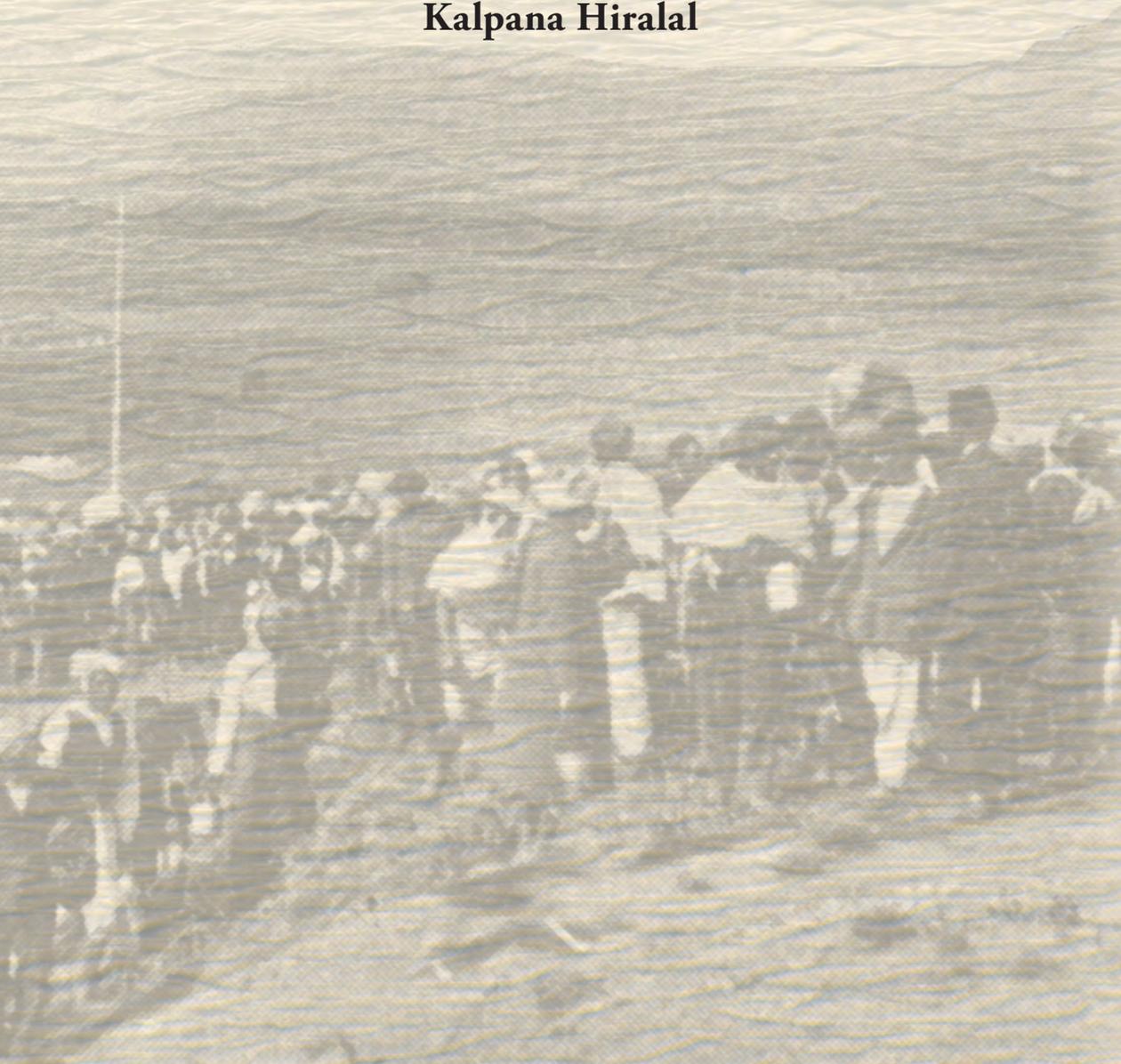


# PIONEERS OF SATYAGRAHA

Indian South Africans Defy Racist Laws, 1907–1914

**E.S. Reddy**  
**Kalpana Hiralal**



The Indian people in South Africa, under the leadership of Gandhi, staged the first non-violent mass movement which involved defiance of unjust laws, courting of imprisonment, bonfires, boycotts, marches and strikes. It brought together people of different religions and linguistic groups, as well as different social classes.

