Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance had been introduced in the Legislative Council by the Government. It aimed at the registration of the entire Asiatic population. It condemned as criminals all against whom it operated, for it required the surrender and cancellation of all existing permits and registration certificates and the taking of a complete set of finger impressions. A mass meeting of Indians in Johannesburg, with delegates from all parts of the Transvaal, passed a resolution solemnly pledging the Indian community not

to submit to the Ordinance, should it become law, but to suffer all the penalties attaching to such non-submission. This was the beginning of what was first known as "passive resistance", and later changed to "*satyagraha*". The Legislative Council duly passed the Ordinance which, however, owing to its racially contentious nature, was withheld from operation pending reference to the Imperial Government. It was therefore decided to send a delegation, consisting of Gandhi and H.O. Ally, a Muslim, to make representations in London.

By a happy chance the mail boat bringing these two delegates arrived at Southampton the day that Ada and I were leaving for Durban. We were thus able to go on board and greet them. Needless to say, Gandhi gave a hearty welcome to my sister, whom he was meeting for the first time. I was able to extract a promise from Gandhi that he would, during his stay in London, make a journey to see my people at Louth and the Pywell family at Leicester. This promise was faithfully kept, and gave great satisfaction. Gandhi, of course, thoroughly enjoyed himself.

Our voyage to South Africa was pleasant. We made calls at Las Palmas, St. Helena and Cape Town, and duly arrived at Durban without mishap or delay.

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Arriving at Phoenix, we found Mrs. Gandhi and her family of three sons occupying the bungalow vacated by Kitchin. Ada was warmly welcomed by all. I got busy building two bedrooms to my one-room house, and adding a verandah in front. Close by we built a kitchen and bathroom. It was a proper native hut, of "mud-and-stud" with a thatched roof. Cooking was done on a charcoal stove. We also baked bread in the same way. Soon we had our home complete and we settled in.

Ada commenced work in the press office as book-keeper with Cordes, a recruit from Rhodesia and Chhaganlal Gandhi. Certain hours were devoted to teaching in school, and gardening was also done. At night, prayers and hymn-singing in Gujarati and English took place with Mrs. Gandhi and the children in her house. When Gandhi returned from England he joined in whenever he could get away from Johannesburg. He and the boys slept on the roof when weather permitted. There would generally be visitors whenever Gandhi was at Phoenix. They were not, however, just on a visit. There were difficulties needing solution, and Gandhi never refused to devote time to

them. It was free service, which he regarded as public work.

The 1908 June wedding of Ada Pywell and Albert West was a festive occasion and all the settlers with their families attended, together with European and Indian visitors from Durban, Verulam and Cape Town. Mrs. Gandhi and her sons were there, but Mr. Gandhi sent a message regretting his inability to attend owing to important work in Johannesburg. The ceremony took place in the Cordes bungalow, the officiating minister being Mr. Ireland of the Greyville Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Pywell, who accompanied her daughter from their home at Leicester, gave the bride away. Miss West was bridesmaid and Mr. Harold Mason acted as best man. After the ceremony, the hymn, "Take My Life" was sung by all present. The wedding breakfast, prepared and served by the menfolk, was very enjoyable, interspersed with congratulatory speeches and my reply to thanks.

Cordes' place was where everyone was welcome, especially if they needed a bath. I do not mean if they were dirty, but should they be "off colour" in any way. There was nothing like a steam bath, followed by a cooling plunge in cold water around the hips, to make one absolutely fit again. That was what John Cordes thoroughly believed in. It was no trouble to him, however much trouble it caused him. To get the steam cabinet fixed up ready for his "patient" was done in next to no time; and, while the "cooking" was going on, the hip bath was filled to just the required depth with water. Nice warm towels were got ready for the final process, and the job was done. However pleased the "patient" was with this kind of Turkish, or Kuhne, bath, Cordes was more pleased with his part of the proceedings, for he just loved it.

I had become acquainted with the Kuhne water cure whilst in Johannesburg. Adolf Ziegler who kept the vegetarian restaurant where I first met Gandhi, was an expert in these matters, and I had treatment under his care. Gandhi himself had great faith in the treatment, and carried out successfully many forms of healing by water and earth.

* * *

Cordes used his thatched cottage only as a sitting room. He had a cook-and-washroom close by. This had a tiled roof, which provided fresh rain water to the tank. For eating and sleeping he used the circular verandah, which could be used in all weathers. He changed the position of his table and bed to suit the change of the wind.

Cordes' nationality was German, but he came to us from Rhodesia, where he had lived for some years. He had a small son, born of a Negro woman. He left the boy behind in someone's care, but after a while, as Gandhi and the other settlers had no objection, Willie was brought to Phoenix, lived among the other children quite happily and received his education. When later Cordes left to join the Theosophical headquarters at Adyar in India, Willie went also.

Rugoo Govindoo, or "Mr. Sam" as we liked to call him, was a typical colonial-born Indian, descended from the original labourers who came from India under indenture. He received his education in an elementary school, but developed further experience as he grew up, speaking five languages fluently: English, Hindustani, Tamil, Telugu and Zulu. He was a useful man to have as a settler. Before he could decide to join our Phoenix scheme, he had to have an assurance regarding some land he had purchased for his family's needs and this assurance was given him by Gandhi. He then joined wholeheartedly in the life of the settlement and remained for fourteen years.

It was fully recognised that Mr. Sam was "different". He and his family were not entirely vegetarian in their diet, as most other settlers were. Moreover, he had a gun, to shoot game, which was to be found on our land. Most surprisingly, Gandhi bought him a new gun, which was much superior to the old one. Such was the complex nature of Gandhi, who could be so severe and uncompromising regarding his own conduct, yet so generous and broadminded to one for whom he had a genuine affection.

