

Chapter 3

Gandhi's success in South Africa

3.1 The build-up to becoming and being Mahatma

The time-line of Gandhi's political career in South Africa until his final departure for India in 1914 is suggestive of the intentions of all the lead players – the Imperial British government in London, Gandhi himself, and the then Congress leadership.

In September 1888, Gandhi left for England to pursue higher studies in law. At best a mediocre student, in December 1889 he failed to pass the London matriculation exam in the first attempt. As son of the Dewan of Porbundar, Gandhi would have enjoyed a certain social status in India; in England, because he belonged to the miniscule section of Indians who could at that time afford to travel abroad for higher studies, he would not have been exposed to the kind of naked racism he would soon experience in South Africa. Unable to establish himself as a lawyer after his return to India in June 1891, Gandhi seized the offer of legal work by Dada Abdullah and Co., and set sail for Durban in April 1893. Here he quickly experienced the ugly manifestations of apartheid in every aspect of life in South Africa.

Having consciously chosen to adopt western clothes and manners, Gandhi felt personally humiliated that his western demeanor, London education, and status as a British citizen (which at that time meant being Indian serf in a British-occupied colony) did not count for anything in South Africa – not in Natal, a British colony, nor in the Boer-ruled Transvaal. Apartheid was as deeply entrenched in Natal as it was in the Transvaal. Gandhi began to realize that a White British citizen of a British colony was more equal than a Brown or Black British citizen of a British colony. He was also beginning to realize that the White supremacists in Natal and in the Transvaal treated all 'coloured races' or non-White peoples with the same contempt and brutality. The son of the Dewan of Porbundar could not digest this unfamiliar slight to his self-esteem - that he and other Indians were not equal with the White British citizen before the Queen Empress; worse, they could be 'degraded' to the level of native Africans.

From then on, Gandhi made it his mission to fight to get the Natal and Transvaal governments to raise the status of Indians above that of the native African populace. To this end he began to write protest letters and memorandums (or 'memorials' as he called them), to everyone in power in South Africa and in London. He wrote persistently to the Viceroy in India, to Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, to Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale and the Bombay-born Sir Mancherji

Bhownagregree, (Bhavnagari) the first non-White British Member of Parliament and President of the Parsee Association of Europe. In a remarkable turn of events, and too frequently for sheer coincidence, Gandhi's path now begins to cross the same people, in different positions, at different times, between 1895 and 1909. The imperial government, it seems reasonable to conclude, was shuffling the same officials around in positions from where they had to deal with India and, more pertinently, with Gandhi.

Joseph Chamberlain was Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1895 to 1903. During this period, between 1895 and 1900, Lord Ampthill served Chamberlain as assistant private secretary and then as private secretary; possibly he learnt about Gandhi from the latter's prolific letters to Chamberlain. During this period, Lord Elgin was Viceroy of India. In 1903, following a change of government in Britain, Lord Elgin replaced Chamberlain as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Lord Ampthill, already Governor of Madras in 1900, at the age of 31 years, was elevated to pro-tem Viceroy 1904. In 1906, when Gandhi traveled to London from South Africa on a deputation mission, Winston Churchill was Undersecretary of State for the Colonies; on his second deputation visit to London in 1909, Lord Ampthill was back in London and facilitating Gandhi's meetings with important government officials. It was in 1909 that Gandhi wrote the famous letter to the young Lord Ampthill, positioning himself for a leadership role in India in the near future. Gandhi's path would cross that of Winston Churchill again more than two decades later when Gandhi would participate in the Round Table Conference in London. All these men knew Gandhi from the 1890s itself, and all of them knew India exceedingly well.

Initially, Gandhi's copious letters had little effect on these important men, but as his ceaseless efforts to highlight the severe discrimination faced by Indians in South Africa began to catch the hostile attention of the Natal and Transvaal governments, domestic political compulsions and the beginnings of internal rumbling within the INC forced Gokhale, Wedderburn and Dadabhai Naoroji to take note of Gandhi and the plight of South African Indians.

Around this time, London also began to take note of the condition of Indians in the Transvaal as a means of scoring political points against the Boer regime, while making only cosmetic changes to Natal's severely discriminatory laws against the Indian community. Britain's intrusive interest in the plight of Indians under the Boer regime achieved no lasting gains for the Indians; however, after 1906, when Gandhi adopted passive resistance as the tool of engagement, converging interests in his pacifism forced Congress and the Raj to collaborate with each other. Gandhi went to London on two futile missions to canvass with important British government officials to improve the condition of Indians in Natal and the Transvaal, but after the Boer War, when Britain annexed the

Boer republics as self-governing entities into the Empire, matters worsened for Indians and the Imperial government saw no reason to engage itself further with the Indian question. But Gandhi retained the attention of the Raj.

Well-to-do and well educated Parsees in London, who were well networked with Parsees in South Africa and in the Congress in India, important London-educated and/or London-based Indians, now evinced interest in Gandhi. Their clout with the imperial government in London coincided with the British government's own interest in Gandhi. All these pieces would soon mesh neatly into each other to form the emerging picture of India's immediate political future. The years between 1900 and 1909 show Gandhi, under the motivated patronage of the 'Moderate' leadership of the INC, positioning himself as Empire-loyalist and hence also a virulent critic of the Nationalists (the so-called 'Extremists') and of armed resistance. During this critical period in the making of the Mahatma, Gandhi earned his halo by throwing in his lot, first with the Queen Empress, and then with the King of the British Empire. It matters little if Gandhi's loyalties possibly changed by the 1940s; we hope to show through the timeline that follows that Gandhi chose his friends and allies well at a time when it mattered most to him.

- 1888 October 28, Gandhi arrived in London to study law.
- 1889 November, he is introduced to Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant and from then on, under the influence of the Theosophists, read religious literature and began to attend church services.
- 1891 June, attended lectures by Dadabhai Naoroji.
- 1891 June 12, returned to India after completion of studies.
- 1893 April, sailed for Durban on legal work from Dada Abdullah and Co.
- 1893 Sometime after May, vowed to fight colour prejudice; met Baker, attorney and Christian preacher, who introduced him to other White Christians.
- 1894 August 22, Gandhi took his first important political step by establishing the Natal Indian Congress in response to the proposed Franchise Law Amendment Bill which sought to disenfranchise the Indian community

3.2 Christianity's early and lasting impact on Gandhi

- 1894 November 26, Gandhi's growing interest in Christianity made him an agent for selling Christian literature:

If there is anyone who would like to have a chat on the subject, it would afford me the greatest pleasure to have a quiet interchange of views. In such a case, I would thank any such gentleman to correspond with me personally. I need hardly mention that the sale of the books is not a pecuniary concern.

The books will be gladly lent in some cases. I would try to conclude with a quotation from a letter of the late Abbe Constant to the authors: 'Humanity has always and everywhere asked itself these three supreme questions: Whence come we? What are we? Whither go we? Now these questions at length find an answer complete, satisfactory, and consolatory in *The Perfect Way*'.¹

- 1895 April, visited Trappist monastery near Durban and was impressed with the practice of vegetarianism from a so-called Christian 'spiritual' point of view:

The settlement is a quiet little model village, owned on the truest republican principles. The principle of liberty, equality and fraternity is carried out in its entirety. Every man is a brother, every woman a sister. The monks number about 120 on the settlement, and the nuns, or the sisters as they are called, number about 60. They take no intoxicating liquors except under medical advice. None may keep money for private use. All are equally rich or poor. They may not read newspapers and books that are not religious. *They may not read any religious books but only those that are allowed.* For bedrooms they have a large hall (but none too large for the inmates) which contains about 80 beds. Every available space is utilized for the beds. *In the Native quarters they seem to have overdone it in point of beds. As soon as we entered the sleeping hall for Natives, we noticed the closeness and the stuffy air. The beds are all joined together, separated by only single boards. There was hardly space enough to walk.* They believe in no colour distinctions. The Natives are accorded the same treatment as the whites. *They are mostly children.* They get the same food as the brothers, and are dressed as well as they themselves are. While it is generally said, not without some truth, that the Christian Kaffir is a failure, *everyone, even the wildest skeptic, admit that the mission of the Trappists has proved the most successful in point of turning out really good, Christian Natives.* While the mission schools of other

¹ Letter to *The Natal Mercury*, November 26, *The Natal Mercury*, 3-12-1896, CWMG, Vol. 1, pp 185-86.

denominations very often enable the Natives to contract all the terrible vices of the Western civilization, and very rarely produce any moral effect on them, the Natives of the Trappist mission are patterns of simplicity, virtue and gentleness. It was a treat to see them saluting passers-by in a humble yet dignified manner.

There are about 1,200 Natives on the mission, including children and adults. *They have all exchanged a life of sloth, indolence and superstition, for one of industry, usefulness and devotion to one Supreme God.*

They love and respect, and are in turn loved and respected by, the Natives living in their neighbourhood *who, as a rule, supply them with the converts.*

The most prominent feature of the settlement is that you see religion everywhere. Every room has a Cross and, on the entrance, a small receptacle for holy water which every inmate reverently applies to his eyelids, the forehead and the chest. Even the quick walk to the flour mill is not without some reminder of the Cross. It is a lovely footpath. The walk thus forms a continuous exercise for calm contemplation, unmarred by any other thoughts, or outside noise and bustle. Some of the inscriptions are: 'Jesus falls a first time'; 'Jesus falls a second time'; 'Simon carries the Cross'; 'Jesus is nailed to the Cross'; 'Jesus is laid in his mother's lap', etc., etc..

There are about twelve such settlements in South Africa, most of which are in Natal. There are in all about 300 monks and about 120 nuns. Such are our vegetarians in Natal. *Though they do not make of vegetarianism a creed, though they base it simply on the ground that a vegetarian diet helps them to crucify the flesh better, and though, perhaps, they are not even aware of the existence of the vegetarian societies, and would not even care to read any vegetarian literature, where is the vegetarian who would not be proud of this noble band, even a casual intercourse with whom fills one with a spirit of love, charity and self-sacrifice, and who are a living testimony to the triumph of vegetarianism from a spiritual point of view? I know from personal experience that a visit to*

the farm is worth a voyage from London to Natal. It cannot but produce a lasting holy impression on the mind. No matter whether one is a Protestant, a Christian or a Buddhist or what not, one cannot help exclaiming, after a visit to the farm: 'If this is Roman Catholicism, everything said against it is a lie'. It proves conclusively, to my mind, that a religion appears divine or devilish, according as its professors choose to make it appear.² (emphasis added)

'The Natives of the Trappist mission are patterns of simplicity, virtue and gentleness. It was a treat to see them saluting passers-by in a humble yet dignified manner' remarked Gandhi for whom the saluting native symbolised the successfully civilized slave. Aurobindo's comment on the other hand on the issue of the saluting Indian native is typically laced with biting sarcasm.

A 'veteran' laments the decay of manners among the people of this country, in the hospitable columns of the *Pioneer*. There was a time, only forty years ago, when on the approach of a European, Indian lads would cry – 'Gora ata, gora ata' – and skid. When the same class of lads now 'pass a European with a cigarette between their lips and stare him calmly in the face' and a 'large number of natives salaam with their left hands' – the world or the British Empire, which means the same thing, must be nearing its end.³

It is impossible to argue with a man who sees but refuses to acknowledge. Gandhi saw native Africans cramped into habitations no bigger than cattle pens, saw that the missionaries were bringing in children from the neighbouring villages to convert them, saw that the Trappist missionaries were living in closed communes from where all outside influences, including books were either banned or closely monitored, thereby disproving his eulogy of 'liberty, equality and fraternity', saw that the missionaries were practicing vegetarianism from a narrow understanding of some aspect of their own religion. Yet, because vegetarianism was then Gandhi's pet fetish, he closed his eyes and mind to the truth of life in a Christian mission and exuded breathless admiration. Possibly the Trappist monastery inspired Gandhi's own *Phoenix* and *Tolstoy* settlements, soon

² 'A band of vegetarian missionaries', *The Vegetarian*, 18-5-1895, CWMG, Vol. 1, pp 239-44.

³ *By the Way, Bande Mataram*, October 11, 1906, page 189

established in South Africa, and his later ashrams in Wardha and Sabarmati in India.

- 1896 January, *The Times*, London, striking a racially uncharacteristic editorial note, referred to Gandhi as one 'whose efforts on behalf of his Indian fellow-subjects in South Africa entitle him to respect'.

3.3 Gandhi links Indian polity with South Africa

- 1896 June 5, Gandhi left for India to meet important public figures and to address public meetings between August and October 1896, to raise awareness about the discrimination faced by the Indian community in South Africa. Gandhi travelled to Bombay, Pune, Madras, Calcutta and Nagpur and met M.G. Ranade, Badruddin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Mehta, B.G. Tilak, G.K. Gokhale, Dr. RG Bhandarkar and Surendranath Banerjea.
- 1896 September 26, Gandhi addressed a public meeting in Bombay, presided over by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta under the auspices of the Framji Cowasji Institute:

A general feeling throughout South Africa is that of hatred towards Indian, encouraged by the newspapers and connived at, even countenanced by, the legislators. Every Indian, without exception, is a coolie in the estimation of the general body of the Europeans. Storekeepers are 'coolie storekeepers'. Indian clerks and schoolmasters are 'coolie clerks' and 'coolie schoolmasters'. *Naturally, neither the traders nor the English-educated Indians are treated with any degree of respect. Wealth and abilities in an Indian count for naught in that country except to serve the interests of the European Colonists.* We are the 'Asian dirt to be heartily cursed'. We are 'squalid coolies with truth-less tongues'. We are 'the real canker that is eating into the very vitals of the community'. We are 'parasites, semi-barbarous Asiatics'. We 'live upon rice and we are chock-full of vice'. Statute-books describe the Indians as belonging to the 'aboriginal or semi-barbarous races of Asia', while, as a matter of fact, there is hardly one Indian in South Africa belonging to the aboriginal stock. The Santhals of Assam will be as useless in South Africa as the natives of that country. You can easily imagine how difficult it must be for a respectable Indian to exist in such a country. I am sure, gentlemen, that if our President went to South Africa, he would find it, to use a colloquial phrase, 'mighty hard' to

secure accommodation in a hotel, and he would not feel very comfortable in a first-class railway carriage in Natal, and, after reaching Volksrust, *he would be put out unceremoniously from his first-class compartment and accommodated in a tin compartment where Kaffirs are packed like sheep. Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness. The aim of the Christian Governments, so we read, is to raise people whom they come in contact with or whom they control.* It is otherwise in South Africa. There, the deliberately expressed object is not to allow the Indian to rise higher in the scale of civilization but to lower him to the position of the Kaffir.⁴ (emphasis added)

Gandhi's 'epoch-making struggle' in South Africa was limited to getting the imperial regime in London and the Boer government to dilute apartheid just enough to raise the status of Indians above that of native Africans. While the reference to Indians as 'coolies' enraged Gandhi, he himself employed the pejorative and derogatory 'kaffir' without qualms for the native Africans. Throughout his sojourn in South Africa, Gandhi never once felt that what was humiliating and morally wrong for Indians was so much more humiliating and worse for native Africans whose homeland had been invaded and occupied by sundry Europeans and to which even educated Indians had migrated to make a better living. Gandhi's infatuation for Christianity, for the Queen and for the Empire, his contempt for Hinduism as practiced by ordinary Hindus, his delusions about Christian rule, all remained intact when he returned to India in 1915. Some of his views changed minimally, but the core remained undisturbed till his death. Gandhi's abject ignorance about the consequences of religious conversion is evident from his casual observation about native Africans 'who supply them with the converts'.