...

This struggle secured the understanding and sympathy of many whites in South Africa—a few of whom suffered imprisonment for their active support—and of opinion in Britain, the metropolitan country. It was supported by an unprecedented solidarity movement all over India uniting people of all religions, princes and commoners, rich and poor, elder statesmen and students. Sanctions were considered for the first time as a means to combat racist oppression in South Africa.

...

Part I of this volume contains a brief history of the passive resistance, describing the leadership of Gandhi as well as the role of his associates and of the masses who participated in the resistance.

In Part II, we present information, mainly from published sources, on hundreds of resisters whose courage and sacrifices contributed to the success of the struggle.

(from INTRODUCTION)

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Indian South Africans Defy Racist Laws, 1907-1914

**E.S. Reddy**  
**Kalpna Hiralal**



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**One Thousand Rupees**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*The* small, vulnerable Indian community in South Africa made immense sacrifices in their Satyagraha led by Gandhiji. The struggle began in the Transvaal against the 'Black Act', the Asiatic Registration Act which made it obligatory for all male residents of Asiatic origins to provide impressions of all their fingers and carry certificates to be produced before the police on demand. This humiliating provision was soon supplemented with even more restrictive Immigration Restriction Act.

The Satyagraha that was inaugurated in 1906 lasted until 1914 in three distinct phases. Our scholarship on the South African Satyagraha is sparse, our understanding limited despite the recognition that the South African period was fundamental to making of the philosophy and praxis of Satyagraha.

This work by two remarkable scholars will, we hope bridge the gap in our understanding. Their focus is not on Gandhiji. Their concern is to document the contribution of tens of thousands of resisters, many of whom still remain unknown despite the diligent scholarship that is evident in this work.

We hope that their work would become a model for other works to follow, not only on South Africa, but also on various Satyagraha in India and we would begin to recognise and document the contribution of women and men who fought for a more just, equal and free world.

Vivek Desai

## FOREWORD

RAMACHANDRA GUHA

*In* *Pioneers of Satyagraha*, E. S. Reddy and Hiralal have mined a wide range of primary sources to provide a closely researched and carefully argued narrative of the first movements of civil disobedience organized by Indians in South Africa. Their book is a major contribution to four fields: (1) the study of Gandhi and Gandhism; (2) the history of non-violence resistance; (3) the history of Indians in South Africa; (4) the history of South Africa itself.

Gandhi's years in South Africa were crucial to the development of his moral and political philosophy. It was in the diaspora that Gandhi first came to understand the religious and linguistic diversity of India, here that he first recognized the potential of mass civil disobedience to effect social change. Reddy and Hiralal pay proper attention to Gandhi's leadership in the satyagrahas conducted between 1907 and 1914. At the same time, they fully acknowledge and document the role of other leaders, such as the Tamil Thambi Naidoo, the Gujarati Muslim A. M. Cachalia, and the Parsi Jivanjee Ghorkhodu Rustomjee. They also bring to light the importance of the support to the movement of sympathetic, liberal-minded, whites.

Indians first came to South Africa in 1860, to work as indentured labourers in the plantations and mines of Natal. Gandhi himself arrived in Natal thirty-three years later. As Reddy and Hiralal show, from well before Gandhi arrived, Indians were protesting against their harsh working conditions. Workers resisted individually and collectively. Indian merchants drew up petitions asking for greater rights that they submitted to the colonial authorities.

Gandhi spent the years 1893 to 1901 in Natal, where the majority of Indians lived. Later, after the Anglo-Boer War ended, he shifted to the Transvaal. The idea of satyagraha itself was born in a mass meeting of Indians in Johannesburg's Empire Theatre on the 11th of September 1906. Gandhi now travelled to London to plead with the Imperial authorities. When his mission failed, the satyagrahas started in 1907, with individuals defying discriminatory laws and courting arrest.