One of the outstanding personalities coming under the influence of Gandhi was Parsee Rustomjee. Earlier I have given a description of the place where he lived and worked. Like Gandhi he was happiest when surrounded by his fellow public workers. He placed his office and sitting room at their disposal at all times. As a young man he left India to seek his fortune in South Africa. He began as a small trader and had a stall near the market at Verulam, where he sold mineral waters, sweets and fruits. Later he developed a business in Durban, as a wholesale merchant, specialising in the importation of Indian spices and other valuable goods, and in time he became well-to-do.

On one occasion, as told to me by Gandhi, Parsee Rustomjee was caught in the act of smuggling and found himself in danger of being sent to prison. Gandhi, on being

told of this, advised him to confess all and offer to pay the penalty that might be fixed by the Customs Officer and the Attorney-General. This was agreed to and the case was settled out of court. Rustomjee had to pay a penalty equal to twice the amount he had confessed to having smuggled. He reduced to writing the facts of the whole case, got the paper framed and hung it up in his office to serve as a perpetual reminder to his heirs and fellow merchants. This case of Parsee Rustomjee's is typical of many in which Gandhi advised guilty clients to confess their sins, thus saving them from greater.

The good influence of Gandhi over Rustomjee could be traced throughout the rest of his life. As he prospered, so his generosity grew. An orphanage connected with the Mosque at Umgeni was one of his gifts. A part of the cost of a Methodist day school and the whole of the cost of an Indian orphanage belonging to the Roman Catholic Church was also provided by him.

Later, two Rustomjee Trusts - one in his late wife's name and the other in his own - were established, with a total capital of 50,000. From the income of these Trusts, many schools for Indians in South Africa were built, an Indian Free Public Library and Gandhi Hall were provided and maintained; and for India, large contributions were constantly being sent to provide for spinning and weaving schools, and for the establishment of village wells, famine relief and other causes sponsored by Gandhi after his return to India in 1915. For many years I had the privilege of being a member of these Trusts and took part in the distribution of the magnificent income we had at our disposal. No part of the capital is ever used - only the income. This noble example has since been followed by other Indians, notably by the late R.K. Khan, who established a trust which maintains free Indian dispensaries in Natal.

* * *

Life at Phoenix Settlement continued to develop, happily on the whole, for fourteen years. If we did not succeed in proving our ability to live on three pounds a month and maintain ourselves by cultivating the soil, giving our spare time to the work of turning out the paper, we proved, at least, that Indians and Europeans could live together in a community, working together with common ideals and human interests. We cultivated our separate plots of ground, grew those crops which we thought best, and joined in helping and advising one another according to the experience gained. In time we were able to produce fruit and vegetables sufficient for our needs. Sam went

one better and developed a farmyard with a cow and poultry. His gun came into use when he went hunting among the wild deer. Many times we had encounters with snakes in and around our houses, and, although we did not approve of killing, I am afraid we were only too glad to have Sam's gun brought into use to rid us of them.

In actual practice we found that we had to spend the usual working hours at the press and our spare time in our gardens. Consequently, as time went on and families increased, our salaries had to be fixed according to our needs, which was quite fair, seeing that some of us had to spend a good deal of time in travelling about the country in the interests of the newspaper, whilst others, during the Passive Resistance campaign, served terms of imprisonment. So the time we could devote to earning our living from the land was considerably cut down. There was a good deal of what might be called unproductive work in repairing and extending our houses. A rather big job was the building of the library and school. Only the brickwork was given to a builder, and we undertook the timber construction, including a very high roof. We did not mind doing the work - it was a pleasure - but while we did carpentry, we were not cultivating the soil.

There was much in this life in open country that was attractive. We enjoyed friendly relations with Africans living in the surrounding hillsides and with passersby to and from the station who would frequently call for a drink from our rainwater tank or to buy a pineapple or paw-paw from the garden. They were happy people and we were never afraid of these "savages."

Within calling distance across the river was a Negro squatter, whose wife helped with our washing and cleaning at times. A distance away across the fields was an Indian woman who was called to act as midwife for our Indian settlers' wives when having children. When our two children were born we thought we should have a doctor. So, on each occasion, I cycled the fifteen miles to Durban in the morning, before the trains were running, and brought back Dr. Nanji, who cycled with me. He did not complain. I was my wife's nurse for these events and, with the assistance of Mrs. Pywell, I managed fairly well.

Hilda for nine years, Harry for five years, lived a very healthy happy life with other children there. Mrs. Pywell, who arrived from England at the age of nearly 80 in

poor health, soon became very well and active, and seemed to get a new lease of life in this new sub-tropical land. Both she and my wife joined happily with all the people at Phoenix, especially the women, who appreciated the help they obtained with their sewing and knitting. Students at the near-by Native Institute were given lessons in music and organ playing by my wife. Mrs. Pywell was known as "Granny" by Gandhi and the settlers. She lived to be 95.

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The visit of Prof. G.K. Gokhale, C.I.E., Member of the Imperial Legislative Council of India, to South Africa in 1912, marked a turning point in the affairs of the South African Indians. His successful month's tour of the Union has been fully reported elsewhere and I can only refer to the personal impression made upon me by this splendid man, recall some incidents, and refer to the way his presence among us affected our future at Phoenix.

From the moment of Gokhale's arrival at Cape Town to the day of his departure, Gandhi was his personal attendant. Of course, he was his political adviser, as he was the only one who could supply every detail of the situation. But that was not all. Gokhale was a sick man, and Gandhi prepared and cooked every item of his special diet, and saw to his needs in every respect, even to the washing and ironing of Gokhale's ceremonial scarf, which he always wore as part of his national dress.