Gandhi's poor understanding of the life of native Africans and their worldview was similar to that held by White colonialists when they doubled as Christian missionaries and herded Native Americans⁵ into Christian missions on the pretext that the indolent, loafing natives would

⁴ Speech at Public Meeting, Bombay, September 26, 1896, *The Times of India*, 27-9-1896, and *Bombay Gazette*, 27-9-1896, CWMG, Vol.1 pp 407-17

⁵ The politically correct term for those once called Red Indians.

be subjected to the civilizing mission of the Church and taught to do an honest day's work. Gandhi's eulogy of South African Christian missions, whose inhabitants were mostly children, sharply differs from what missionaries did in Australia when they separated Native children from parents to raise them as 'good, civilized Christians', and the heartrending description by Ward Churchill, a Native-American scholar-writer, of Christian missions in America when sundry Europeans altered the religious demography of America by converting the Native Americans or simply exterminating them:

Some of the worst policy-driven escalations of death from disease north of the Rio Grande were the result of slave-labor systems on the Spanish (Christian) missions in Florida, Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico from roughly 1690-1845. Run first by the Jesuits, later by Franciscans, these institutions were supposedly devoted to the Indians' physical well-being, as well as their spiritual/moral "enlightenment" through revelation of the 'benefits of work'. As late as 1865, New Mexico Indian Superintendent Felipe Delgado wrote to US Indian Commissioner William P Dole in response to queries concerning traffic in native slaves by the missions in his area that the object of the priests' efforts 'has not been to reduce them to slavery, but rather from Christian piety to instruct and educate them in civilization. This has been the practice in this country for the last century and a half, and the result arising from it has been to the captives, favorable, humane and satisfactory'. *In actuality the (Christian) missions were death-mills* in which Indians, often delivered en masse by the military, were allotted an average of seven feet by two feet of living space in what one observer VM Golovin, described as '*specialy constructed cattle pens*'. Usually segregated by sex unless married by Catholic ceremony, each gender typically shared an open pit serving as a toilet facility for hundreds of people. ⁶ (emphasis added)

Several laws were passed and Bills introduced which affected the lives of the Indian community with regard to their habitation, restricting free profession of their trade and de-legitimizing their customs and

⁶ Churchill, Ward, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 1997, City Lights Books, San Francisco, pp 140-41.

traditions.⁷ To cite an instance of Gandhi's 'struggle' to elevate Indians to a higher status than native Africans, he said of the proposed Natal Municipal Corporation Bill:

The definitions given of the terms 'Coloured person' and 'uncivilized races' are very unsatisfactory, and are calculated to incorporate into the Bill the mischief that has been already created by the definition of 'Coloured person'. According to the Bill, the term includes, among others, 'any Hottentot, Coolie, Bushman or Lascar'. Now the terms 'coolie' and 'lascar' themselves require defining, and it is exceedingly dangerous to leave their interpretation to the administrators of the measure, from the Attorney-General down to Kaffir policemen. How, for instance, is a Kaffir policeman to know who is a 'coolie' and who a 'lascar'? Why, again, should the term 'coolie' be at all retained in the Bill, when it is well known how offensive it has become? The definition of the term 'uncivilized races' is an insult to the Indians concerned, and more so to their descendants. An infallible test of civilization is that a man claiming to be civilized should be an intelligent toiler, that he should understand the dignity of labour, and that his work should be such as to advance the interests of the community to which he belongs.

Clause 200 makes provision for registration of persons belonging to uncivilized races, resident and employed within the Borough. One can understand the necessity of registration of Kaffirs who will not work, but why should registration be required for indentured Indians who have become free, and for their descendants about whom the general complaint is that they work too much.⁸

3.4 Gandhi the Empire loyalist

- 1899 October, Boer War begins.
- 1899 October 17, Gandhi offered his services to the British government in the Boer War:

About 100 English-speaking Indians of Durban met together at few hours' notice on the 17th

⁷ For a complete list of all such crippling laws see end of chapter.

⁸ The Natal Municipal Corporations Bill, *Indian Opinion*, March 18, 1905, CWMG, Vol 4, page 214.

inst. to consider the desirability of unreservedly and unconditionally offering their services to the Government or the Imperial authorities in connection with the hostilities now pending between the Imperial Government and the two Republics in South Africa. The motive underlying this humble offer is to endeavour to prove that, in common with other subjects of the Queen-Empress in South Africa, the Indians, too, are ready to do duty for their Sovereign on the battlefield. The offer is meant to be an earnest of the Indian loyalty.

I venture to trust that our prayer would be granted; a favour for which the petitioners will be ever grateful and which would, in my humble opinion; be a link to bind closer still the different parts of the mighty empire of which we are so proud.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant

M. K. Gandhi⁹

Gandhi's stretcher-boy service in this war proved he had no conception of colonialism as evil, and that he considered the White Boers and the White British colonial government as legitimate entities in South Africa. Gandhi, unlike Aurobindo and Tilak, did not see British rule of India as an abomination. This is why he could not personally make, and refused to allow the Indian community in South Africa to make common cause with native Africans; that is why he served the Empire in a war which killed 14,000 native Africans. Gandhi's sympathies in this war lay with one colonial power, the Boers, but he served another White colonial power, the British Empire. The native Africans thus bore the collective brunt of the animosity and ill-will of the Boers, the British Empire, and the migrant Indian community.

- 1899 December 14, organized the Natal Indian Ambulance Corps with around 300 free Indians and 800 indentured Indians, and left for the front. The Ambulance Corps was temporarily disbanded on December 19 and re-formed on 7 January 1900; it was permanently disbanded on 28 January 1900. Gandhi served the British Empire for 25 days in a war that had nothing to do with Indians in South Africa or India.
- 1900 March 14, Gandhi addressed public meeting of Indians and Europeans to felicitate British Generals for victory in the Boer War.
- 1900 May 21, conveyed to Queen Victoria greetings on her birthday.

⁹ *The Indian Offer*, Durban, October 19, 1899, from the photostats of a typed office copy, a rough pencil draft in Gandhi's own hand, S.N. 3301-2, and *The Natal Mercury*, dated 25-10-1899, CWMG Vol. 2, pp 316-17.

- 1900 August 14, informed Colonial Secretary of having forwarded to Turkish Ambassador in London the felicitation of Indians to the Sultan of Turkey on the occasion of the silver jubilee of his reign (possibly a foreshadow of Gandhi's endorsement of the Indian Muslim agitation for restoration of the Turkish Caliphate).
- 1901 January 23, conveyed to Colonial Secretary, on behalf of the Indian community in Natal, condolences over the passing away of the Queen.
- 1901 February 2, Gandhi laid a wreath on the pedestal of the statue of Queen Victoria in Durban and addressed a memorial meeting, paying tributes to the late Queen:

Mr. M. K. Gandhi dwelt on the noble virtues of the late Queen. He referred to the Indian Proclamation of 1858 and the Queen's deep interest in Indian affairs—how she commenced the study of Hindustani language at a ripe age, and how, although she herself could not go to India to be in the midst of her beloved people, she sent her sons and grandsons to represent her.¹⁰

- 1901 March 30, Gandhi singled out for mention in dispatches for services in Boer War; protests at being singled out
- Over a thousand Indians had been recruited by Gandhi to fight in the war between two colonial regimes and yet, the British Government chose to acknowledge only Gandhi's services; and Gandhi protested at being singled out, not because the services of all the other Indians did not even merit a passing mention but because "if I am entitled to any credit for having done my duty, it is due in a great measure to Mr. Shire, Asst. Supt. Indian Ambulance Corps and Dr. Booth, now Dean of St. John's".¹¹
- 1901 October 18, Gandhi left for India promising to return if his services were required.
 - 1901 December 17, left Rajkot for Mumbai on his way to the Calcutta Congress; in Mumbai Gandhi met British Member of Parliament Sir Bhownagree.
 - 1901 December 27, Gandhi got INC to move resolution on South Africa in the Calcutta Congress.
 - 1902 March 30, sent copy of this resolution to Bhownagree.
 - 1902 April 8, sent note to Gokhale congratulating him on his Budget speech in the Imperial Legislative Council.
 - 1902 July 10, left Rajkot for Mumbai to set up law office.
 - 1902 August 1, wrote to Gokhale informing him of the move and offering his services.

¹⁰ Mourning the Queen's Death, February 1, 1901, *The Natal Advertiser*, 4-2-1901, CWMG, Vol. 2 page 388.

¹¹ Letter to Colonial Secretary, March 30, 1901, Pietermaritzburg Archives: C. S. O. 1901/2888, CWMG Vol. 2, page 394.

- 1902 November 14, wrote to Gokhale informing him about his return to South Africa.

3.5 Beginning of Gandhi's political career in South Africa

Gandhi first went to South Africa in 1893; returned to India in 1896; went back to South Africa and returned to India again in 1901; and went back to South Africa for a third time in 1902. It is obvious that since his return to India after studying law, and until 1902, Gandhi failed to establish himself as a lawyer in India or to find a niche in politics. While it is evident that he had a taste for politics even at this time, his political career did not take off until his return to South Africa in 1902, after which both his legal and political career moved rapidly. Gandhi realized his entry into active politics would be possible only through his profession as a lawyer, which is why he returned to South Africa in 1902. He also realized that he could achieve status as a political leader there only if he was perceived as a person with some standing with the political leadership in India.

The Boer Republics were annexed to the Empire even before the war ended in 1902, and Lord Milner arrived from London to take charge as Governor of South Africa. Despite Gandhi having compelled 1100 Indians to run the Ambulance Corps, Lord Milner introduced more disempowering laws, making life even more difficult for the Indian community. The Peace Preservation Ordinance and Ordinance No. 5 of 1903 were promulgated in the Transvaal to regulate the re-entry of Indians who had left the Transvaal for Natal, Cape Colony, and India, when war broke out. As previously mentioned (Chapter 2), this ordinance segregated Asiatics into locations, refused trading licenses except in Asiatic bazaars, and made pre-war licenses of Asiatics non-transferable.

Under the Peace Preservation Ordinance, all entrants to the Transvaal were to be issued permits on request, but as a rule Indians were refused permits and thus prevented from returning to their homes and businesses. Milner set up the Asiatic Affairs Department to enforce the provisions of Law 3 of 1885. The Department was charged with compiling a dossier of all anti-Indian measures that prevailed in the Boer Republics, and these measures were subsequently applied with a vengeance. *Gandhi's volunteering the services of the Indian community proved sterile for the community as a whole, though Gandhi received the Boer War Medal for his loyalty and dedicated service to the Empire.*

- 1903 February 16, opened law office in Johannesburg and enrolled at the Bar of the Transvaal Supreme Court.
- 1903, February 23, forwarded to Dadabhai Naoroji a comprehensive statement on the Indian Question in the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies; wrote to Gokhale that events in the Transvaal were progressing fast and he was "in the thick of the fight."

Gandhi would henceforth brief these leaders regularly about his work in South Africa. *The fact that Congress leaders had the time to engage with Indian affairs in South Africa and involve the INC in the same (without meaningfully improving the condition of the Indian community there), reveals there was no raging "freedom movement" in India.*

- 1903 December 1, wrote to Indian National Congress, Madras, to realize the seriousness of situation in Natal and make early and earnest efforts to prevail upon the Imperial British government to secure relief.
- 1904 October, read Ruskin's '*Unto this Last*' on the way to Durban and decided to establish a commune along the lines indicated by Ruskin; assumed entire responsibility for *Indian Opinion*.
- 1904 November-December, founded the Phoenix Settlement.
- 1904 December 24, first number of *Indian Opinion* issued from Phoenix Settlement.

Indian Opinion's objective was to bring the European and Indian subjects of King Edward closer together; educate public opinion; remove causes for misunderstanding; put before Indians their own blemishes and show them the path of duty while they insisted on securing their rights. This was an Imperial and pure ideal, towards the fruition of which anyone could work unselfishly.¹²

- 1905 August 19, called for united opposition to Bengal partition and supported boycott of British goods.
- 1905 September 16, Gandhi opined that Gokhale was outstanding among the candidates for the post of President of the INC.

This marks the beginning of Gandhi's intervention in the affairs of the Indian National Congress. Hitherto, Gandhi had successfully persuaded the INC, through his influence with important leaders, to involve itself in the affairs of the Indian community in South Africa. Now Gandhi began to involve himself in the affairs of the INC in India. The Congress, it may be kept in mind, was then the sole vehicle for a meaningful political career in India; the Muslim League was as yet unborn.