Among the hallmarks of *Pioneers of Satyagraha* is the delineation of the

social and political environment in which these struggles were conducted. The book contains succinct analyses of the legal/institutional background of white racism in South Africa, and its impact on Indians, individually and collectively.

In documenting the different stages of the struggle, Reddy and Hiralal make rich use of contemporary periodicals. These newspapers (including Gandhi's own *Indian Opinion*) provided detailed descriptions of the movement as it evolved, and of the state's attempts to suppress it.

As Reddy and Hiralal show, in the first stages of the movement, it was restricted to the Transvaal, while most of the satyagrahis were merchants, both small hawkers and prosperous traders. In this phase, the Chinese in Transvaal also courted arrest in large numbers, since the Anti-Asiatic Ordinances targeted them too. The cross-national, cross-cultural, alliance between Indians and Chinese is a little-known facet of these satyagrahas, and I am glad Reddy and Hiralal have highlighted it.

In 1913, however, the movement spread to Natal, with a major strike by Indians working in coal mines and sugar plantations. The social base of the movement now became much deeper. It was now more fully representative of the diverse strands within the Indian community in South Africa.

*Pioneers of Satyagraha* has a fascinating chapter on the participation of women in the struggle. Between 1907 and 1911, they provided solid support to the men who courted arrest; keeping the house and family going in their absence. In 1913, a group of courageous Tamil women from Transvaal travelled to Natal and inspired the workers there to go on strike. Finally, Gujarati and Tamil women courted arrest themselves. Their political radicalism was far in advance of that of women in India, who had—at this stage—themselves stayed away from active politics.

Reddy and Hiralal also document the state's response in some detail. Through evocative quotes from primary sources, they alert the reader to the brutality of the police, to the beatings, arrests and deportations by which the Governments of Natal and Transvaal sought to quell the movement. The harsh prison conditions are also documented.

*Pioneers of Satyagraha* is a work that seamlessly moves between history and biography. Part I provides a finely-grained social and political history of the resistance to unjust laws. Part II presents biographical portraits of the resisters themselves, bringing back to attention the many brave men and women whose struggles and sacrifices were as significant as those of their more famous leaders. This important work of scholarship and recovery should command a wide audience in India, South Africa, and beyond.

*PART I*  
**THE RESISTANCE**

*The* Indian people in South Africa, under the leadership of Gandhi, staged the first non-violent mass movement which involved defiance of unjust laws, courting of imprisonment, bonfires, boycotts, marches and strikes. It brought together people of different religions and linguistic groups, as well as different social classes.

In the Transvaal, a province of South Africa,<sup>1</sup> three thousand Indians, or more than one-third of the adult males, and even some children, went to prison and suffered privations between 1908 and 1911. Over a hundred were deported to Bombay and Colombo, often leaving their families without support. When the struggle was extended to the rest of South Africa in 1913, nearly forty thousand workers, or over half of the adult Indian population of Natal, struck work. Almost ten thousand were imprisoned, some in mining compounds. Some workers were killed and many injured. Many families were reduced to poverty.

The suffering, sacrifice and determination of the resisters resulted in the attainment of the main demands of the community.

This struggle secured the understanding and sympathy of many whites in South Africa—a few of whom suffered imprisonment for their active support—and of opinion in Britain, the metropolitan country. It was supported by an unprecedented solidarity movement all over India uniting people of all religions, princes and commoners, rich and poor, elder statesmen and students. Sanctions were considered for the first time as a means to combat racist oppression in South Africa.