During the Durban visit I met Gokhale on several occasions, privately and at a luncheon given by Senator Marshall Campbell at Mount Edgecombe. Then at the banquet given in the Durban Drill Hall, where Gokhale gave a notable speech on the Indian situation.

At Phoenix the settlers had the opportunity of meeting Gokhale. I had the privilege of a personal talk with him, when he told me of his great hope of persuading Gandhi to return to India as soon as a settlement of the Indian question in South Africa could be arrived at. This was really a great blow to me, as it seemed to threaten an end to all our earnest hopes concerning the development of Phoenix as a health, agricultural and educational centre. I said that without Gandhi as leader, all our efforts would fail. This could not be denied; but Gokhale was so certain of Gandhi's ability to arouse the necessary enthusiasm in the people of India for their great national

movement for Independence that he felt that we should be willing to make the sacrifice, and hope that, after all, our own schemes for progress in South Africa might still be realised.

III

Another two years passed before we saw the settlement of the South African Indian question. The struggle was renewed and hundreds of volunteers suffered imprisonment, including a number of women from Phoenix, led by Mrs. Gandhi.

Mrs. Polak, in an article, "Women and the Struggle", published in the Souvenir of the Passive Resistance Movement, has this to say about it:

"The last phase of the fight and the one through which today we rejoice in peace, was practically led in the early stages by a small band of women from Natal, who challenged prison to vindicate their right to the legal recognition of the wifhood, and a similar small band of women from Johannesburg. The women from Natal, all of them wives of well-known members of the Indian community, travelled up to Volksrust and were the first of hundreds to go to gaol. The women from the Transvaal travelled down the line, taking in the mines on their way, holding meetings and calling upon the men to refuse to work and to die rather than to live as slaves; and at the call of these women, thousands laid down their tools and went on strike. I think it may safely be said that, but for the early work of these brave women, the wonderful response to the call of honour and country might never have taken place."

Shortly afterwards, the Transvaal women were arrested, and a similar sentence to that passed upon the women of Natal was passed upon them.

The question of the promised repeal of the unjust 3 tax was the immediate cause of the strike. Thousands of Indians from the mines joined in a great procession, organised by Gandhi, towards the Transvaal border, the ultimate goal being Tolstoy Farm. But Gandhi was arrested and the march came to an end near Standerton. Polak had taken charge and he too was arrested and, later, Kallenbach. The strikers were taken by train back to the mines, which were then proclaimed gaols where they were forced to carry on their work.

Meanwhile the Indians on the sugar estates in Natal decided to strike. A body of about two thousand marched to Phoenix and squatted on the ground near the Press. Food was sent from Durban by the [Natal] Indian Association. Presently two police came to me and told me that I must send the strikers back to the estates. This I refused to do. I appealed to the Chief Magistrate of Durban to allow the people to remain where they were quite safe, but he simply ordered me to obey the police.

At that time General Smuts was Prime Minister, and I sent him a telegram, pointing out the danger of trying to force the strikers to leave, and assuring him that they were quite peaceful and being cared for. No reply was received, and then a large body of mounted police arrived on the scene. I was arrested and taken away to Durban Gaol, and the strikers were driven back to the estates. What I feared would happen occurred shortly afterwards, and the police fired upon and killed several of the men.

My arrest and short period of detention in Durban Gaol under "safe keeping" gave me a glimpse of what gaol life was like. After I had been duly registered, at around five o'clock in the evening, I was placed in a cell about 8ft. by 10ft. in the European section. My bed was a mattress on the cement floor. I do not remember whether I was given any food. Most of the night was spent in walking the few paces to and fro, reviewing the events of the past week, which had been full of excitement and apprehension. Now that was over and I was left only with a feeling of annoyance at being rushed off in the midst of the work of getting out the paper.

Through the small slot in the door I could see, across the corridor, faces peering out. One man in a loud whisper, asked, "What are you in for?" He seemed to be very anxious to know, but, as I was not sure myself, I could not enlighten him. In the early morning I was let out to empty the sanitary bucket and have a wash in the yard among the awaiting-trial prisoners.

Whilst we were circling the yard for exercise, I saw two men I knew. One was a Labour Member of Parliament and the other an Indian passive resister from the Transvaal. Both were in for some political offence or other. Whilst I was in the yard I had a view of the lining up of Negro prisoners about to be sent to work outside. The Negro warders did not neglect any opportunity of showing their authority while passing

along the line. One prisoner offended in some way, and the warder snatched off the man's cap, spat upon it and then threw it on the ground. This gave the warder deep satisfaction, and he continued his march, feeling, no doubt, several inches taller.

About mid-morning I was handed over to the care of a policeman who took me, in a rickshaw, to the railway station, where we entered a compartment of the Verulam train. On arrival at the Court I was ordered into the dock where I pleaded not guilty to the charge of "Harbouring Indentured Indians." The Prosecutor, evidently not ready to proceed with the case, secured an adjournment and I was released on bail of 100 kindly provided by some Indian friends.

That was the last I heard of the case until I was told that the Attorney-General had refused to prosecute. It was rather a pity, for it would have been interesting to see how the charge of "harbouring" could be proved. These were the facts: Indian men, women and children arrived at the settlement and squatted there. No one had asked them to come. When the Indians in Durban heard of the move, they ordered a quantity of foodstuffs to be sent by wagon to Phoenix and the people cooked food for themselves. Two mounted police came along and told me that I must send the people back to their barracks, which I refused to do. After a day or two, a posse of mounted police rode up and drove the people away. If I had been charged with refusing to assist the police I should have pleaded guilty, for that was the fullest extent of my "crime." In other words, I acted the part of a passive resister, pure and simple.