- 1905 November 1, called for communal harmony in Bengal to strengthen anti-partition agitation, even though he was aware that Muslims were celebrating the partition.

The cablegram from India that has appeared lately in the newspapers brings the aphorism (divide and rule) vividly home to us. It is said that twenty thousand Mahomedans at Dacca, the capital of the new province partitioned from

¹² Ourselves, *Indian Opinion*, 24-12-1904, CWMG Vol. 4, page 145.

Bengal, assembled together and offered prayers of thanksgiving to the Almighty for the partition, and their consequent deliverance from Hindu oppression.¹³

Gandhi's unequal insistence on Hindu-Muslim unity began in South Africa; he carried it unchanged to India in 1915, and retained it even after vivisection of the Hindu *bhoomi* in 1947 and until his assassination in 1948. Both Congress and the Nehruvian secular polity faithfully bear the coffin of Gandhian sentimentalism on their shoulders to this day.

- 1905 December 4, in his capacity as Secretary, British Indian Association, Gandhi bade farewell to Sir Arthur Lawley, Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal, and Governor-designate of Madras.

This was yet another instance of 'shuffling' by the imperial government in London. Arthur Lawley, confirmed proponent of apartheid who had supported confining Indians and other 'Asiatics' to specified locations, was appointed Governor of Madras to succeed Lord Ampthill. Notwithstanding such dubious antecedents, Gandhi bestowed upon Lawley a glowing write-up in *Indian Opinion*, going so far as to present his personal opinion as that of the entire British Indian community in South Africa:

We congratulate Sir Arthur Lawley on his appointment as Governor of Madras. *It is a distinction well deserved by His Excellency. Sir Arthur is always kindly, courteous, and solicitous for the welfare of those whose interests are entrusted to him.* His views about Indians are strange, and we have been often obliged to comment upon many inaccuracies into which he has been led in considering this question, but we have always believed that these views have been honestly held. Moreover, wrongly though we consider it to be so, Sir Arthur has believed that, in upholding the anti-Indian policy, he would best serve the interests of the European inhabitants of the Transvaal. The mere fact, however, that Sir Arthur has been led to hold such views, owing to his extreme anxiety to serve the European interests in the Transvaal, may be his strength in Madras, *for his kindness, his courtesy, his sympathy and his anxiety have now to be transferred to the millions of Indians over whose destiny he is to preside for the next five*

¹³ Divide and Rule, *Indian Opinion*, 4-11-1905, CWMG Vol. 4, page 477.

years. Sir Arthur Lawley is to fill the place vacated by Lord Amthill, who has endeared himself to the people of the Madras Presidency. We hope that Sir Arthur will continue the traditions he inherits.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

The column in *Indian Opinion* shows that Gandhi knew that Lawley was an unbridled racist. Lawley favoured apartheid, was virulently anti-Indian in South Africa, yet Gandhi, instead of raising a hue and cry over his appointment and warning Gokhale, Naoroji and others to resist it, actually congratulated Lawley and declared he would be good for Madras and her people with his "kindliness, courtesy, sympathy and anxiety"! Gandhi's hope that Lawley would treat the people of Madras Presidency with the same kindliness, courtesy, sympathy and anxiety with which he practiced apartheid in South Africa, was akin to his call for Hindu-Muslim unity to fight the partition of Bengal despite knowing that over 20,000 Muslims had gathered in Dacca to tender thanks to Allah for delivering them from Hindu rule. This sublime indifference to ground realities would manifest again in 1946, when in spite of knowing Mountbatten's role in delivering Indonesia back to her colonial oppressors and splintering the country, Gandhi, and the INC dominated by him, permitted Mountbatten to enter India as last Viceroy. Within months of Mountbatten assuming charge as Viceroy in January 1947, vivisection was not only an accepted condition for transfer of power in April 1947, but became a fact of history on 15 August 1947.

- 1906 February 26, Gandhi suggested to Dadabhai Naoroji that a deputation of British Indians in South Africa meet with British Ministers on the issue of safeguarding Indian interests in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony.
- 1906 February, Bambatha Uprising or 'Zulu Uprising'.
- 1906 March 17, Gandhi exhorted Indians to volunteer their services to the Government on the occasion of the Zulu Rebellion.
- March 1906, Gandhi took a vow of absolute continence for life.
- Before March 31, Imperial Government set up a commission to look into the proposed Transvaal constitution after becoming a self-governing colony of the British Empire.
- 1906 April 12, wrote to William Wedderburn about the deteriorating conditions of Indians in the Transvaal.
- 1906 April 14, Natal Indian Congress decided to send a deputation led by Gandhi to London to meet British Ministers.
- 1906 April 24, Natal Indian Congress agreed to Gandhi's proposal to set up the Indian Ambulance Corps to serve the government in its war against the Zulus in the Bambatha Uprising.¹⁵

¹⁴ Sir Arthur Lawley as Governor of Madras, *Indian Opinion*, 2-12-1905, CWMG Vol. 5, page 32.

¹⁵ For details about the Zulu massacre see appendix at end of chapter.

This was a brutal genocide of Zulus by the British, at par with the genocide of Native Americans:

Columbus stands, by this definition, not as Italian, Spaniard, Portuguese or Jew but as the penultimate European of his age, the emblematic personality of all that Europe was, had been and would become in the course of its subsequent expansion across the face of the earth. As a symbol then, Christopher Columbus vastly transcends himself. He stands before the bar of history and humanity, culpable not only for his deeds on Espanola, but, in spirit at least, for the carnage and cultural obliteration which attended the conquests of Mexico and Peru during the 1500s. *And the ghost of Columbus stood with the British in their wars against the Zulus and various Arab nations, with the United States against the 'Moros' of the Philippines, the French against the peoples of Algeria and Indochina, the Belgians in the Congo, the Dutch in Indonesia.* Nazism was never unique: it was instead only one of an endless succession of "New World Orders" set in motion by the Discovery. It was neither more nor less detestable than the order imposed by Christopher Columbus upon Espanola; 1493 or 1943, they were part of the same irreducible whole.¹⁶ (emphasis added)

This is a devastating commentary by a Native American scholar of a man whose 'discovery' of the New World exterminated entire civilizations, cultures and peoples in the Americas and the Caribbean; yet in 1992, the western world sought to make the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus discovering the Americas for the Pope and the Catholic faith into a global celebration. Tilak and Aurobindo understood the nature of colonialism and hence insisted on political freedom preceding all other nation-building activities. But Gandhi never made the critical connection between the White race, Christianity, and colonialism; his stretcher-boy service to the empire attests to this monumental ignorance.

- 1906 May 12, Gandhi supports home rule for India "in the name of justice and for the good of humanity".
- 1906 May 26, ahead of Queen Victoria's birthday celebrations, Gandhi appealed to public men of South Africa to abjure race hatred and colour prejudice.

¹⁶ Churchill, Ward, op. cit., page 92.

- 1906 May 30, British Indian Association decides to include Haji Habib and H O Ally in deputation to England.
- Natal government accepts Natal Indian Congress offer to organize ambulance corps.
- 1906 June 16, Indian stretcher-bearer corps' pledge of allegiance published in *Indian Opinion*:

We, the undersigned, solemnly and sincerely declare that we will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, His Heirs and Successors, and that we will faithfully serve in the supernumerary list of the Active Militia Force of the Colony of Natal as Stretcher-Bearers, until we shall lawfully cease to be members thereof, and the terms of the service are that we should each receive Rations, Uniform, Equipment and 1s. 6d. per day.

M.K. Gandhi, U.M. Sehlat, H.I. Joshi, S.B. Medh, Khan Mahomed, Mahomed Shaikh, Dada Mian, Pooti Naiken, Appa Samy, Kunjee, Shaikh Madar, Mahomed Alwar, Muthusamy, Coopoosamy, Ajodhya Singh, Kistama, Ali, Bhailal, Jamaludin.¹⁷

- 1906 June 21, ambulance corps receives marching orders.
- 1906 June 22, Gandhi given rank of Sergeant-Major by British government.
- 1906 July 19, Indian stretcher-bearer corps disbanded.
- 1906 August 7, Sir Henry MacCallum, Governor of Natal, thanked Gandhi for services rendered by stretcher-bearer corps.
- 1906 August 25, Gandhi demanded Indians no longer be classified as 'coloured people'.
- 1906 September, despite Gandhi's services to the Empire, owing allegiance not only to the then king but also his heirs and successors and persuading a reluctant Natal Indian Congress and other Indians to join him on the promise of possible full citizenship if they served the Empire loyally, the British regime in South Africa promulgated the draconian Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, No. 29 of 1906, later known as the Black Act. However, Gandhi was decorated with the Zulu War Medal as compensation.
- 1906 September 11, Gandhi announced first *Satyagraha* campaign against proposed Asiatic Ordinance at a mass meeting of Indians at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg. Gandhi 'threatened' *Satyagraha* if the ordinance was made into law. *Satyagraha* was the first of the two resolutions passed at the meeting. The second resolution decided to send a deputation led by Gandhi to London to meet British ministers.

¹⁷ Pledge of allegiance, *Indian Opinion*, 16-6-1906, CWMG, Vol. 5, page 262

The vow of continence for life and *Satyagraha* mark the well-crafted official beginning of the 'making of the Mahatma'.

3.6 The course of Satyagraha was directed from behind

- 1906 October 20, Gandhi arrived in Southampton en route to London on his first deputation visit; met Dadabhai Naoroji.
- 1906 sometime before October 25, met Sir Mancherji Bhownaggee.
- 1906 October 26, met Wedderburn and Dadabhai Naoroji.
- 1906 October 27, interviewed by Reuter.
- 1906 October 27 and 30, met Bhownaggee again.
- 1906 October 31, met Sir Richard Solomon at the House of Commons.
- 1906 November 7, addressed Members of Parliament.
- 1906 November 8, deputation to Lord Elgin.
- 1906 November 23, deputation met John Morley, Secretary of State for India.
- 1906 November 26, Liberal members of Parliament asked Prime Minister to receive the deputation regarding Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance.
- 1906 November 28, Gandhi met Winston Churchill to protest the Transvaal Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance No.29.

It is pertinent that Gandhi returned to South Africa with the intention of making something of his life only in 1902. In 1906, he was a still a nonentity; hence it is strange that Members of Parliament, Winston Churchill, the Under-Secretary of State, and other powerful government officials agreed to meet an obscure Indian lawyer from South Africa. Even if Gandhi had been a man of consequence, a person like Churchill would have associated with him only if Gandhi was perceived as no threat to the Empire, and possibly also as a gesture of reward for his public professions of loyalty to the Empire and his Ambulance Corps services during the Boer War and the Bambatha Uprising.

- 1906 December 3, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Elgin, declined to approve the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance; this was announced in the House of Commons by Churchill the same day. This was a small but temporary concession by the British government to Gandhi; it would be rendered futile as the Asiatic Law would come back in another guise.
- 1906 December 6, Transvaal received responsible 'self-government' from Britain; there followed a slew of laws discriminatory to Indians and increasing segregation, including in schools.
- 1907, The South African Indian community comprising the Natal Indian Patriotic Union and the Natal Indian Congress grew very critical of Gandhi as he had made Indians willy-nilly partners in his personal whims with regard to the Empire and the methods to be

employed to assert their rights, without getting tangible or lasting relief from the government.

- 1907 February 7, fortuitously for Gandhi's shaky leadership, Winston Churchill informed the British House of Commons that the Natal government had been refused leave to introduce legislation excluding Asiatics from obtaining trading licenses.
- 1907 March 19, Transvaal Colonial Secretary, Gen. J.C. Smuts re-introduced the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance which had failed to gain assent in December 1906, under the name Transvaal Asiatic Registration Bill, also known as the Black Act.
- 1907 March 22, the Asiatic Registration Bill was passed by the Transvaal Parliament; it required all male Asians to register and be finger-printed and carry registration passes at all times.

Gandhi protested not so much against the registration of all male Asians, but because the Indian community stood 'degraded' to a level lower than native Africans. The Regulations for Towns stipulated that Coloured people could not walk on pavements, sidewalks or *stoeps* of the streets or towns; the habitation of the Indian community was segregated within '*coolie settlements*'.

- 1907 March 29, Indians held a mass protest meeting in Gaiety Hall, Johannesburg; after the perfunctory noises, Gandhi inexplicably capitulated to the regime and offered to register voluntarily if the Act was withdrawn.
- 1907 April 4, Gandhi led a deputation to meet Gen. J.C. Smuts to present the resolutions passed on 29th March in Johannesburg. Gen. Smuts agreed to meet Gandhi. (*This was tantamount to the South African government meeting Gandhi*).
- 1907 June 7, the Transvaal British Indian Association sent a deputation on a similar mission to meet Transvaal Prime Minister Gen. Louis Botha, who refused to meet it. (*The South African government which met Gandhi, refused to meet other Indians*).
- 1907 July 1, The Asiatic Registration Act came into operation.
- 1907 July 31, an open air mass meeting was held in Pretoria against the Black Act and Indians decided to launch *satyagraha* in protest, to go to prison rather than register.
- 1907 August 8, Gandhi wrote to Gen. Smuts with suggested amendments to the Asiatic Registration Act.
- 1907 November 22, wrote to Gokhale suggesting Hindu-Muslim compact be made special feature of forthcoming Indian National Congress at Surat. Gandhi's recommendation for a Hindu-Muslim compact was a significant indicator of the course that events in India would take after Gandhi's return to India; the word 'compact' was also symptomatic of how Gandhi perceived the place of Muslims in the nation. By calling for a 'compact' Gandhi reiterated the theme of limited convergence of interests offered by the Muslims in 1857, thus legitimising the innate separateness of the Muslim identity. Unlike

Aurobindo, Gandhi did not ask for assimilating all sections of Indian society, including the Muslims into the INC but acknowledged the separateness of the Muslim identity and asked for a 'compact' or 'partnership'. This was no small ideological positioning and perhaps one of the reasons why the Congress split into two distinct ideological groups – the Moderates and the Nationalists (Extremists) in December 1907 at Surat:

Dear Professor Gokhale,

I have sent a letter addressed to you through Mr. Ameerodeen Fajandar, one of the delegates from the Transvaal who will attend the Congress at Surat. May I draw your attention to the fact that the struggle we are undergoing here has resulted in making us feel that we are Indians first and Hindus, Mahomedans, Tamils, Parsees, etc. afterwards. You will notice, too, that all our delegates are Mahomedans. I am personally glad of the fact. And it may also happen that there will be many Mahomedans, having South African connections, attending the Congress. May I ask you to interest yourself in them and make them feel perfectly at home? A Hindu-Mahomedan compact may even become a special feature of this Congress. The rest of the struggle you know from the papers.