This mass movement in South Africa was a precursor to the later mass struggles for the liberation of the country. In 1946-48, two thousand Indian men and women went to prison in protest against the 'Ghetto Act'. They were joined by seventy whites, Coloured people and Africans who demonstrated their solidarity. Racial discrimination in South Africa and resistance against it received international attention as a result of India's complaint to the United Nations. The Indian passive resistance was followed in 1952 by the Defiance Campaign in which eight

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1 Transvaal had been under Afrikaner (Boer) administration, as South African Republic, until the British occupied the region during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. It was a British Colony until 1910. It became a province of the Union of South Africa when it was formed in 1910.

thousand people of all racial origins courted imprisonment. These non-violent mass movements encouraged the formation of movements of solidarity which grew in strength as repression and resistance escalated in South Africa.

The mass democratic movement of the 1980s in South Africa represented a new stage in the mobilisation of the people and involved unprecedented general strikes under severe repression. The international solidarity movement had become powerful and effective sanctions began to be imposed on apartheid South Africa. The apartheid regime was forced to release prisoners, end repression and negotiate with the leaders of the struggle for a transition to a democratic society.

Gandhi developed his philosophy of satyagraha during the course of the struggle in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> With the benefit of his experience in South Africa, he was able to lead a mass movement of millions of people in India for independence from colonial rule.

The movement in India against the mightiest empire of the time attracted world attention. It inspired leaders of many struggles against oppression, and for peace. Non-violent resistance became a major force in international affairs.

Yet, no history of the movement in South Africa exists except for *Satyagraha in South Africa*, dictated by Gandhi in prison from 1922 to 1924 and completed while recuperating from illness after release. He said in the preface to that book:

I have neither the time nor the inclination to write a regular detailed history. My only object in writing this book is that it may be helpful in our present struggle, and serve as a guide to any regular historian who may arise in the future.<sup>3</sup>

The struggle for freedom in India was at that time in an ebb. Serious differences had developed in the national movement for freedom. Gandhi felt it necessary to educate his followers on his concept of satyagraha and persuade them that there was no reason for despair. He said:

The reader will note South African parallels for all our experiences in the present struggle to date. He will also see from this history that there is so far no ground whatever for despair in the fight that is going on. The only condition of victory is a tenacious adherence to our programme.<sup>4</sup>

Because of his purpose in writing this book, he glossed over the opposition he faced within the Indian community in South Africa, the mistakes that were made and corrected, and the extent of the suffering of the passive resisters. He could

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2 Gandhi considered that the term 'passive resistance' did not adequately describe the struggle in South Africa. In January 1908, he invented the term 'satyagraha' as more appropriate. But the English section of *Indian Opinion*, his weekly newspaper, continued to use 'passive resistance' as it was better known while the Gujarati section used 'satyagraha'. We use the two terms interchangeably, but we prefer 'non-violent resistance' as the struggle was not passive and as 'satyagraha' became for Gandhi an ideal rather than a description of the struggle. For further discussion on the use of the terms, please see the last chapter, 'World Significance of the Satyagraha in South Africa'.

3 MK Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1961), pp. xiv-xv. As the book was written from memory it contains some errors.

4 Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. xiv

mention only a few of the resisters. He explained:

The names of several other friends who joined this 'Asiatic invasion' have been left out as I am writing this without consulting any papers, and I hope they will excuse me for it. I am not writing these chapters to immortalise names but to explain the secret of Satyagraha...<sup>5</sup>

Most of the other satyagrahis have remained almost unknown to this day.

Apart from Gandhi himself, only two of the Indian satyagrahis—Bhawani Dayal and Raojibhai M. Patel—have published their reminiscences. They participated in the struggle only in the final phase in 1913 and were soon imprisoned. Bhawani Dayal's book—*Dakshin Africa [Ke] Satyagraha Ka Itihas*, 1916—is in Hindi and hard to find. Raojibhai Patel's *Gandhiji ni Sadhana* was published in Gujarati and translated into Hindi. An English 'adaptation' has numerous errors.<sup>6</sup> Pragji Khandubhai Desai, one of the leading satyagrahis, has written only a short article.<sup>7</sup> Prabhudas Gandhi, then a child in the Phoenix Settlement, wrote his reminiscences in Gujarati and a condensed edition was published in English.<sup>8</sup> H.S.L. Polak, Hermann Kallenbach and A.H. West—three of the Europeans who went to prison—have also written about the movement. No biography of a participant in the struggle has been published, except for two recent biographies of Hermann Kallenbach.<sup>9</sup>