Much has been written elsewhere concerning the great life's work of Gandhi, especially during the later years in India, when he became acknowledged as one of the greatest men in the world. I would like to pay tribute to the many acts of loving service he rendered day by day to those around him. In his own home, at Tolstoy Farm, or at Phoenix, he delighted in acts of simple service, such as cooking meals, doing domestic work, cutting hair, attending the sick and caring for the many children around him. It was done with perfect good humour. At no time did I ever see him in anything approaching a temper, no matter how aggravating the circumstances. And whenever someone came along, seeking advice on personal or political problems, Gandhi would readily break off what he was doing and give the utmost attention to his troubles. He never treated any matter as trivial, but always gave credit for honesty and sincerity to

all, though often they did not deserve it.

At the daily prayers and the Sunday services at Phoenix, there was a joining together of men, women and children in a united spiritual exercise. Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians sang hymns and read the various scriptures in different languages. This, to my mind, was a unique example of a universal church service, where no particular religion was placed in a superior position and where Truth and Love were acknowledged to be the universal attributes of God. Gandhi was a great lover of these meetings and indeed, was the prime mover in all such gatherings.

One of the finest illustrations of Gandhi's readiness to forgive was when he was struck down on his way to the Registration Office in Johannesburg to give voluntarily his finger impressions. A fight had been going on against the degrading demand that all Indians should give their finger-prints on a certificate of identification. After hundreds of men and women had suffered imprisonment for the sake of principle, Gandhi offered the compromise of voluntarily giving this objectionable form of registration if the Government would withdraw its compulsory regulations. Some could not bring themselves to accept this compromise. One of them, a Pathan, decided to punish the author of the suggestion, and struck Gandhi a blow which almost killed him. When, later, the police wanted Gandhi to agree to a prosecution for the assault upon him, he firmly refused. "He does not realise what he has done," he said. "In his anger at what he considered an insult to himself and his friends, this man has acted in the only way he knew." In time this same Indian came to Gandhi and publicly apologised for his cruel action, and asked for forgiveness, which was readily given, and he became a staunch supporter.

During the strike period in Natal, the atmosphere continued to be strained. An overseer on a sugar estate threatened me with violence because of my "interference" over his treatment of a crippled Indian in his employ. For a time I deemed it advisable to move with my family to Durban, where I could at the same time be in close touch with the Indian position from day to day and keep Gokhale in India informed of the state of affairs.

Gandhi, Polak and Kallenbach were all in gaol. C.F. Andrews and Willie Pearson arrived from India at Gokhale's request when he learned that I too was in gaol. There

was great activity amongst the Indians in Durban. Almost daily, meetings were held at Rustomjee's place. Everywhere I went, detectives seemed to be on the watch, and I felt that at any moment I might be arrested on some charge or other. But that did not happen. I did, however, see the inside of the gaol again when I went with a deputation to interview the Governor regarding the treatment of Indian prisoners.

When things became more settled and there was a prospect of the struggle coming to an end, we went back to Phoenix and carried on the routine of work again there. The passing of the Indians Relief Bill by the Union Parliament in June 1914, brought the eight-years struggle to an end. Beyond reporting the important events that followed and recording the correspondence between Gandhi and General Smuts, I took no part in it. Several public meetings of farewell were held and on July 18, 1914, Gandhi and his wife, accompanied by Kallenbach, sailed for England, where they arrived on the day before the outbreak of the First World War.

* * *

One of the most important gatherings addressed by Gandhi just before he left South Africa was the great open-air meeting of indentured Indians and employers at Verulam, Natal, reported in the local papers. He asked his countrymen to understand that it was wrong for them to consider that the relief had been obtained because he had gone to gaol, or his wife, or those who were near and dear to him. It was because they had the good sense and courage to give up their own lives and to sacrifice themselves, and in these circumstances he had also to tell them that many causes led to that relief, and one of these was certainly also the most valuable and unstinted assistance rendered by Mr. Marshall Campbell of Mount Edgecombe. He thought that their thanks and his thanks were due to him for the magnificent work that he did in the Senate whilst the Bill was passing through it.

They would now not have to pay the 3 tax, and the arrears would also be remitted. That did not mean that they were free from their present indentures. They were bound to go through them faithfully and honestly, but, when those indentures terminated, they were just as free as any other free Indians, and they were entitled, if they would go to the Protector's office, to the same discharge certificate as was granted to those who came before 1895, under Law 25 of 1891. They were not bound to re-

indenture nor to return to India. The discharge certificates would be issued to them free of charge. If they wanted, after having gone to India, to return, they could only do so after they had lived for three years in the Province as free men after serving their indentures.

If any of them wished to have assistance for going to India, they could obtain it from the Government if they did not wish to return from India. If therefore, they wanted to return from India, they must fight shy of that assistance which was given to them by the Government, and should find their own money or borrow it from friends. If they re-indentured, they could come under the same law, namely Law 25 of 1891. His own advice to them was not to re-indenture, but by all means to serve their present masters under the common law of the country. If ever occasion arose, which he hoped would never happen, they now knew what it was possible for them to do.

Now he wanted to remind them that Victoria County, as also the other districts of Natal, had not been so free from violence on their own part as the Newcastle District had been. He did not care that provocation had been offered to them or how much they had retaliated with their sticks or with stones, or had burned the sugarcane - that was not Passive Resistance, and if he had been in their midst, he would have repudiated them entirely and have allowed his own head to be broken rather than permit them to use a single stick against their opponents. And he wanted them to believe him when he told them that Passive Resistance, pure and simple, was an infinitely finer weapon than all the sticks and gunpowder put together.