Yours sincerely, M. K. Gandhi¹⁸

1908 saw a slew of anti-Indian laws passed by Gen. Smuts. One was The Immorality Amendment Ordinance, Act No. 16 of 1908 which outlawed sexual relations between Whites and non-Whites.

- 1908 January 1, Transvaal Immigrants' Restriction Act (henceforth referred to as TIRA) (No. 15 of 1907) came into force. Mass meeting held at Surti Mosque, Fordsburg, to protest against TIRA and Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act (henceforth TARA) (Law 2 of 1907).
- 1908 January 4, the Transvaal British Indian Association informed the Transvaal government that if trading licenses were refused to them for failing to register, they would trade without license. Gen. Smuts refused to withdraw the Asiatic Registration Act and refused to meet Gandhi. Smuts added that Indians had been misled by their leaders and declared that no Parliament in the country could repeal TARA.
- 1908 January 8, within four days of Gen. Smuts refusing to meet Gandhi, Gandhi told Reuters that if the Asiatic Registration Act was

¹⁸ Letter to GK Gokhale, Johannesburg, November 22, 1907, From a photostat of the typewritten original signed by Gandhi: G.N. 4109, CWMG Vol. 7, page 354.

- suspended (a quiet shift from the demand to 'withdraw'), Indians would register voluntarily.
- 1908 January 10, Gandhi arrested and sentenced to two months' imprisonment for refusing to obey court orders to leave Transvaal. *On this day Gandhi first used the word Satyagraha for his brand of passive resistance.*
 - 1908 January 21, Gen. Smuts sent an emissary to meet Gandhi in prison with settlement proposals with regard to the Asiatic Registration Act.
 - 1908 January 28, At meeting in New Reform Club, London, Sir. W. Wedderburn declared that as the Imperial Government spent £ 3 million annually on the defense of the Transvaal, it had a right to demand that Transvaal Indians be treated in keeping with Imperial traditions. Sir M.M. Bhownagree warned of an 'Imperial danger' and M.A. Jinnah (appointed by Anjuman Islam, Bombay, 'to proceed to England and there to place the position of the Transvaal Indians before the people of England and to do all in his power to create public opinion in favor of a settlement of the Asiatic difficulty in the Colonies', *Indian Opinion*, 11.1.1908) said all Indians were united in their protest against the humiliating treatment of Transvaal Indians.
 - 1908 January 28, emissary Albert Cartwright met Gandhi in prison with a 'compromise formula.' Gandhi made some face-saving token amendments and signed the proposal.
 - 1908 February 3, G.K. Gokhale asked at the Viceroy's Council if the Government was aware of 'the depth and intensity of public feeling' at the 'injustice and indignities' of Transvaal Indians. Replying for Government, Findlay said that they sympathized with their Transvaal subjects and had reason to hope 'current negotiations' would remove their 'just grievances'.
 - 1908 February 3, Gandhi met Gen. Smuts who agreed to repeal the Asiatic Registration Act if Indians registered voluntarily.
 - 1908 February 4, Lord Ampthill places a 'calling-attention' motion in House of Lords on the issue, Lord Curzon also spoke.
- The position that William Wedderburn, Mancherjee Bhownagree, Gopalkrishna Gokhale and Ampthill were taking with regard to the 'injustices and indignities' of Transvaal Indians and their righteous indignation over the treatment meted to Gandhi in prison was ironical to put it mildly, considering the fact that it was exactly at this time that the British government in India was decimating Tilak, Aurobindo and other nationalists in the INC.*
- 1908 February 5, Gen. Smuts hardened stand and declared the Act would not be repealed as long as even a single Indian failed to comply with requirements.
 - 1908 February 10, voluntary registration of Indians begins; Gandhi attacked and wounded by Mir Alam Khan for entering into this humiliating agreement with Gen. Smuts. Gandhi recuperated under the care of Christian missionaries and appealed for forgiveness for his assailants:

I am well in the brotherly and sisterly hands of Mr. and Mrs. Doke. I hope to take up my duty shortly. Those who have committed the act did not know what they were doing. They thought that I was doing what was wrong. They have had their redress in the only manner they know. I, therefore, request that no steps be taken against them.

Assault or no assault, my advice remains the same. The large majority of Asiatics ought to give finger-prints. Those who have real conscientious scruples will be exempted by the Government. To ask for more would be to show ourselves as children. The spirit of passive resistance, rightly understood, should make the people fear none and nothing but God—no cowardly fear, therefore, should deter the vast majority of sober-minded Indians from doing their duty. The promise of repeal of the Act against voluntary registration having been given, it is the sacred duty of every good Indian to help the Government and the Colony to the uttermost.¹⁹

- 1908 March 5, Addressed public meeting under auspices of Natal Indian Congress at Durban; another attempted assault on Gandhi by Pathans.
- 1908 March 6, Met Durban Pathans who insisted he had betrayed the community; reported that this conciliatory meeting was a failure.
- 1908 June 24, Tilak arrested in India on charges of sedition.
- 1908 June 31, Gen. Smuts reneged on earlier commitment and declared that repeal of the Asiatic Registration Act was preposterous; Gandhi cried 'foul'.
- 1908 July 20, Gandhi began *Satyagraha* to protest Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act, Transvaal Immigration Restriction Act and Transvaal Municipal Consolidation Bill.
- 1908 on or before August 1, Gandhi wrote in *Indian Opinion* that 'after great deliberation' Tilak's views on British rule should be rejected. It would be harmful, even useless, to use violence to uproot British rule.²⁰
- 1908 August 14, Gandhi appealed to Gen. Smuts to repeal the Black Act, failing which he would intensify the stir.

¹⁹ Letter to Friends, *Indian Opinion*, 15-2-1908, CWMG pp 135-36.

²⁰ Gandhi began to position himself as a votary of non-violence, in contrast to Aurobindo and Tilak. For full text of Gandhi's repudiation of Tilak, see end of chapter.

- 1908 August 18, apparently in response to Gandhi's warning of intensifying *Satyagraha*, Transvaal Prime Minister Louis Botha and Transvaal Colonial Secretary Gen. Smuts met Gandhi to 'discuss the Indian question'.
- 1908 August 20, Indians reject proposed amendments to the Registration Act; at a mass meeting Gandhi issues ultimatum to Gen. Smuts to repeal the Act.
- 1908 August 21, the very next day, Gen. Smuts introduced the Amendment Bill in Parliament; the Bill was passed.
- 1908 September 9, British Indian Association assumed Gandhi's financial responsibilities, his own needs being looked after by Dr. Hermann Kallenbach.
- 1908 September 18, Sanction of Royal assent to new Asiatic Act reported; also decision authorizing Lord Amphill to represent grievances of Transvaal Indians to Imperial Government.
- 1908 October 7, Arrested at Volksrust, along with fifteen other Indians, for entering Transvaal without registration certificates.
- 1908 October 13, Gandhi in detention sent message exhorting Indians to go to jail for the sake of the motherland.

It may be pertinent to question which motherland? If it was India, how did Indians going to jail in the Transvaal serve the cause of political freedom, if political freedom was indeed the goal of the Indian National Congress? If it was South Africa, Gandhi had no sympathy or affinity with its true native populace.

- 1908 October 14, sent to two months' imprisonment with hard labour.
- 1908 October 15, Gandhi reported at road-making work on Market Square. Reuter's Volksrust correspondent wrote, 'Mr. Gandhi expressed himself as being the happiest man in the Transvaal'.

It is notable that Reuter now embarks upon a mission to give extensive publicity to the 'Mahatma in the making.'

- 1908 October 21, In reply to a question in the House of Lords by Amphill, the Earl of Crewe stated he had wired Transvaal for facts about Gandhi's arrest and added that Gandhi had been participating in 'passive resistance campaign, and paid the penalty'.
- 1908 October 22, Viceroy of India conveyed to India Office the Indian resentment at the treatment meted out to passive resisters in Transvaal, recommended civility and urged concession of India demand for entry of six educated India annually into the Transvaal
- 1908 October 25, Gandhi removed from Volksrust Gaol to Johannesburg in convict's garb to testify in Daya Lala's case; refused offer of cab, and marched on foot from Park Station to Fort, carrying prison knapsack. These were not just 'mahatma-making' but also 'politician-making' years.
- 1908 November 28, Muslims telegraphed protest against General Botha's statement that many Mahomedans had declined to join passive resistance movement.

- 1908 December 12, Gandhi released from Volksrust prison.
- 1908 December 15, General Botha communicated to Lord Selborne his inability to revise policy. Transvaal Colonial Secretary, in reply to Transvaal Governor, denied promise of repeal of Act 2 of 1907.
- 1908 December 23, Gandhi presented to the Volksrust prison officer a copy of Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is within You*.
- 1908 December 31, Indian National Congress resolution on South Africa considered harsh, humiliating and cruel treatment of British Indians as injurious to British Empire.

No substantial concessions were granted by the Imperial government in London or the South African regime, despite sympathetic noises by important British officials in London, by Congress in India, and by Gandhi in South Africa. It bears remembering that at this time Gandhi was attempting to challenge entrenched apartheid, which was not to end until 1990, through non-violent passive resistance, which he re-designated '*Satyagraha*'.

- 1909 January 20, Gandhi wrote to the press stating that Indians had entered the third and final phase of struggle.
- 1909 January 27, Gandhi wrote to Lord Curzon hoping latter's intervention would result in happy termination of struggle.
- 1909 February 2, Lord Curzon obligingly informed Gandhi of his discussion with Botha and Smuts and of 'their anxiety to treat British Indians in spirit of liberality and justice'.
- 1909 February 22, Gandhi left Phoenix for Johannesburg, and was arrested on 25th with Polak and Vyas; sentenced to three months' imprisonment.
- 1909 March 3, reached Pretoria Central Gaol.
- 1909 March 10, Gandhi taken in handcuffs to court as witness. Passive resisters congratulated Kasturba Gandhi on Gandhi's third sentence of imprisonment for sake of self-respect and honour of Asiatic communities.
- 1909 March 11, Joseph Doke, in letter to Johannesburg press, referring to Gandhi being handcuffed, observed that 'the great majority of our Colonists feel ashamed that a man of the character and position of Mr. Gandhi should be needlessly insulted in this way'; the implication being these 'colonists' had not felt just as indignant when politically obscure persons had been handcuffed and otherwise treated with little dignity.
- 1909 March 26, *Government of India*, in reply to cable of March 17 from BIA, Port Elizabeth, assured continued 'endeavours to obtain sympathetic treatment for British Indians in the Transvaal, but *regretted inability to interfere in cases of penalty for noncompliance with law*'. (emphasis added)
- 1909 March 29, *Transvaal Governor communicated* to BIA reply from Secretary of State of Colonies to their petition of September 9, 1908, *that Transvaal Government was unwilling to repeal Registration*

Act and Imperial Government not in a position to press repeal; and that views of two sides on yearly admission of six educated Indians differed only as regards method and machinery.

- 1909 April 12, Question of Gandhi being marched in handcuffs raised in Commons; Under Secretary of State for Colonies (Winston Churchill) insisted that no special disability or indignity was imposed on Gandhi as passive resister.
- 1909 May 24, Gandhi released from Pretoria Central Gaol at 7.30 a.m.; said at meeting in Mohammedan Mosque Hall that he felt no pleasure at being free.
- 1909 June 16, Addressed Johannesburg Indian mass meeting convened to appoint deputations to England and India.
- 1909 June 21, Gandhi replies to Habib Motan on the issue of a Muslim in the Viceroy's Council and his familiar prescription for Hindu-Muslim unity. It is pertinent that in 1909, this prescription was proffered, with great confidence - a measure of Gandhi's surging confidence and determination to lead the INC in India. That his prescription was de-linked from ground reality was neither here nor there can be witnessed below:

Here is my reply to your letter dated 17th June.
I do not know exactly what the demands of the Muslim League are, for I was in gaol at the time, and I have not yet acquainted myself with what happened during my imprisonment. I think it reasonable that a Muslim should be appointed to the Viceroy's Council. If Lord Morley has ordered such an appointment, I think he is justified. I make no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. To me both are sons of Mother India. *My personal view is that, since numerically Hindus are in a great majority, and are, as they themselves believe, better-placed educationally, they should cheerfully concede to their Muslim brethren the utmost they can. As a satyagrahi, I am emphatically of the view that the Hindus should give to the Muslims whatever they ask for, and willingly accept whatever sacrifice this may involve. Unity will be brought about only through such mutual generosity.* If Hindus and Muslims observe, in their dealings with one another, the same principles that govern the relations of blood-brothers, there will be unbroken harmony

between the two communities, and then alone will India prosper.²¹ (emphasis added)

A great disconnect between Gandhian prescriptions and logic is evident here. Gandhi describes himself as a *satyagrahi*, but why should that compel Hindus to give the Muslims 'whatever they ask for'? Gandhi proclaims authoritatively that 'Unity will be brought about only through such mutual generosity', but the fact is that if Hindus make all the sacrifices and Muslims only receive, there surely is little 'mutual generosity' involved. It seems a heavy price to pay for 'unbroken harmony'.

3.7 1909 - The turning point in Indian history

- 1909 June 21, Gandhi and Haji Habib sailed to England on second lobbying mission.

'British Parliament was debating a draft bill for the creation of the Union of South Africa. To lobby for their interests, the Transvaal Asians sent a two-member deputation comprising Hajee Habib and Gandhi to London. *It spent four disappointing months between July and November in London and returned empty-handed.*'²²

- 1909 July 1, Sir Curzon Wylie, Private Secretary to Lord Morley, assassinated by Madanlal Dhingra. Dr. Cowasji Lalkaka also killed.