Numerous biographies of Gandhi deal with the satyagraha, but they are centred around Gandhi, his leadership and spiritual development. The satyagraha is treated more as an Indian struggle rather than an important event in South African history. Sushila Nayar, in her large volume on *Mahatma Gandhi—Satyagraha at Work*, mentions only a few Indian resisters while devoting a long chapter to biographies of European sympathisers.<sup>10</sup>

Several studies by scholars since 1980 describe the socio-economic background to the Indian resistance in South Africa in the early twentieth century, and stress the role of the masses.<sup>11</sup> Feminist analyses of the movement by Kalpana Hiralal

5 Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 217

6 Raojibhai M. Patel, *The Making of the Mahatma based on Gandhijini Sadhana*—Adaptation in English by Abid Shamsi (Ahmedabad: Ravindra R. Patel, 1990).

7 Pragji Desai, 'Satyagraha in South Africa' in Chandrashanker Shukla, *Reminiscences of Gandhiji by Forty-eight contributors* (Bombay: Vora and Co., 1951).

8 Prabhudas Gandhi, *My Childhood with Gandhiji* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957).

9 Isa Sarid and Christian Bartolf, *Hermann Kallenbach* (Berlin: Gandhi-Informations-Zentrum, 1997); Shimon Lev, *Soulmates: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach* (Hyderabad, Orient Black Swan, 2012).

10 Sushila Nayar, *Mahatma Gandhi, Volume IV: Satyagraha at Work* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1989), pp. 450-85.

11 S. Bhana and U. Dhupelia, 'Passive Resistance among Indian South Africans' unpublished paper presented to the conference of the South African Historical Association, University of Durban-Westville, July 1981; J. Beall and D. North-Coombes, 'The 1913 Natal Indian Strike: The Social and Economic Background to Passive Resistance', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, vi,

and R. Mongia highlight the role of Indian women and debunk the myth of docile Indian women in the diaspora.<sup>12</sup> Surendra Bhana and Shukla-Bhatt have published poems written in Gujarati, English and Hindi during the movement and produced an interesting literary study of the struggle.<sup>13</sup> But none of them identify many of the resisters and their role in the struggle.

We have written a short history of the struggle which describes the inspirational leadership of Gandhi as well as the contributions of other leaders and individual resisters, and have provided available information on hundreds of resisters. We hope further research and contributions of descendants of the satyagrahis will lead to a more detailed history of that great struggle of the Indian South Africans.

### *The Course of the Struggle*

The struggle was confined to the Transvaal until 1911 and was directed against the Asiatic Registration Act and the discriminatory provisions of the Immigration Restriction Act which restricted immigration of even former residents of the Colony who left during the Anglo-Boer War. It was resumed in 1913 throughout the Union of South Africa, especially as the courts declared most Indian marriages invalid and the Government failed to fulfil its promise to abolish the £3 tax on former indentured workers, their wives and children.

The struggle went through three phases: (a) from the decision at a mass meeting on 11 September 1906 to defy the Asiatic Ordinance to the provisional agreement with General Smuts on 30 January 1908; (b) from the renewal of resistance in July 1908 to the provisional settlement with General Smuts in May 1911; and (c) from 15 September 1913 to the passage of the Indians' Relief Act in June 1914. The first two phases were in the Transvaal and the last in Natal and the Cape as well.

In August 1906 the Transvaal Government published a draft Asiatic Ordinance requiring the Asiatics (mainly Indians and about a thousand Chinese) to register again. It contained humiliating provisions: they had to provide ten finger prints and show the registration certificates on demand by police officers. The Ordinance was replaced by an Act of the Transvaal Parliament in 1907 when the Colony received self-government.

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1983, pp. 48-81; M. Swan, 'The 1913 Natal Indian Strike', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 10, 1984, pp. 239-58; and A. Desai and G. Vahed, *Inside Indenture—A South African Story, 1860-1914* (Durban: Madiba Publishers, 2007). See also Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi before India* (London and New Delhi: Penguin, 2013) based on extensive archival research.