They might strike work, but they might compel nobody to strike work, and if, as a result of their strike, they were sentenced to be imprisoned, whipped, or to both, they must suffer even unto death - that was Passive Resistance. Nothing else and nothing less than that would satisfy the requirements of Passive Resistance. If, therefore, he was indentured to Mr. Marshall Campbell, or Mr. Sanders, or any friends about there, and if he found that he was being persecuted or not receiving justice, in that case he would not even go to the Protector, he would sit tight and say, "My master, I want justice or I won't work. Give me food if you want to, water if you want to; otherwise I sit here hungry and thirsty," and he assured them that the hardest, stoniest heart would be melted. Therefore let that sink deeply into themselves that whenever they were afraid of any injury being done to them all, that was the sovereign remedy and that

alone was the most effective remedy.

If they wanted advice and guidance and many of them had complained that he was going away, and that his advice would not be at their disposal - all he could suggest to them was that although he was going away, Phoenix was not leaving, and, therefore, if they had any difficulty for which they did not wish to pay Mr. Langston or other lawyers, they should go to Phoenix and ask Mr. West or Mr. Chhaganlal Gandhi what was to be done in any particular case. If Mr. West or Mr. Chhaganlal could help them, they would do so free of charge, and if they could not they would send them to Mr. Langston with a certificate that they were too poor and he had no doubt he would render them assistance free of charge... But, if they were called upon to sign any document whatsoever, his advice to them was not to sign it unless they went to Phoenix and got advice. If Phoenix ever failed them and wanted a farthing from them then they should shun Phoenix.

The scene before him that morning would not easily fade from his memory, even though the distance between him and them might be great. He prayed that God might help them in all the troubles that might be in store for them and that their conduct might be such that God might find it possible to help them. And to the European friends living in this country he wished to tender his thanks, and he wished also to ask them to forgive him if they had ever considered that during that awful time, he was instrumental in bringing about any retaliation at all on the part of his countrymen. He wished to give them this assurance that he had no part or parcel in it, and that so far as he knew, not a single leading Indian had asked the men to retaliate.

There were times in a man's life when he lost his senses, his self-control and under a sense of irritation, fancied or real, began to retaliate when the brute nature in him rose, and he only went by the law of "might is right", or the law of retaliation - a tooth for a tooth. If his countrymen had done so, whether from a real sense of wrong or a fancied, let them forgive him and let them keep a kind corner for him in their hearts; and if there were any employers of indentured labour there present who would take that humble request to them, he did ask them not to act always selfishly, though he knew it was most difficult to eradicate self, and let them consider these indentured labourers not merely as cattle which they had to deal with, but as human beings with the same fine feelings, the same fine sentiments, as themselves.

Let them credit them to the fullest extent with their weaknesses, as also at least with the possibilities of all the virtues. Would they not then treat their Indian employees even as brothers? It was not enough that they were well treated as they well treated their cattle. It was not enough that they looked upon them with a kindly eye merely; but it was necessary that employers should have a much broader view of their own position, that they should think of their employees as fellow human beings and not as Asiatics who had nothing in common with them who were Europeans, and they would have an intelligent interest not merely in the material or physical well-being of their men, but in their moral well-being. They would look after their morality, after their children, after their education, after their sanitation, and, if they were herded together in such a manner that they could not but indulge in hideous immorality, then they would themselves recoil with horror from the very imagination that the men who were for the time being under their control should indulge in these things because they had been placed in these surroundings.

Let them not consider that because these men were drawn from the lowest strata of society they were beyond reclamation. No, they would respond to every moral pressure that might be brought to bear upon them and they would certainly realise the moral weight that is possible for every human being, no matter who he is, no matter what tinge of colour his skin possesses.

* * *

Gandhi's departure from South Africa was a serious blow to those of us who were left at Phoenix. Several of our settlers and Gandhi's sons sailed direct to India, where they expected to meet together for educational and public work. Gokhale was in London and it was intended that he and Gandhi should discuss plans for India. What was foreshadowed in 1912 was now to be realised. But it was not till January 1915 that Gandhi reached Bombay. Meanwhile he lent a hand in recruiting members of the Indian Ambulance Corps.

In reply to one of my letters, I received from London an answer dated November 20, which had been taken in shorthand and written by Mani Lal Chandra and, of course, signed by Gandhi. It appeared that, owing to War conditions, many letters had miscarried. This was the first I had received since his departure from South Africa in July. Here is the main part of it:

"I wish that your surmise was true and that I was working among our wounded soldiers. Most of the members of the Corps are certainly doing so, at Netley. When the last batch went, I was bedridden. In any case, my presence here was necessary to get together the required number of men. I was to have followed, however; but now unheard-of difficulties are being put in my way and I am prevented from going to Netley, or to any of the other hospitals where our wounded soldiers are being received. It seems to me that I am prevented because the officials immediately in charge fear that I might make mischief. The ostensible reason given to prevent my going is ill health. I may be quite wrong in my surmise, however. At any rate, I have placed the whole facts before Mr. Roberts, the Under-Secretary for India, and I should know before long probably. So you will see that I have not been separated either from Mrs. Gandhi or Mr. Kallenbach. We are all now living under Mr. Ganderia's roof. He, as you know, is the Secretary of the Corps. He is the proprietor of a boarding house for Indian students. He has placed one of his best rooms at our disposal.

"I envy your gardening work. Just now my own health seems to have been completely shattered. I feel that I hopelessly mismanaged my constitution in the past. I was in a hurry to regain my lost energy. I therefore overfed the system and over-strained the body in compelling myself to take long strenuous walks. I was too impatient and am paying the penalty. I can now scarcely walk with any strenuousness without the original pains starting. The ribs seem to have become shattered. They will not stand any strain, nor the groins. I, therefore, am obliged largely to keep indoors and remain in bed. Of food I can take very little. The slightest excess would upset me. In spite of all this, I am able to attend to my work. Nor does all this imply that I am only skin and bone. By carefulness I am able to undo the mischief done. The mental and moral atmosphere is also a great drawback. Everything appears so artificial, so materialistic and unmoral, that one's soul almost becomes atrophied.