Madanlal Dhingra's act, like that of the Chapekar brothers and later of Bhagat Singh, was inspired by nationalist personages like Tilak, Aurobindo, Savarkar, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and others who advocated armed resistance to the evil of colonial occupation of the motherland and the resulting slavery of the people. Gandhi's writing on the issue indicated his thinking and probably enticed the imperial British government to examine his potential. Gandhi's arguments rested on his favourite presumption – that only people incapable of reason, logic and deep thinking took recourse to armed resistance. He dismissed with sublime contempt the intellectually stimulating writings of Tilak, Aurobindo and Savarkar as mere 'worthless writings', while people like Dhingra, the Chapekar brothers and Bhagat Singh acted as they did only because of their poor intellect, resulting in 'ill-digested reading'. Yet Tilak had already been arrested for inspiring the Chapekar brothers; Aurobindo was also incarcerated. Gandhi's call to punish those that 'incited him' was a pointer in

²¹ Letter to Habib Motan, Johannesburg, before June 21, *Indian Opinion*, 26-6-1909, CWMG Vol. 9, page 384

²² Footnote to Foreword, HS, page 9

Savarkar's direction, which the British government followed with alacrity. Gandhi's logic regarding what Britain or the British people would do in the event of a German attack is simply surreal even as his potshot at India's surviving Hindu rulers was at grim variance with reality:

It is being said in defense of Sir Curzon Wylie's assassination that it is the British who are responsible for India's ruin, and that, just as the British would kill every German if Germany invaded Britain, so too it is the right of any Indian to kill any Englishman. Every Indian should reflect thoughtfully on this murder. It has done India much harm; the deputation's efforts have also received a setback. But that need not be taken into consideration. It is the ultimate result that we must think of. *Mr. Dhingra's defence is inadmissible. In my view, he has acted like a coward. All the same, one can only pity the man. He was egged on to do this act by ill-digested reading of worthless writings. His defence of himself, too, appears to have been learnt by rote. It is those who incited him to this that deserve to be punished. In my view, Mr. Dhingra himself is innocent. The murder was committed in a state of intoxication. It is not merely wine or bhang that makes one drunk; a mad idea also can do so.* That was the case with Mr. Dhingra. The analogy of Germans and Englishmen is fallacious.²³ If the Germans were to invade [Britain], the British would kill only the invaders. They would not kill every German whom they met. Moreover, they would not kill an unsuspecting German, or Germans who are guests. If I kill someone in my own house without a warning—someone who has done me no harm—I cannot but be called a coward. There is an ancient custom among the Arabs that they would not kill anyone in their own house, even if the person be their enemy. They would kill him after he had left the house and after he had been given time to arm himself.

²³ This was in response to Dhingra's unassailable logic at the inquest when he demanded, "If the Germans have no right to rule over England, then what right does England have to rule over India"?

Those who believe in violence would be brave men if they observe these rules when killing anyone. Otherwise, they must be looked upon as cowards. It may be said that what Mr. Dhingra did, publicly and knowing full well that he himself would have to die, argues courage of no mean order on his part. But as I have said above, men can do these things in a state of intoxication, and can also banish the fear of death. Whatever courage there is in this is the result of intoxication, not a quality of the man himself. A man's own courage consists in suffering deeply and over a long period. That alone is a brave act which is preceded by careful reflection. I must say that those who believe and argue that such murders may do good to India are ignorant men indeed. No act of treachery can ever profit a nation. Even should the British leave in consequence of such murderous acts, who will rule in their place? The only answer is: the murderers. Who will then be happy? Is the Englishman bad because he is an Englishman? *Is it that everyone with an Indian skin is good? If that is so, we can claim no rights in South Africa, nor should there be any angry protest against oppression by Indian princes. India can gain nothing from the rule of murderers—no matter whether they are black or white.* Under such a rule, India will be utterly ruined and laid waste. This train of thought leads to a host of reflections, but I have no time to set them down here. I am afraid some Indians will commend this murder. I believe they will be guilty of a heinous sin. We ought to abandon such fanciful ideas. More about this later.²⁴
(emphasis added)

Gandhi's reference to 'worthless writings' was an attack against Tilak, Aurobindo and Savarkar, while his reference to 'rule of murderers' must have re-assured the British government about Gandhi's disinclination to end British rule in India; Gandhi's third reference, this time to Indian princes had an ominous ring to it and was a signal indicating how he

²⁴ London, after July 16, 1909, Curzon Wylie's assassination, *Indian Opinion* 14-8-1909, CWMG Vol. 9, pp 428-29 For more on Gandhi's opinions about Dhingra, see end of chapter.

would be dealing with them on his return to India.²⁵ All this must have been music to British ears.

- 1909 July 9, Bengal Provincial Congress Committee proposed Gandhi's name as one of the three nominees for Presidentship of the INC.
- 1909 July 22, repudiated in letter to *South Africa* that SABIC (South Africa British Indian Committee) was associated with extremist movement in India.
- 1909 July 29, Gandhi in a letter to Lord Ampthill denied any connection between Transvaal passive resistance movement and the 'party of sedition' in India:

Most people, that is, most Indians and Anglo-Indians, express their detestation of bomb throwing and violence in words or in unreasonable action. The movement in the Transvaal, with which I have identified myself is an eloquent and standing protest in action against such methods. The test of passive resistance is self-suffering and not infliction of suffering on others.

May I add, too, that the idea of passive resistance originated in South Africa was independent of any movement in India and that we have sometimes been bitterly assailed by some of our Indian friends for pinning our faith to passive resistance pure and simple?²⁶ (emphasis added)

Gandhi's claim that passive resistance as it originated in South Africa had nothing to do with the *Swadeshi* or Boycott movement in India, to understate it, is a deviation from truth. That Gandhi usurped all names and concepts associated with the nationalist faction of the INC, and passed it off as his own, has been discussed previously.

- 1909 August 4, Repudiated categorically, in a letter to Lord Ampthill, that Transvaal passive resistance movement was 'fomented' or financed from India or had anything to do with the "party of violence" there:

Indian passive resistance in the Transvaal had its rise in that Colony and has been continued absolutely independent of anything that is being said or done in India; indeed, sometimes, even

²⁵ Chapter 7 deals with Gandhi's failure to build bridges with Indian States in the critically important period of the 1940s decade.

²⁶ Excerpts of Gandhi's groveling letter to Ampthill on July 29 and August 4 at end of chapter.

in defiance of what has been said or written to the contrary in India or elsewhere. Our movement is absolutely unconnected with any extremist movement in India. I do not know the extremists personally.

.....and now Mr. Henry S. L. Polak is in Bombay, from the Transvaal, in order to place the position before the Indian public. He has gone there with definite instructions not to come into touch with the Extremist Party, but to be guided largely by the Editor of *The Times of India*, Professor Gokhale and the Aga Khan. It would be improper for me not to add that I follow what is going on in India with the keenest interest and some of the phases of the national movement with the gravest anxiety. (emphasis added)

- 1909 September 6, In letter to Ameer Ali, declared his life devoted to demonstrating that Hindu-Muslim cooperation was an indispensable condition of India's salvation.
- 1909 November 13, Gandhi leaves for South Africa.
- 1909 November, on the return journey by sea from England to South Africa, Gandhi penned *Indian Home Rule*, later re-named *Hind Swaraj*; a preview of the same was given to Lord Amphill in the famous letter.
- 1909 September 20, King Edward VII signed the draft constitution for the Union of South Africa into law as the South Africa Act of 1909. Sections 26, 35, 44, 147 and 151 left intact anti-Indian and other discriminatory legislation against native Africans.

Even as the British government in India was removing Tilak and Aurobindo from the INC and from the political arena in 1909, the Imperial Government in London was shaping Gandhi's political career in such a way that would make him the unchallenged leader of the INC in India in the not-too-distant future; crafting him to occupy the political space created by them with foresight and flawless planning. From 1910, until Gandhi's hurried departure to India in 1914, there was little or no advance in Gandhi's 'struggle' in South Africa, though in 1913 Smuts precipitated a crisis that facilitated Gandhi emerging center-stage again. The events following the 'crisis' enabled the imperial British government, the South African government, and the INC, to act in tandem to catapult Gandhi to India as de-facto leader of the Congress.

- 1910 January 6, in letter to J.C. Gibson, Gandhi refuted the charge that the South African movement was engineered and controlled from India.

- 1910 February 9, In Gandhi's office, Mrs. Amacanoo and Mrs. Packirsamy took off their ornaments, vowing not to wear them till struggle was over.
- 1910 May 30, Gandhi set up the 1100-acre *Tolstoy Farm* near Johannesburg, a gift from his friend Hermann Kallenbach, for use by *satyagrahi* families.
- 1910 June 1, Union of South Africa came into being.
- 1910 July 30, Churchill announced in the House of Commons that he had given instructions that all persons imprisoned as passive resisters or as suffragettes be spared unnecessary degradation.
- 1911 February 28, Smuts told Parliament that Indians belonged to an ancient civilization and hence could not be classified as 'barbarians.'
- 1911 April 27, Indian Passive Resistance protesting Poll Tax suspended when Gen. Smuts entered into negotiations with Gandhi.
- 1911 June 22, Coronation of King George V at Westminister Abbey; in Durban Indians boycotted celebrations.
- 1911 June 24, Gandhi in *Indian Opinion* affirmed loyalty to the king.²⁷

The importance of Gandhi's affirmation to King and Empire cannot be underestimated. Gandhi repeatedly affirmed his loyalty to the Empire and the British Monarchy, and prescribed non-violence to fight for what he believed were rights guaranteed by the monarchy in theory, but denied in practice. His adulation for British monarchy deserves critical scrutiny in the face of an almost pathological dislike for Indian-Hindu princes and maharajas. Till the end of his life, his aversion for Hindu rulers remained unchanged and, as we shall see later, this prejudice had catastrophic consequences for the shape of Indian polity to come after transfer of power in 1947.

- 1911 September 24, Gandhi wrote to Dr. Pranjivan Mehta telling him he was preparing himself for work in India.
- 1911 September 28, Italy invaded Turkish territory.
- 1911 October 2, Gandhi attended meeting of Muslims at Johannesburg to condemn Italy for waging war against Turkey.
- 1912 January 12, Gandhi, in letter to Gokhale, welcomed his visit to South Africa; suggested visit on way to London.
- 1912 October 22, Gokhale arrives in Cape Town. In his capacity as member of the Viceroy's Council, Gokhale met Prime Minister Louis Botha and Gen. Smuts; visited Tolstoy Farm.
- 1913 January 11, Gandhi in *Indian Opinion* acknowledged contribution of Rs. 2500 by the Nizam of Hyderabad to passive resistance fund.

The same Gandhi, years later, still carrying the chip of his paranoiac resentment of Hindu maharajas and princes on his shoulders, would refuse in 1946 a similar donation from the Maharaja of Rewa for reasons we may assume were peculiarly and typically Gandhian whims.

²⁷ For more on Gandhi's loyalty to the Empire and the King, see end of chapter.

Maharaja Saheb,

Yesterday you presented me a cheque for Rs. 1,001. I considered whether or not I should accept it. My heart says that I should not; I am, therefore, returning it. Please excuse me.

Yours,

M. K. Gandhi²⁸

- 1913 January 18, *Indian Opinion* announced Gandhi's decision to go to India about the middle of the year, if expected Immigration Bill was passed in forthcoming session of Parliament.
- 1913 January, *Tolstoy Farm* closed down.²⁹
- 1913 Gandhi began a penitential fast (one meal a day for over four months) because of a 'moral lapse' by two members of *Phoenix Farm*.
- 1913 October 19, meeting of Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in Durban; NIC secretaries M.C. Anglia and Dada Osman sharply castigated Gandhi and tendered their resignations. The resignations were not accepted and the meeting withdrew NIC's support for the passive resistance campaign. In retaliation, Gandhi and his supporters withdrew from the meeting and formed the Natal Indian Association (NIA), at Parsee Rustomjee's house. The NIC would become defunct until its resuscitation in 1920.

3.8 Gandhi's last phase in South Africa – Prelude to India

- 1913 November, the third *Satyagraha* campaign launched; Gandhi arrested thrice in four days; at the second trial he received a sentence of three months' imprisonment, but was released before completing the term.

Very little is known about this *Satyagraha*, also known as the Natal Indian Strike or Miners' Strike, Gandhi's last campaign before finally departing from South Africa in July 1914.³⁰ By this time the opposition to Gandhi was growing among the Indian community; one section began to get both disillusioned and dissatisfied with his *Satyagraha* and his refusal to even consider more effective methods of resistance and

²⁸ Martand Singh, the Yuvaraj ascended the throne on the dramatic deposition of the Ruler, Gulab Singh Ju Deo, while out on camp near the border, by the Resident Lt. Col. Campbell. The dismissal was condemned by Jawaharlal Nehru, for it implied British displeasure at the ex-maharaja's desire to give self-government to his subjects. (*Letter to Maharaja of Rewa*, Dinshaw Mehta Clinic, Poona, February 20, 1946, From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal, CWMG Vol. 89, page 430)

²⁹ There is no information why this happened.

³⁰ The timing of his departure is significant. Though tensions had been building up in Europe, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 proved to be the spark that finally triggered off World War I. G.K. Gokhale was already dying and Britain would have worried about Tilak and the other nationalists.

protest; this resulted in a split in the Natal Indian Congress. The timing of the last South African *Satyagraha* is significant.

Gandhi undertook this campaign within a month of the split in the NIC, almost as though to drive home the point that he alone could organize people into a mass-protest movement and that the regime would deal with Indians only with and through him. Yet the split in the NIC was the first crack in the myth about Gandhi's leadership, namely, that he was so saintly and his methods so moral and noble that his leadership was beyond criticism, his methods beyond reproach. Gandhi had to repair the image of his infallibility among the community for the sake of his political career in the immediate future in India; the British Empire had a stake in that mission because if Gandhi had to take over the leadership of the Congress and steer it away from armed resistance and political independence, towards passive acceptance of self-rule within the Empire, then Gandhi had to return to India with the image of being not only infallible but also morally superior to others in the INC. The British Empire could not afford to have Gandhi's authority eroded nor have Indians perceive him as impotent.