12 R. Mongia, 'Gender and the Historiography of Gandhian Satyagraha in South Africa', *Gender and History*, Vol. 18, 2006, pp. 130-149; K. Hiralal, 'Rethinking Gender and Agency in the Satyagraha Movement of 1913', *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 25, 2010, pp. 71-80, 'Our Plucky Sisters who have dared to fight'—Indian Women and the Satyagraha Movement in South Africa', *The Oriental Anthropologist*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1-22.

13 S. Bhana and N. Shukla-Bhatt, *A Fire That Blazed in the Ocean—Gandhi and the Poems of Satyagraha in South Africa, 1909-1911* (New Delhi: Promilla & Co., 2011).

The Hamidia Islamic Society and the British Indian Association (BIA)<sup>14</sup> organised a huge mass meeting on 11 September 1906 to protest against the Ordinance. On the proposal of Haji Habib, a merchant and community leader in Pretoria, the community took an oath not to register and to suffer imprisonment until the law was repealed. H.O. Ally, Chairman of the Hamidia Islamic Society, seconded the proposal with a rousing speech. By the end of November, when registration closed, only 545 had registered.

Soon after, an Immigration Restriction Act came into force, making it almost impossible for former Asiatic residents of the Transvaal to enter the Colony<sup>15</sup> and prohibiting further immigration by Asiatics. Licences were refused to traders and hawkers unless they produced registration certificates.

The Government began to arrest those it considered leaders of the resistance. They defied orders by the courts to leave the Transvaal and were sentenced to two or three months of imprisonment. By the end of January 1908, nearly two hundred Indians and some Chinese were in prison.

Albert Cartwright, an editor, helped arrange a compromise which was confirmed on 30 January 1908 when General Smuts, the Colonial Secretary, invited Gandhi, the Secretary of the British Indian Association then in prison, for talks. Under the compromise, Indians would register voluntarily and would not be harassed by the police. They would be allowed to trade without licences until the Parliament met again in June. The prisoners were released and pending prosecutions were withdrawn.

Almost all Indians and Chinese registered voluntarily, but the Government did not repeal the Asiatic Act. Negotiations with the Government by Gandhi, on behalf of the Indian community, broke down as the Government rejected the requests that it repeal the Asiatic Act, amend the Immigration Restriction Act to make it of general application, and allow the immigration of a few educated Indians such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers and priests needed by the Indian community.

Resistance was resumed and on 16 August registration certificates and licences were burnt in a huge cauldron at a mass meeting of Indians.

While resistance in the first phase was defended on religious grounds because of the oath taken on 11 September 1906, it was now increasingly seen as a struggle for the honour of India and the dignity of Indians in South Africa.

About two thousand persons courted arrest within the next year. Gandhi brought several educated persons and former residents into the Transvaal from

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14 The Hamidia Islamic Society represented the Muslim merchants who were the majority of Indians in the Transvaal and relatively more well-to-do. The British Indian Association, set up by Gandhi, was open to all Indians.

15 Thousands of Indians had left the Transvaal during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, and many of them were unable to return under the procedures set up by the British administration which followed. *Indian Opinion*, 31 August 1907.

Natal to claim their right to enter the Colony and court imprisonment.

The authorities resorted to stringent repression. The courts routinely sentenced resisters to the maximum penalty with hard labour. Some merchants were fined, without the option of prison, and their goods were auctioned. Scores of Indians were deported to Bombay and Colombo, far from their ancestral homes.

By late 1909, the number of determined satyagrahis dropped to less than one hundred. But the Government of the Union of South Africa<sup>16</sup> came under great pressure from India and Britain. It decided to calm the situation before the next Imperial Conference in London. Gandhi and Smuts held discussions and reached a provisional settlement in May 1911. Passive resistance was suspended and the resisters were released from prison.