"I am longing to go to India, and so is Mrs. Gandhi; but a sense of duty - and I am not sure that on this occasion it is a right sense of duty - compels me to remain here. I share your views about war. If I had the moral strength, however, I would certainly be the passive resister that you have pictured in your letter."

A month later I find that he was relieved of this life of uncertainty and was actually on his way to India at last. I value this short note written on a P & O liner, for its continued spirit of friendliness:

"I am thoroughly done up now, but, on the approach of Xmas Eve, I cannot help sending you loving thoughts. Our departure was sudden and early. We are keeping well, considering the stormy whether. My health is improving. I hope to resume writing for Indian Opinion. I have been so often prevented from reaching India that it seems hardly real that I am sitting in a ship bound for India and, having reached that, what shall I do with myself? However, 'Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on.' That thought is my solace, and may it be yours in the darkest moments. With love to you all from both of us."

IV

In the course of my work amongst Indian labourers, I had a good deal to do with lawyers. I wondered if it would be advisable for me to qualify, if possible. So I passed the thought on to Gandhi who, in May 1915, was nearing the end of his first tour of India. I was not surprised to get this reply:

"It is no use your qualifying as a lawyer. It is possible you may get some guilty ones discharged on technicalities, and you may get the innocent also saved from imprisonment. But when you consider what a small percentage of the population passes through the Courts, you at once see that it is no part of a humanitarian's work to take up law. All you can do without getting the title of lawyer, you are doing. More you do not need. If you have leisure, read up your laws by all means, as Mr. Gokhale did, though he never was a lawyer."

Here is one of those personal letters which I value so highly. He had then been in India about a year:

"Your conversational letter I have. It is naturally full of you as I have known you. I never doubted that you would be able to make your way among the officials by your very bluntness. The novelty of resistance may shock them at

first but pleases them afterwards. Even they must get tired of `noddors', if one may coin that noun. And you will have to continue to do that work whether people appreciate it or not, or, rather, want it or not. Appreciation may not be looked for. Do please send me all the correspondence you wish to. I promise to go through it all. Do not think that South Africa disappears from my mind. How could it? I owe much to South Africa, i.e., to friendships formed there. In my moments of sadness, recollection of friends working there is no small comfort. Your success and your failures are alike matters of deepest interest to me.

"Is your little school still going on? How is Granny doing? Is she still as fresh as before? The very thought of her working away is an inspiration. Just now I am reading to the Ashram, at prayer time, Pilgrim's Progress. I often think of Mrs. West's sweet voice and want her to sing to us `When I survey the Wondrous Cross'. The whole of Phoenix rises before us whenever we sing our favourite hymns."

The three years following the exodus of the Gandhi family from Phoenix to India was a period of hard work for us who remained to carry on *Indian Opinion* and develop the agricultural experiment. In addition to editorial work, a constant watch had to be kept on the political situation. Now that Gandhi was in India and Polak in England, where he had gone to stay, it was necessary for me to act as adviser in matters coming under the Relief Act. There was the Repatriation Scheme under which ex-indentured Indians could claim free passages to India for themselves and their families. In this way the Government hoped slowly to get rid of the bulk of the Indian population. Those who took advantage of this offer had clearly to understand that the free passage was to India only, with no right ever to return. It was no wonder, therefore, that the Government was not very satisfied with the result.

Tales were spread abroad which caused confusion among the people concerning their rights. To make the position clear beyond doubt, I issued a circular, in four languages, setting forth the terms of the Government's offer. A footnote was added that I did not advise anyone to re-indenture in order to get a free passage. Better, by far, accept less wages and preserve their independence and self-respect. This was signed, "A. H. West, representing M. K. Gandhi."

For the same purpose I addressed a large gathering of Indians on the Temple grounds at Verulam. With a little knowledge of the Hindi language I prepared a speech on the situation, which I read. An invitation was extended for anyone to come to Phoenix for advice if in doubt.

Articles appeared in Indian Opinion, and the Natal Mercury published a letter from my pen on the Repatriation Scheme.

Our paper was then published in English and Gujarati only. Harilal Thakkar was responsible for the Gujarati translations.

It now rested with Sam and me to see what we could do with agriculture. It became more and more evident that we could not continue to accept financial help from the Passive Resistance Fund. We must, somehow or other, make ourselves self-supporting. We therefore decided to plough up more land, grow crops of corn and fruit and become real farmers. From early morning we worked on the land until midday. In the afternoon for about four hours we did press work and in the evening we resumed work on the land until bed-time. This we did for many months and got a good deal of real pleasure out of it. But it was not profitable. Drought and then floods caused much loss to our crops and rendered the land unworkable for weeks and months.

We soon realised that the land was poor and unproductive. We planted acres of bananas, but they proved a complete failure. Pineapples were the only fruit that prospered. They liked stony ground. Oranges and other citrus fruits were a miserable loss. Whilst we had hope, Sam and I worked to the point of exhaustion to make it a success. Our homes, the children, everything, had to take second or third place. At last we came to the conclusion that we could never make agriculture a paying concern by our methods. If we could adopt the standard of living of a Negro or Indian agriculturist, live in a hut, and, leaving the world aside and the education of our children, scrape a few handfuls of food from the ground, it might be possible, but we could not bring ourselves to do it.

We discussed all this with Gandhi by correspondence and received replies which

only confirmed our opinion. The question of accepting advertisements in *Indian Opinion* and the printing of jobs as a source of income was debated again, although we had for a long time rejected both. Gandhi refused to go back on our principles regarding these, and we agreed. The idea of leaving Phoenix and returning to Durban to do business in competition with other printers was also rejected. Sam and I, therefore, came to the conclusion that the only course open to us was that we alone should retire from Phoenix and earn our living in Durban. After full consideration we put this proposition to Gandhi by cablegram:

"Will you lend Sam myself jobbing plant, papers, earn living Durban? Ultimately complete independence. Paper published English Gujarati Phoenix. Management editorship same time being. Cable reply."