The South African government, for no tangible political reason and knowing that it would cause grave unrest within the Indian community, almost as if eager to present Gandhi with an explosive issue guaranteed to inflame passions and enable him to bring people to the streets, decided to de-recognize all marriages not conducted according to Christian rites and/or not registered with the Registrar of Marriages. In one stroke, it rendered illegal the unions of Indian Muslims and Hindus married according to their respective religious customs.

Gandhi organized his *satyagraha* jointly against three laws: to protest the March 1913 ruling by Justice Searle in the Cape Supreme Court which de-recognized Hindu and Muslim marriages; the June 1913 Immigrants Regulation Amendment Act; and the notorious Three Pound Tax which came into effect in March 1911 and made it mandatory for every Indian family who did not wish to continue their contracts as indentured labour and chose to stay on in South Africa as 'free' Indians, to pay a tax of three pounds per head to the South African state. In this way, an ex-indentured family paid as much as 15, 20 or even 25 pounds, depending on the size of the family. Children of ex-indentured Indians were not spared, and boys above 16 years and girls over 13 had to pay this crippling tax. Clearly the South African regime was determined to precipitate a crisis.

Gandhi's last *Satyagraha* in South Africa thus brought to the streets indentured and ex-indentured Indians along with vast numbers of the Indian community, making this his largest campaign in South Africa, and covering a large segment of Apartheid laws in force against the Indian community. The coal miners from Newcastle in northern Natal were the

first to down tools and join Gandhi in the strike, followed by workers across Natal. The *satyagraha* coincided with a general and paralyzing railway strike, and Gandhi was in a position to push the government into a corner, demanding immediate repeal of discriminatory laws in return for ending the non-cooperation movement.

As a perfect prelude to what would become a pattern in India, first in 1922, and then in 1931, even as many Indians were brutally beaten up, killed in police firing, and as more and more Indians, particularly women, joined the strike, choosing to die for Gandhi's *satyagraha*, the leader himself was simply lodged in jail. As protests mounted over his 'arrest' and over police brutality, Gandhi called off the civil disobedience movement. In this instance, Gandhi called off the strike at a time when it had gained optimum momentum and reached its peak, because he allegedly did not want to add to the troubles of the South African government which had already been brought to its knees by the general railway strike. So as a loyal citizen of the Empire, having demonstrated his ability to inflame passions and get people killed by repressive State power, he withdrew the strike and rendered the sacrifice of ordinary Indians completely futile. *Gandhi's unique ability to arouse and deflate human passions somehow always benefited the colonial government and increased his own grip over the organizations he headed: first NIC, then NIA, and finally INC. Each time his moral halo was burnished by his acolytes, yet it pushed the people's movement into an abyss of vulnerability and impotence, because every time Satyagraha or civil disobedience ended prematurely, it ended in failure.*

- 1913 November, Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India, a speech in Madras expressed sympathy with the Indian Passive Resistance struggle in South Africa, boosting Gandhi's political and moral stature in India, which had already been enhanced by Gokhale's towering praise for him after Gokhale returned from South Africa:

'Only those who have come into personal contact with Mr. Gandhi as he is now can realize the wonderful personality of the man. He is without doubt made of the stuff which heroes and martyrs are made. Nay, more. He has in him the marvelous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs'. Hardinge, let us recall, had just sentenced Savarkar to two sentences of 'transportation for life'.

- 1913 December, Gandhi released unconditionally in expectation of a settlement with Gen. Smuts.
- 1913 December 18, the Indian Inquiry Commission or Solomon Commission began its proceedings in Pretoria.
- 1914 January sometime, Gandhi undertook 14 days' fast for the 'moral lapse' of members of the *Phoenix Settlement*.
- 1914 January 2, Rev. C.F. Andrews and W.W. Pearson arrive in Durban (sent by G.K. Gokhale to negotiate with the South African government; Andrews met Gandhi here for the first time).

- Satyagraha campaign suspended pending agreement between Gandhi, Andrews and Gen. Smuts.
- 1914 January 7, Andrews and Gandhi leave for Pretoria to meet Smuts.
 - 1914 January 21, Gandhi received written statement from Pretoria Muslims and Hindus repudiating allegation of split on the issue of passive resistance.
 - 1914 January 21, Gandhi met Benjamin Robertson; wrote to Ministry of Interior that passive resistance would not be revived or the Commission's work hampered in any wise.
 - 1914 January 22, Andrews facilitated and oversaw the provisional settlement between Gandhi and Smuts; the government accepted principle of consultation with Indians. Gandhi left Pretoria for Phoenix; passive resistance suspended.
 - 1914 January 30, Gandhi, Andrews jointly cabled Gokhale that NIC meeting of January 28 had been engineered and was of no significance. (NIC had broken away from Gandhi on the issue of futility of passive resistance and Gandhi started NIA in reaction).
 - 1914 February 27, *Gandhi wrote to Gokhale from Cape Town expressing desire to return to India in case of settlement, observe compact of silence for a year and learn at Gokhale's feet.*
 - 1914 March 7, Solomon Commission report submitted to government.
 - 1914 June 26, after a protracted passive resistance campaign led by Gandhi, the Indian Relief Act was passed following the report of the Solomon Commission. The Act abolished the £3 poll tax, recognized marriages contracted in terms of traditional Indian (Muslim or Hindu) rites, and facilitated the entry into the Union of the wives of Indians already domiciled locally. However, Indians remained disenfranchised and were still not allowed to own property in the two former Boer Republics (Transvaal, Orange Free State), or to live in the Orange Free State. Further, restrictions on Indian trading remained in force. In short, the South African government did only the minimum necessary to boost Gandhi's image as the non-violent deliverer of the Indian people. As Smuts himself stated in the Senate on March 11, 1914, Gandhi was allowed to function in South Africa as he did 'because he never advocated methods of violence to overthrow the government'.
 - 1914 July 18, sailed for England en route to India on SS Kinfauns Castle.³¹
 - 1914 August 8, Gandhi given reception at Hotel Cecil, London, by English and Indian friends; Jinnah, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarojini Naidu among those present.
 - 1914 August 13, Circular signed by Gandhi, Kasturba, Sarojini Naidu affirming resolve to tender unconditional service to Empire, issued for signature by supporters.

³¹ This obviously circuitous route is perplexing and has never been explained.

We, the undersigned have, after mature deliberation, decided for the sake of the Motherland and the Empire to place our services unconditionally, during this crisis, at the disposal of the Authorities. We advisedly use the word 'unconditionally' as we believe that, at a moment like this, no service that can be assigned to us can be considered to be beneath our dignity or inconsistent with our self-respect.

This secretive pledge of unconditional support was sent round in connection with and preceded the Indian offer to assist the British Government during the War. It was signed by Gandhi, Kasturba, Sarojini Naidu and fifty others.³² The first inkling of such an assurance by Gandhi to the Imperial British government – which significantly was not signed by Lajpat Rai and Jinnah – was given in the *Indian Opinion* only two months later, in September. The phrase 'Indian offer to assist the British government' is intriguing, as is the fact that Kasturba too signed the secret affirmation of unconditional support. In what capacity did Kasturba sign, and on whose behalf did Gandhi, Kasturba, Sarojini Naidu and 'fifty others' sign? Who or what constituted the 'Indian' in 'Indian offer' – Gandhi? The Indian National Congress? Or the British Indian government? This pledge of loyalty and support, however, set the stage for Gandhi's return to India.

3.9 Preparing the Indian soil

Gandhi's imprisonment during the last *satyagraha* campaign, Lord Hardinge's speech sympathizing with *satyagraha* in South Africa, Gandhi's subsequent unconditional release followed by the Gandhi-Smuts agreement under the aegis of the Solomon Commission which paved the way for Gandhi's triumphal return to India, must be viewed in the light of the growing disenchantment of the South African Indian community with *satyagraha* and passive resistance. *Satyagraha* did not improve their living or work conditions in any lasting or tangible form, resulting in the split of the Natal Indian Congress. The disenchantment with Gandhi was due not just to *satyagraha*'s inability to deliver desired results, but more pertinently, because Gandhi was perceived as an Empire loyalist.

Circumstances suggest that the British Empire synchronized with the South African regime to gently nudge and manipulate Gandhi's *Satyagraha* in the direction and time of its choice, with a view to projecting *satyagraha* as the most effective tool to persuade the Empire to treat its slaves more humanely. A clinical analysis of the time-line of Gandhi's political career in South Africa reveals that *Satyagraha* gave the Indian community there nothing more than what the Transvaal government was willing to bestow for its own reasons. In 1914, Gandhi

³² A Confidential Circular, *Indian Opinion*, 16-9-1914, CWMG Vol. 14, page 284.

received small concessions in the laws and two war medals, the Zulu War Medal and the Boer War Medal, for his services to the British Empire.

But this was still in the future. Gandhi did not know this in 1909 when he embarked on his eventually fruitless lobbying mission to London, though he was personally satisfied with the visit. One important factor which may have contributed to the failure of Gandhi's deputation in 1909 may have been Gen. Smuts' simultaneous presence in London.

Still, enthused by his leadership role in South Africa, the response from high British officials in London, and probably encouraged by Gokhale's patronage, Gandhi during his four month stay in London began to toy with the idea of returning to India to play a decisive role in the Indian National Congress. It was to signal this intention of intervening in Indian politics to supplant the Nationalists in the hearts of ordinary Indians that Gandhi wrote '*Indian Home Rule*' (later re-named *Hind Swaraj*) in 1909. *Hind Swaraj* is a political manifesto; the language is mild and the velvet gloves are on in the early chapters when first references are made to the Nationalists. As the monogram progresses, however, Gandhi makes his anger against Aurobindo and Savarkar, and his own intentions, abundantly clear.

From the moment the INC split in December 1907 into Nationalists and Moderates, the British began ruthless persecution of the Nationalists, a policy which lasted up to 1910. Almost all Nationalist leaders, Tilak, Aurobindo, and Lajpat Rai, were either imprisoned or deported and the movement thrown into complete disarray. Gandhi would certainly have known at the time of writing *Hind Swaraj* that most leaders of the Nationalist segment had been imprisoned or deported, and in 1910, when he translated the *Hind Swaraj* in English, that Savarkar had been dispatched to the Andamans. He would be aware that the colonial power had used the most brutal and repressive measures to weaken the leaders and break the nationalist movement and spirit of ordinary Indians who saw in Aurobindo, Tilak, and Lajpat Rai their only hope for liberation from colonial oppression. In this context, Gandhi's views are illustrative of his positioning:

Some call the moderates the timid party, and the extremists the bold party. All interpret the two words according to their preconceptions. This much is certain – that there has arisen an enmity between the two. The one distrusts the other, and imputes motives. At the time of the Surat Congress, there was almost a fight. I think that this division is not a good thing for the country, but I think also that such divisions will not last long. *It all depends upon the*

*leaders how long they will last.*³³ (emphasis added)

Gandhi's use of the word 'Extremist' instead of 'Nationalist' is instructive. He had to de-legitimize them and render their advocacy of armed resistance abhorrent to Indian minds if he had to supplant them as INC leader. Notwithstanding his pious declarations of adherence to *satya*, Gandhi would have faced difficulty in publicly condemning Savarkar for advocating use of force because in 1910 public opinion was firmly with the Nationalists. He could vent his hostility to Aurobindo and Savarkar only through his writings in *Indian Opinion* (the heightened atmosphere in the country at that time would not permit public speech of this kind). The British Indian government, in the wake of its brutal repression of Aurobindo, Tilak and Savarkar, had also banned Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo*. This gave Gandhi the perfect opportunity to label the Nationalists as 'terrorists':

India is being severely tested now. For the repressive laws that have been passed and the suppression of writings, the primary responsibility lies with the terrorists but the matter does not rest there. Indiscriminate suppression of newspapers by the Government will not ensure peace.³⁴

In *Hind Swaraj*, however, Gandhi was forced to fudge the issue by equating Aurobindo and Savarkar's advocacy of armed resistance against colonialism as a contest with European civilization! We must marvel at the psychological warfare unleashed by Gandhi, the clever intellectual tight-rope he walked; he needed ordinary Indians to follow him and accept his leadership. He did so with well-planned equivocation and implied the following in his speech and writings -

- British rule in India is excellent in theory.

This assertion helped Gandhi avoid antagonizing the British and assured them of his loyalty. British rule was imperfect not because the British were bad humans or because the Empire was ignoble, but because British rule in India had moved away from its great Christian roots, away from Christ's teachings, and become an ugly thing called 'modern civilization'. This charming strategy got several missionaries and devout Christian intellectuals to distance themselves from the Raj and come to his side and boost his 'saintly' image – Joseph Doke in South Africa, Charlie Andrews, Margaret Slade (Mirabeau), Agatha Harrison and Horace Alexander in India. Charlie Andrews made the critical decision in early August 1914 to leave the Order on 'conscientious grounds.'

³³ HS, Ch. II, The Partition of Bengal, pp 22-23.

³⁴ Never Mind, *Indian Opinion*, 9-4-1910, CWMG, Vol. 10, page 484.

- Modern civilization, manifesting as dependence on machinery and driven by competition, is evil.

This intellectual acrobatic exercise helped Gandhi point to British rule as evil, and in the same breath claim the British were not evil!

- The British have not enslaved us; we have enslaved ourselves because of our dependence on machinery.³⁵

This was a repetition of Tolstoy's opinion on India's enslavement and essentially reduced British colonialism to a puerile exercise of enslaving Indians with gadgets, pointedly ignoring colonialism's greed for the territory of non-Christian peoples and the Church's greed for new converts to the faith:

A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising 200 million. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand people, not athletes but rather weak and ill-looking have enslaved 200 million of vigorous, clever, strong, freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that not the English but the Indians have enslaved themselves?³⁶

Both Tolstoy and Gandhi pointedly ignored the vastly superior weapons of warfare in the possession of the colonial powers. With advanced arms and weapons neither their numbers nor their physical weakness was of any consequence, not to mention their stubborn insistence under these terribly unequal circumstances, on passive resistance as the sole weapon to confront the British government!