Gandhi's reply was quite clear: "You may enforce your plan. Good luck!"

Gandhi's son Manilal was working with us at Phoenix, having been sent from India by his father some months earlier. We had discussed a proposition that Sam and I might earn our living in Durban whilst continuing to help with *Indian Opinion*, and Manilal thought that this was a good idea. When he was informed of Gandhi's reply to our request for the loan of the jobbing plant and paper stocks, he did not like it. However, he accepted the position and we proceeded to put into force our plan. I told Manilal that he could qualify for the managership in six months' time. Meanwhile I would continue to edit the paper from Durban and come to Phoenix every Wednesday to pass proofs. We started our printing business in Durban and the arrangement about editing *Indian Opinion* was carried out successfully for many months, while I kept in touch with Phoenix by my weekly visits. Eventually Manilal refused to accept an editorial article which I had written, and this led to my discontinuing my editorship of the paper. As we got together the necessary new printing plant for our Durban business, we were able to return to Phoenix the printing plant we had borrowed.

Soon after Manilal had got the management in his own hands, he recommenced job printing and accepted advertisements in *Indian Opinion*. It may well be that he found it impossible to carry on without the necessary financial backing which we had so long enjoyed. Sam and I had made a success of our business, our children were being educated in the schools of Durban and we were living a useful life amongst both Indians

and Europeans. We were satisfied that the step we had taken was the right one, but we remembered, without bitterness, that we had been forced to leave Phoenix partly because *Indian Opinion* was not to be kept up by job printing or advertisements.

The final verdict of Gandhi on these matters was this: "My view is that if you can turn out *Indian Opinion* only by removing to Town, you should suspend publication. I do not like the idea of your competing for jobs or advertisements. I think that when that time comes we shall have outlived our purpose. I would rather that you sold out Phoenix and you and Sam were engaged in some other independent work. If you can make of Phoenix something without the Paper, I should like the idea. But if you cannot even eke out a living from agriculture at Phoenix, Phoenix should be sold."

Regarding the decision to do job printing and accept advertisements, I was not consulted, and I did not refer to the matter in any of my letters. But Gandhi wrote and told me that Manilal had asked him to permit this or to supply him with funds. Gandhi had dissuaded Manilal from making it a business concern. He had not sent him there to do this business but to render public service. He felt that *Indian Opinion* had served its purpose, if only partially. It had brought into being several Indian newspapers. They all in some shape or some degree served the public. He advised Manilal to close down *Indian Opinion*, give up Phoenix, parcel out the land, bring to India the stock of books not wanted for a better purpose, and himself come away with them. That Manilal did not take this advice and continued to publish the paper in his own way for many years is not part of my story.

I have now given a record of my contact with Gandhi from 1903 to 1914. The correspondence which follows shows the extent to which our friendship continued through the years while he was engaged in that great work of bringing about the liberation of India. That epic story has already been amply covered by more capable writers who were on the spot. I feel, however, that there are matters arising out of my experiences with Gandhi that should be discussed by me. There has, for example, been much criticism of Gandhi's action in not giving his sons what is called a proper education. All the boys complained that they were not given a fair chance to follow in their father's footsteps. With the exception of his eldest son, who remained in India in his younger days, none was given even an ordinary elementary school course.

Gandhi thought that what we could give in our little school at Phoenix, or at Tolstoy Farm, or at home, was enough. Moral education was the main thing. The fact that none of us was a trained teacher did not seem to matter, any more than the fact that, though I myself was not a trained journalist, I was thought qualified to edit and manage *Indian Opinion*. In this way, of course, it was easy to show that scholastic education was really unnecessary for the formation of character, which was what really mattered.

Once we were discussing the education of one of his sons, and Gandhi agreed to allow me to approach a lady, the daughter of a Christian missionary, living a few miles away, with a view to his receiving lessons up to the high-school standard. I interviewed the lady, and things seemed to be going on well until I mentioned religious instruction, which Gandhi did not want for his son. Now this was most unfortunate. Had this question not been raised, I do not believe there would have been any trouble. Gandhi, for instance, did not object to his sons taking part in our Sunday services, at which the New Testament was read and Christian hymns were sung. But it was not surprising that the daughter of a missionary should refuse to vow that she would never speak about the Christian religion. That was altogether too much to ask, and so the opportunity was lost.

There was no further opportunity of discussing this matter, probably because we were not together much at the time. I have often thought of it since. I could not understand Gandhi's objection to having his sons educated in the usual way. He had, no doubt, sound reasons for his attitude, which, however, did not change after many years. As for his fears regarding religious instruction, I was also puzzled. It did not seem to fit in with his broad-minded views. Why, for instance, did he have a picture of Christ over his office desk and be a follower of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, and yet fear that Christian teaching might do harm to his son?

Gandhi once told the Federation of International Fellowships, "After long study and experience, I have come to these conclusions, that: (1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some error in them; (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism. My veneration for other faiths is the same as for my own faith." In this spirit we discussed these matters in Johannesburg nearly sixty years ago, and when I left for

Natal, Gandhi gave me two small books. One was the *Bhagavad Gita* and the other, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas a Kempis, with Gandhi's initials signed on the flyleaf of each book.

About the year 1908, Gandhi told me of a friend in India who had asked him to suggest a school in England where he could send his son to be educated. I suggested the Grammar School at Louth, which was well known to me, though I had not attended it. Somewhat to my surprise, the idea was promptly accepted, and when Gandhi was in England soon after, the lad arrived and was personally taken by him to Louth and installed as a boarder. I understand that he did very well and stayed for two years. Incidentally, the school, thought not belonging to any church, was closely attached to the Louth St. James's Church and had daily prayers in school, and the boys attended Sunday services and special term-opening services at church. I was never told that this Hindu lad did not attend.