- British rule in India, driven and inspired by modern European civilization, rests on violence; armed resistance by Indians using the same weapons of warfare like guns and explosives is as evil as modern civilization.
- Armed resistance is therefore the same as European civilization.

This is an unparalleled example of fallacious logic. It was Gandhi's simplistic proposition that armed resistance or use of force was not a Hindu or Indian act, but was an expression of modern or European civilization.³⁷

³⁵ "Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the Indian gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilisation: it represents a great sin". HS, Chapter XIX *Machinery*, page 107.

³⁶ HS, *Preface to Gandhi's Edition of the English Translation of Leo Tolstoy's "Letter to a Hindoo"*, page 137.

³⁷ Possibly Gandhi was so overawed by the modern weaponry (guns, cannon) of the British that he overlooked the presence of puissant warriors in Hindu tradition, from Srirama and

Later in his Indian career, Gandhi exhibited on several occasions the same despotic streak bordering on cruelty and intolerance towards detractors and dissenters within and without the INC – his secretary Pyarelal, Sardar Patel, and Subhash Bose, each of whom had good reasons to fault Gandhi, distanced themselves from him; their own greatness and strength of mind protected them from Gandhi's destructive streak. But the women in Gandhi's ashram – Amtussalam, Kanchan Shah, Susheela Nayyar and his grand-niece Manu to name a few, were not so lucky and Gandhi's cruelty bordering on sadism left them mentally shattered and physically destroyed. Gandhi was paternally benign towards those who obeyed him without demur and were slavishly servile; the only person for whom he exhibited one-sided indulgence was Nehru, who was not only physically attractive and charming but had the imperious ways of an Englishman. Nehru knew well enough the great advantages of staying on the right side of Gandhi and his shrewdness paid off when Gandhi anointed him his political heir – a move that propelled Gandhi's political ideology on an anti-Hindu trajectory after independence.

Little is known of Kasturba's experience of living with a man so coercive in his methods and given to grim experiments in *brahmacharya*. Gandhi took a vow of continence without the preparation and pre-conditioning of mind and body mandated by Hindu *dharmic* tradition; stopped sleeping with his wife because of this vow; yet was unsure even in his old age that he had perfected his *brahmacharya*. Even in Kasturba's lifetime and after her death, Gandhi continued with these experiments until his own death in 1948.

After a great deal of experience, it seems to me that those who want to become passive resisters for the service of the country have to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness.

Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness. A man who is unchaste loses stamina, becomes emasculated and cowardly. He whose mind is given over to animal passions is not capable of any great effort. This can be proved by innumerable instances. What then is a married person to do is the question that arises naturally; and yet it need not. When a husband and wife gratify the passions, it is no less an animal indulgence on that account. Such an indulgence, except for perpetuating the race, is strictly prohibited.

Srikrishna to Chhatrapati Shivaji, Rana Pratap, Rani Jhansi, Guru Gobind Singh, Aurobindo, Savarkar, Bhagat Singh, Subhash Bose.

But a passive resister has to avoid even that very limited indulgence because he can have no desire for progeny. A married man therefore can observe perfect chastity. The subject is not capable of being treated at greater length. Several questions arise: How is one to carry one's wife with one? What are her rights, and other such questions? Yet those who wish to take part in a great work are bound to solve these puzzles.³⁸

Gandhi's unconventional attempts to test if he had overcome these 'animal passions' and 'animal indulgence', suggest he did not 'solve these puzzles'. Given his unchallenged iconic status in Indian public discourse, we shall never know if Kasturba concurred with these experiments. A woman of great dignity, Kasturba, like most women of her generation, would have drawn a veil over such serious embarrassments and personal trauma and therefore maintained stoic silence all her life. Yet with nearly a century between the events, it is imperative that Indian academia scale the walls of complicit silence and engage in an honest evaluation of Gandhi's life and work.

Gandhi left South Africa forever in July 1914, after Gen. Smuts allegedly succumbed to the pressure of his 'unrelenting' *Satyagraha* and passed the Indian Relief Act in June 1914. These concessions to the Indian community did not shake even a brick in the foundation or superstructure of the Apartheid regime, and more repressive laws were introduced in subsequent years and decades. Yet Gandhi regarded this as adequate victory for him personally and his *Satyagraha*. With a sense of mission accomplished, he decided to set off for India via London, for a more ambitious political assignment.

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Appendix

I Legalised Apartheid

Natal became a British Crown Colony ruled from the Cape. The Natal Charter of 1856 was proclaimed and Natal received representative self-government. Most councillors in the legislature were elected, but the British Government appointed the executive. The right to vote was based on property qualification.

1859: Natal Coolie Law, Law 14 of 1859

After protracted negotiations between the Natal government and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Natal Coolie Law, No.14 of 1859, was passed making it possible for the Natal colony to introduce the immigration of Indians as indentured labour with the option to return to

³⁸ HS, Chapter XVII, *Passive Resistance*, page 97

India after a five-year period. At the end of five years the labourers had the option of renewing their indenture contract for another five-year term, which entitled them to the gift of Crown land and full citizenship rights.

Needless to say, as more and more Indians began to come to Natal, this law was amended to the disadvantage of all future indentured labour from India and other Asian countries. This proviso was withdrawn with the proclamation of Act No 25 of 1891 intended to discourage the settlement of Indians in the province.

1872: The Coolie Consolidation Amendment Act, Law No. 12 of 1872 made provision for a Protector of Indian Immigrants, abolishing flogging for breaches of the masters and Servants Act for improvement of medical treatment for Indian immigrants.

1876: the Free State Republic (a Boer republic) passed legislation allowing Indians to enter the Republic with the understanding that they had no permanent right of residence.

1885: Law 3 of 1885

The first discriminatory legislation directed at Indians passed in the Transvaal.

1. This law shall apply to the persons belonging to any of the native races of Asia, including so-called Coolies, Arabs, Malays, and Mohammedan subjects of the Turkish Empire.

2. With regard to the persons mentioned in Article one the following provisions shall apply: -

(a) They cannot obtain the burgher right of the South African Republic (Transvaal).

(b) They cannot be owners of fixed property in the Republic except only in such streets, wards and locations as the Government for purposes of sanitation shall assign to them to live in.

(c) They shall be inscribed in a Register, if they settled with the object of trading.

(d) The government shall have the right for purposes of sanitation, to assign to them certain streets, wards and locations to live in. This provision does not apply to those who live with employers.

1888: The Registration of Servants Act, Law No. 2 of 1888 passed in Natal, a British colony, classified Indians as members of an "uncivil race" and forced Indians to register. Free Indians are forced to carry passes or court arrest.

The South African Republic rejects a British Indian petition and places all Asians in the same category as the native African people – as labourers.

1890: The Orange Free State Act 29 is passed. This law ensured against the influx of 'Asiatics' and the removal of 'White criminals' entering the state from elsewhere

1891: The Statute law of the Orange Free State

The Statute Law of the Orange Free State prohibits 'an Arab, a Chinaman, a Coolie or any other Asiatic or coloured person from carrying on business or farming in the Orange Free State.' All Indian businesses are forced to close by 11 September and owners deported from the Orange Free State without compensation.

1894: The Franchise Bill is introduced in Natal to disenfranchise Indians. It is as response to this Bill that Gandhi founds the Natal Indian Congress.

1895: The Indian Immigration Amendment Act, Law No. 17 of 1895

The colony of Natal imposes a £3 tax on ex-indentured Indians, who fail to re-indenture or return to India after completion of their labour contracts. The penalty is imprisonment or deportation. In 1900 it is extended to children (boys, 16 years and over, girls, 12 years and over) and becomes operational in 1901.

1896: The Franchise Act No 8 of 1896

This Act disenfranchised Indians. Africans were disenfranchised in 1865. Only three Africans and 251 Indians ever acquired voting rights in Natal.

1897: The Immigration Restrictions Act

The Immigration Restriction Act (Natal) and subsequent amendments in 1900, 1903, and 1906, imposed an educational, health, age and means test, against Indians other than indentured workers, seeking admission to the country, or entry to the Transvaal and Cape. This act virtually stops all further immigration of free Indians into the colony.

The Dealers Licenses Act No 18 Natal Licensing Officers are empowered to issue or refuse licenses.

Law 3 of 1897 prohibits marriage of whites with persons of colour within the SA Republic (Transvaal).

1899: The Regulations of Towns in the South African Republic.

The Regulations for Towns in the South African Republic (Transvaal) states that Persons of colour prohibited from walking on the side-walks (pavements) or stoeps serving as a side-walk of the streets of its towns and 'coolie locations' are established for Indians in the Transvaal.

1902: The Immigration Act is passed in the Cape Colony and made future immigration of Indians to the Cape subject to an education and literacy test.

1902: May 31, The Boer war ends with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging. Transvaal and the Orange Free State become British colonies. Indians, native Africans, Coloured and White refugees return to the Transvaal.

1903: Peace Preservation Ordinance and Ordinance No. 5 of 1903 This Act regulated the re-entry of Indians who had left the Transvaal for Natal, the Cape Colony and India when war broke out. It segregates Asiatics into locations, refuses trading licenses except in Asiatic bazaars and pre-war licenses of Asiatics become non-transferable.

The Transvaal Corporations Ordinance No 58 authorized local authorities to proclaim, move, de-proclaim and manage townships for non-whites. The residents cannot buy land and have to rent. They do have the right to compensation if moved and are allowed to erect buildings under strict regulations.

The Immorality Ordinance, Law 46 of 1903 is passed in the Transvaal.

The Immigration Restriction Act passed in Natal; restricted immigration of Indians to Natal.

Lord Milner, British High Commissioner and Governor of Cape Colony, established the Asiatic Affairs Department to enforce the provisions of Law 3 of 1885. In addition, the Department was charged with compiling a dossier of all anti-Indian measures that prevailed in the Boer republics prior to the Boer War, and these measures were subsequently applied with a vengeance. Thus did the imperial British government in London reward Gandhi and other stretcher-boys of the Boer War.

1905: The Immigration Restriction Act
The act enabled the government to control entry of Indians into Transvaal through a special permit system.

1906: The Immigration Act in Cape Colony made all future immigration of Indians to the Cape subject to literacy requirements.

The Transvaal Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance 29 subjected all Indians to compulsory registration and identification by means of finger prints. Registration Certificates (Passes) to be carried at all times and produced on request to a police officer under penalty of fine or imprisonment.

1906 January 1, a poll tax of three British Pounds on Indians 18 years and over is enforced in Natal.

1907: The Asiatic Law amendment Act

Colonial Secretary, General Smuts, introduces The Asiatic Law Amendment Act, 2/1907 "The Black Act" is identical to Ordinance 29/1906. All male Asians to be registered and finger printed; to carry certificate (pass) at all times, to be shown to police on demand. Act 2/1907 operative from 1 July 1907.

1907 March 19, General J C Smuts re-introduces the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance 29 of 1906 which failed to gain assent in December 1906 as the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Bill.

1907 March 22 The Transvaal Asiatic Registration Bill passed by the Transvaal parliament. Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act is gazetted. Royal assent is given in May.

Apartheid became institutionalized with the passing of several crippling discriminatory laws. From 1895 to 1914, Gandhi's *satyagraha*, petitions, memorandums, fervent letters to Pietermaritzburg, London and India and two deputation visits to London in 1906 and 1909 achieved little. Apartheid would not be ended until 1990.

II SENTENCE ON THE GREAT TILAK

The sentence passed on Mr. Tilak, the great patriot, is terrible. The few days' imprisonment which the Transvaal Indians suffer is as nothing compared to transportation for six years. The sentence is not so much surprising as terrible. At the same time it is nothing to be unhappy about. It is not surprising that a Government we seek to defy should inflict oppressive measures on us. Mr. Tilak is so great a man and scholar that it would be impertinent, in this country, to write of his work. He deserves to be adored for his work in the service of the motherland. His simplicity is extraordinary; but the light of his scholarship has reached even Europe. Yet we should not blindly follow the policies of those whom we regard as great. It would be casting a reflection on Mr. Tilak's greatness to argue that his writings had no bitterness in them or to offer some such defence. Pungent, bitter and penetrating writing was his objective. He aimed at inciting Indians against British rule. To attempt to minimize this would be to detract from Mr. Tilak's greatness.

The rulers are justified, from their point of view, in taking action against such a man. We would do the same in their place. If we look at the matter thus, we realize that we need not feel bitter towards them. Mr. Tilak, however, deserves our congratulations. He has, by his suffering, attained undying fame and laid the foundations of India's freedom. If the

people, instead of being overawed at the sentence passed on Mr. Tilak or being intimidated by it, rejoice at it and keep up their courage, the sentence will in the sequel prove to have been a blessing. What we need to consider is whether Indians should accept the views of Mr. Tilak and his party. We submit, after great deliberation, that Mr. Tilak's views should be rejected. It will be harmful, even useless, to use force or violence for uprooting that rule. Freedom gained through violence would not endure. And the sufferings to which the people of Europe submit would also become our lot then. As for the masses, they would merely pass from one form of slavery to another. No one will gain this way and almost everyone will lose—that is what the result will be. We believe that the easiest way to make British rule beneficent is to adopt the way of satyagraha. If British rule becomes tyrannical, it will come to an end as soon as the British Government attempts to resist satyagraha. If the same workers who went on strike in protest against the sentence on Mr. Tilak were to become satyagrahis, they would be able to get the Government to agree to any reasonable demands. What is our duty in this context? Though Mr. Tilak and other great Indians like him differ from us, we should continue to hold them in the highest esteem. We must emulate them in their capacity to suffer. Since they are great patriots, we must consider no honour too great for them, and act in the same spirit of patriotism. Their object is the same as ours, namely, to serve the motherland and to work for its prosperity. Compared to what they have been doing to secure that end, the course we have chosen is not in the least difficult. But we are convinced that the outcome of our exertions will be a thousand times better.