When the same Indian friend offered to pay the cost of educating one of Gandhi's sons in England, the offer was not accepted. Gandhi suggested the name of another of our Phoenix settlers, and he was sent. Unfortunately, he contracted tuberculosis and had to return to South Africa after a short time. In a letter to me, Gandhi said he would explain his attitude regarding his son's education when we met, but that meeting was crowded out and never took place.

A great friend of mine, who also was a co-worker with Gandhi during the Passive Resistance struggle, wrote me from London in 1920, criticising Gandhi's methods: "He does not seem to me to realise what a very imperfect thing is the human nature which is his material for constructing a better scheme of things and to my mind, he makes the fatal mistake, which the greatest teachers have always avoided, of supposing that everyone is immediately capable of attaining the Kingdom of Heaven."

Many of those who worked in close association with Gandhi would, at times, observe the same thing. And yet we loved him in spite of it, or, rather, because of it. Each one of us knew in his heart that his estimate of our character was pitched too high. If it caused us to aim higher, so much to the good. And many a time it was observed how a man would rise above his normal mental and moral stature to heights of great sacrifice and bravery, all through Gandhi's success as the great leader of the Passive

Resistance movement. It affected everyone, European as well as Asian, young and old, men, women and children.

When we consider Gandhi's life up to the day, thirty-four years later, of his death, what is it that stands out above all else? Were we to put this question to a hundred people, we would get a dozen differing answers. The misguided murderer seemed to regard Gandhi as an enemy of his people and India. Jesus was condemned to death and denounced as a traitor. The truly great men are often despised and rejected. We who were presumed to be friends and associates of Gandhi's often disagreed with his methods and his ideas. But we knew that at all times he acted from motives of truth and of love for all mankind.

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

[Captain, later Sir, Francis Younghusband of Indian Staff Corps, visited South Africa as special correspondent of *The Times of London* and wrote the book *South Africa of Today*, published by Macmillan in 1898. The book contains a chapter on "Indian Immigration to Natal" in which he wrote about his meeting with Gandhiji.]

He (the Indian) has his grievances, and of those I was made acquainted by Mr. Gandhi, the leading merchant (sic!) of Durban... Mr. Gandhi, the spokesman of the Indian community and the butt of the agitators, is a particularly intelligent and well-educated man, who has studied for three years in England and lives in a well-furnished English villa at Durban. At a dinner, to which he and the leading Indians invited me, I found merchants who had visited England and several other countries in Europe, who had bought steamers in Glasgow and conducted business on a large scale, and who could talk fluently in English on all the current events of the time...

What, however, they undoubtedly have to feel anxious about is their future treatment. As Mr. Gandhi pointed out to me, the restrictions placed upon them are being increased year by year...

[The following is from the reminiscence of Sir Francis many years later.²¹]

... when I first knew him (Gandhi) he was just the ordinary courteous English-educated young man, not one whit different from thousands of other Indians who come to Europe. He was under thirty and, dressed in European clothes like the rest, had nothing noteworthy about him.

Yet even then he was beginning to show that grit and grim pertinacity and purpose, and above all that wonderful compassion for the oppressed, which have only increased and intensified in the forty-seven years since we first met in Durban in South Africa. Indian immigration to Natal was then the burning question. Natal was building itself as a flourishing colony. It was prepared to admit some but not an unlimited number of Indians. It had been founded by South Africans and it wanted to keep itself predominantly South African. When therefore Indians began to arrive in what would

21 Sir Francis Younghusband, "Gandhi - after Forty-seven Years" in Radhakrishnan, Dr. Sarvepalli, Mahatma Gandhi, fourth edition. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1977.

soon be overwhelming numbers the Natalians determined to restrict them. This matter was capable of adjustment. What, however, caused the Indians deep resentment was the indignity with which they were treated. Rich and poor, cultured and uneducated, were all classed together as "coolies". Mr. Gandhi was a "coolie". Rich merchants were "coolies". All Indians were "coolies," just as in China all Europeans were "foreign devils."

Young though he then was, Mr. Gandhi had made himself the leader of the Indian community in championing the rights of Indians. He was living in a well-furnished English villa in Durban, and at a dinner to which he invited me as *Times* correspondent I found him to be "a particularly intelligent and well-educated man." But it took a good deal more than mere intelligence and education to accomplish what he afterwards did. The race antagonism rampant in South Africa was then terrific. Antagonism between Boer and British, between South Africans and the Negro races, and between British and Indians. And that a young Indian lawyer should be able to stand up against it showed a courage and a character which were of far more avail than any amount of intellectual education.

By his sacrifice of a lucrative career, by his readiness to undergo imprisonment and ignominy in championing Indian rights, he was able to win the admiration and in the end the adoration of his fellow Indians..."

[The second report of the Natal Indian Congress, covering the period from 1895 to 1899, states that Captain Younghusband, the special correspondent of the London *Times*, paid a visit to Durban. "The Indian side of the Indian question in South Africa was placed before him and all the documents were supplied to him. Messrs Dada Abdulla & Co., entertained him to dinner at the Congress Hall and invited the leading Indians. He has devoted a special chapter to our question in his book on South Africa and, while favouring the attitude taken up by the Europeans, places the Indian side of the question pretty fairly."²²

[Sir Francis attended a meeting, mainly of Quakers, addressed by Gandhi at Friends' House in London on October 31, 1931.²³]

²² *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 3, page 106

²³ *Ibid.*, Volume 46, page 260

APPENDIX

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