Indian Opinion, 1-8-1908, CWMG Vol. 9, pp 28-29.

III The Bambatha Uprising or Zulu Massacre

The Bambatha Uprising was a Zulu revolt against British rule and taxation in Natal, South Africa, in 1906. The revolt was led by Bambatha kaMancinza, leader of the Zondi clan of the Zulu people, who lived in the Mpanza Valley: a district near Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal.

In the years following the Anglo-Boer War white settlers in Natal had difficulty recruiting native African farm workers because of increased competition from the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. The British government introduced a £1 poll tax in addition to the existing hut tax to encourage native African men to enter the labour market. Bambatha, who ruled about 5,500 people living in about 1,100 households, was one of the chiefs who resisted the introduction and collection of the hut tax and the poll tax.

The government of Natal sent police officers to collect the tax from Zulus who refused to pay the tax, and in February 1906 two white officers were killed near Richmond, kwaZulu-Natal. In the resulting introduction of martial law, Bambatha fled north to consult King Dinizulu, who gave tacit

support to Bambatha and invited him and his family to stay at the royal homestead.

Bambatha returned to the Mpanza Valley to discover that the Natal government had deposed him as chief. He gathered together a small force of supporters and began launching a series of guerrilla attacks, using the Nkandla forest as a base. Following a series of initial successes, colonial troops under the command of Colonel Duncan McKenzie set out on an expedition in late April 1906, culminating in a fierce battle in the Mome Gorge.

Bambatha was killed and beheaded during the battle (many of his supporters believed that he was still alive, and his wife refused to go into mourning). Bambatha's main ally, the 95-year-old Zulu aristocrat Inkosi Sigananda Shezi of the AmaCube clan (cousin and near-contemporary of the Zulu King Shaka) was captured by the colonial troops and died a few days later.

Nearly 14,000 Zulus were killed during the revolt while thousands were imprisoned and/or flogged. King Dinizulu was arrested and sentenced to four years imprisonment for treason.

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IV Aurobindo on apartheid in the Transvaal – *Indians Abroad*
'India' to hand. This mail laments the exclusion of Indians from the representative system on which the new constitution in the Transvaal is to be based and plaintively recalls the professions and promises of the British Government at the time of the Boer war. The saintly simplicity of *India* grows daily more and more wearisome to us. Everybody who knew anything at all about politics understood at the time that those professions were merely a diplomatic move and the promises made were never meant to be carried out. We see no reason to lament what was foreseen. What we do regret and blame is the spirit of Indians in the Transvaal, who seek escape from the oppression they suffer under by ignoble methods, in spirit to those practiced by the constitutionalists in this country. The more the Transvaal Indians are kicked and insulted, the more loyal they seem to become. After their splendid services in the Transvaal war had been rewarded by the grossest ingratitude, they had no business to offer their services again in the recent Natal rebellion. By their act they associated themselves with the colonists in their oppression of the natives of the country and have only themselves to thank if they also are oppressed by the same narrow and arrogant colonial spirit. Their eagerness to disassociate themselves from the Africans is shown in Dr. Abdurrahman's letter quoted by India. All such methods are as useless as they are unworthy. So long as the Indian nation at home does not build itself into a strong and self-governing people, they can expect nothing from Englishmen in their colonies except

oppression and contumely. (Bande Mataram, August 20, 1906, page 132)

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V Excerpts from 'Letter to Lord Amphill', London July 29, 1909
MY LORD,

I am extremely obliged to Your Lordship for the very great trouble you are taking over the Indian cause in the Transvaal which you have made your own. Immediately on reading your letter, I telegraphed saying that nothing would be done without consultation with Your Lordship and that I was writing this letter and sending the statement. I am enclosing statement in proof form because, in anticipation of Your Lordship's approval, it was sent to the printers yesterday, but it will not be published or submitted without consultation with Your Lordship.

It is to me a test of Your Lordship's very great interest in our struggle as also, may I say, of your high-mindedness. Will you excuse me for saying that I know of no Indian, whether here, in South Africa or in India, who had so steadily, even defiantly, set his face against sedition—as I understand it— as I have. It is part of my faith not to have anything to do with it, even at the risk of my life. Most people, that is most Indians and Anglo-Indians, express their detestation of bomb throwing and violence in words or in unreasonable action. The movement in the Transvaal, with which I have identified myself is an eloquent and standing protest in action against such methods. The test of passive resistance is self-suffering and not infliction of suffering on others. We have, therefore, not only never received a single farthing from " the party of sedition" in India or else-where, but even if there was any offer, we should, if we were true to our principles, decline to receive it. We have hitherto made it a point not to approach the Indian public in India for financial assistance. The accounts of the British Indian Association are open to the world. A statement of income and expenditure is published from time to time and is advertised in *Indian Opinion*. Mr. Doke, Mr. Phillips, and other notable men who are working in the Transvaal for us, know this fact most intimately. May I add, too, that the idea of passive resistance originated in South Africa was independent of any movement in India and that we have sometimes been bitterly assailed by some of our Indian friends for pinning our faith to passive resistance pure and simple?

I hope Your Lordship will pardon me for introducing so much of the personal element, as also for the length of this letter, which was unavoidable. If any further elucidation or information be necessary, you can only add to the debt of gratitude to me by commanding me to furnish the same. (CWMG Vol. 9, pp 447-49)

Excerpts from 'Letter to Lord Ampthill', August 4, 1909

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's question was whether passive resistance was financed or fomented from India. As to the "fomenting", I did not go into details; I very nearly did so and then refrained for fear of making my letter too long and burdensome, but, as you have kindly invited me to express myself more fully, I gladly avail myself of the opportunity. I am fully aware of the allegation that we are acting in co-operation with the Extremist Party in India. I however give Your Lordship the emphatic assurance that the charge is totally without foundation. Indian passive resistance in the Transvaal had its rise in that Colony and has been continued absolutely independent of anything that is being said or done in India; indeed, sometimes, even in defiance of what has been said or written to the contrary in India or elsewhere. Our movement is absolutely unconnected with any extremist movement in India. I do not know the extremists personally.

.....and now Mr. Henry S.L. Polak is in Bombay, from the Transvaal, in order to place the position before the Indian public. He has gone there with definite instructions not to come into touch with the Extremist Party, but to be guided largely by the Editor of *The Times of India*, Professor Gokhale and the Aga Khan. It would be improper for me not to add that I follow what is going on in India with the keenest interest and some of the phases of the national movement with the gravest anxiety.

I believe, too, that the fullest expansion of national sentiment is quite consistent with the stability of British rule in India and I further believe that much of what we suffer in India is easy of remedy by effort from within. I know that under the British constitution, British subjects, no matter to what race they belong, have never got and never can get their rights until they have performed their corresponding duties and until they are willing to fight for them. The fight takes the form either of physical violence, as in the case of the extremists in India, or of personal suffering by the fighters, as in the case of our passive resisters in the Transvaal. In my opinion, the first form of seeking redress is largely barbarous and, in any case, inconsistent with the genius of the people of India, not because they are physically too weak to take that course, but because their training has adapted them to the latter mode, and I am free to confess that passive resistance in the Transvaal is a practical demonstration to the party of violence in India that they are entirely on the wrong track and that, so long as they pin their faith to violence for obtaining relief of any kind whatsoever, so long are they beating the air.

I am quite aware that this exposition of my own view may not be of any use to Your Lordship and possibly is devoid of any interest whatsoever. The only reason why I mention it is to guard myself against being misunderstood. I am most anxious not to withhold anything at all from Your Lordship and I am anxious also to retain, in any work that I

undertake, the support of one who so loves the Empire and the country of my birth as yourself. With many thanks for the deep interest you are taking in our troubles and with apologies for the unavoidable length of this letter. (CWMG Vol. 9, pp 457-59)

VI The Coronation

Our countrymen through out South Africa sent their loyal greeting to their Majesties on the Coronation Day. It may seem somewhat anomalous to a stranger why and how British Indians of South Africa should tender their loyalty to the Throne or rejoice over the crowning of Sovereigns in whose dominions they do not even enjoy the ordinary civil rights of orderly men. The anomaly would however, disappear, if the stranger were to understand the British constitution. British Sovereigns represent, in theory, purity and equality of justice. The ideal of King George is to treat his subjects with equality. His happiness depends upon that of his subjects. British statesmen make an honest attempt to realize the ideals. That they often fail miserably in doing so is too true but irrelevant to the issue before us. The British monarchy is limited and rightly so under the existing circumstances. Those then who are content to remain under the British flag may, ought to, without doing any violence to their conscience, tender their loyalty to the Sovereign for the time being of these mighty dominions, although, like us, they may be labouring under severe disabilities. In tendering our loyalty, we but show our devotion to the ideals just referred to; our loyalty is an earnest of our desire to realize them.

The genius of the British constitution requires that every subject of the Crown should be as free as any other, and, if he is not, it is his duty to demand and fight for his freedom so long as he does so without injuring anyone else. There is no room for helotry and slavery in this constitution, though both exist abundantly. Largely it is the fault of the helots and the slaves themselves. The British constitution provides a happy means of freedom but it must be confessed that it is not easy of adoption. There is no royal road to freedom. British people themselves have reached what they mistake for freedom through much travail and suffering. Yet they are strangers to real freedom—the freedom of self. They cannot and do not blame the constitution for the disability. Nor can we because we have ours. And we have not even bled for our freedom, real or so called. If, however, we understand the spirit of the British constitution, though we suffer from disabilities in this sub-continent and though we are far from happy in the sacred land of our birth, we are bound heartily to shout LONG LIVE THE KING !

Our view of the matter is that, if those who argue in this manner feel that they cannot be loyal, they should declare their want of loyalty and outlaw themselves. Otherwise they will lay themselves open to the charge of insincerity and cowardice. We believe, however, that we can remain loyal to His Majesty despite our untold sufferings. Our sufferings here are to be blamed on the local authorities, and more so on ourselves. If we become truthful [that is] if we rebel against ourselves (against the Satanic within us), thus exorcizing the devil, and ourselves manage our affairs instead, we will not have to put up with any hardship whatever and shall be able to declare, 'Oh, how happy we are under the reign of King George!' To the extent that we are unable to exorcize the Satan in us, we shall have to take to entreating the local authorities, and we might thereby slake our burning woes. If we do not do either, how is King George to blame? Someone may answer saying that everything is done in the name of King George, and therefore the credit for the good things and blame for the wrong things should both be his. What we have said above disposes of that argument. The British monarchy is not free, but is confined within limits. These checks are implicit in that British system of monarchy. If the King oversteps the limits, he will be dethroned. Moreover, the British Constitution aims at securing equality of rights and equality before the law for every subject. Those who do not enjoy such equality are free to fight for it, the only restriction being that the mode of agitation shall not harm others. Not only is every British subject free to fight in this way, but it is his duty to do so. It is a duty to express one's loyalty to such a constitution and to its head, the King Emperor, for that will only be an expression of loyalty to one's own manhood. The loyalty of a slave is no loyalty. He only serves. If a slave can be loyal, that must be due to coercion. The loyalty of a free man is willed. It may be urged against this reasoning that it would justify submission even to a wicked king or a vicious constitution; the argument then is not quite proper. For instance, we could not, as free men, be loyal to the pre-War Boer constitution and to its head, President Kruger, for the constitution itself laid down that there shall be no equality between Europeans and Coloureds in the governance of the country or in ecclesiastical affairs. We cannot fight such a constitution and be loyal to it at the same time. In a situation like that we would have to defy not only the head but the basis of his authority as well. If we refused to fight, we would cease to be men and be thought brutes. If the British Constitution were to change and lay down that there would be no equality, not even in theory, as between whites and Coloureds, we could no longer owe allegiance to such a constitution and would have to oppose it. Even in such a contingency, however, we could remain loyal to the King within limits; such is the virtue of the British system. It is not here necessary to explore these limits for the question does not arise.

It must be remembered that the British people won what they consider their freedom after they had let rivers of blood flow. Real freedom, however, even they have yet to win. We, on the other hand, have shed no blood, endured nothing, for the sake of freedom, real or imaginary. The Transvaal satyagrahis alone gave evidence of having suffered in some measure in the course of their great campaign. But their suffering was a drop in the ocean. Only when we come forward to suffer as much—and infinitely more—shall we succeed in winning freedom for ourselves. The British Constitution permits one to seek this freedom. The British Emperor must wish that all his subjects get such freedom; such is the British way. And there are Englishmen who sincerely strive to act on these principles according to their own lights. We can, therefore, and ought to, remain loyal to the British Emperor, our grievances notwithstanding.

[From Gujarati]

Indian Opinion, 24-6-1911, CWMG Vol. 11, pp 452-54

VII Dhingra Case

Mr. Madanlal Dhingra's case came up for hearing today (the 23rd). We were not permitted not be present in the court. Since Mr. Dhingra did not put up any defence, the case did not take much time. He only stated that he had done the deed for the good of his country, and that he did not regard it as a crime. The presiding judge sentenced him to death. I have already given my views about this assassination. Mr. Dhingra's statement, according to me, argues mere childishness or mental derangement. Those who incited him to this act will be called to account in God's court, and are also guilty in the eyes of the world.

THE SHADOW OF THE DHINGRA CASE

Mr. Dhingra's case has led to Government action against *The Indian Sociologist*. The journal had published a categorical statement that homicide for the good of one's country was no murder. The printer, poor man, has been sentenced to four months' imprisonment for printing such a violent article. The man who has been sentenced is a poor, innocent Englishman, who was entirely ignorant [of what he was printing]. The authors* are in Paris, and hence the Government is unable to get at them. Such acts will not advance the progress of the nation. So long as the people do not throw up men who will be prepared to invite the utmost suffering on themselves, India will never prosper.

*Allusion to Savarkar. Gandhi was baying for Savarkar's blood.

Indian Opinion, 21-8-1909, CWMG Vol. 9, pp 436-37.