But the Government did not implement the settlement, partly because of opposition in Parliament. A new and more serious issue arose in 1913 when the courts declared that marriages under religions which recognised polygamy—that is, most Indian marriages—were invalid in South Africa. The Government was unwilling to adopt remedial legislation. The exorbitant £3 tax in Natal on former indentured labourers, their wives and children—designed to force them to work again under semi-slave conditions or leave South Africa—was causing great suffering and could no longer be ignored. The Government had assured Gopal Krishna Gokhale, an eminent Indian leader who visited South Africa in 1912, that the tax would be abolished, but failed to fulfil the promise.

Resistance was resumed on 15 September 1913. It was no longer limited to the Transvaal. Gandhi and his associates invited Indian women to court imprisonment. Workers were advised to suspend work until the Government gave an assurance that the £3 tax would be abolished. Recognition of all Indian marriages and abolition of the £3 tax were added to the demands.

On 15 September the first batch of 16 resisters from the Phoenix Settlement—12 men and 4 women, including the wife, a son and two other relatives of Gandhi—proceeded to the Transvaal to court arrest. About five thousand Indian workers in the coal mining area of Natal struck work in October demanding the abolition of the £3 tax. They were led by Gandhi to the Transvaal in a dramatic march. The Government delayed arrest of the workers in the hope that the movement would collapse when they could not be provided food and other necessities. But the contributions of Indian merchants and large donations from India frustrated those hopes. The workers were arrested on 10 November, sent back to the mines and imprisoned in the compounds. Gandhi and two European associates—Hermann Kallenbach and Henry Polak—were also imprisoned.

More than twenty thousand workers on plantations and the cities then went on strike. The Government brought the army and reinforcements of the police into the area. In collusion with the plantation owners and other employers, it was able

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<sup>16</sup> The Cape, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State formed the Union of South Africa in 1910.

to suppress the strikes by mid-December.

The brutality against the Indian workers, and the imprisonment of women resisters for three months with hard labour, outraged India. Pressure from India and Britain and the spirit of resistance in the Indian community helped persuade the Government to seek a settlement. General Smuts and Gandhi reached a provisional settlement in January 1914 and the Indians' Relief Act was adopted by the Union Parliament in June 1914. The resistance ended with the satisfaction of its main demands though many other serious grievances of the Indians remained.

Some significant aspects of the struggle are briefly noted below.

### *Leadership of the Struggle*

Almost all accounts of the struggle describe Gandhi's role as an inspired and inspiring leader,<sup>17</sup> but provide little information on the organisation leading the struggle, its structure and the organisers at different levels.

The Hamidia Islamic Society was mainly responsible for organising the mass meeting on 11 September 1906. Leaders of this Society and of the British Indian Association toured the Transvaal and helped organise an almost total boycott of registration under the Asiatic Act. Volunteers were enrolled to picket registration offices. Gandhi, the Secretary of the British Indian Association, acted as an adviser and spokesman. He exhorted the people to defy the 'Black Act', court arrest and be strictly non-violent.

By the end of 1907, enthusiasm for jail-going began to wane among the merchants. H.O. Ally and Haji Habib left the Transvaal to avoid arrest and Gandhi came to be recognised as the leader of resistance. He was not elected or appointed. People looked to him as the only person competent to lead because of his status as barrister, his honesty, his willingness to sacrifice and his ability to negotiate with the Government. The Government also recognised him as the leader when General Smuts reached an agreement with him on 30 January 1908.

Leaders emerged in different towns and communities. For instance, Thambi Naidoo became a very effective leader in the Tamil community. His leadership and courage were crucial in keeping up resistance in the Transvaal in 1909 and

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<sup>17</sup> Speaking at a public meeting in Madras on 21 April 1915, Gandhi said that he was inspired by the resisters in South Africa.

It was they, the simpleminded folk, who worked away in faith, never expecting the slightest reward, who inspired me, who kept me to the proper level, and who compelled me by their great sacrifice, by their great faith, by their great trust in the great God to do the work that I was able to do... The inspiration was given by them to us, and we were able to be interpreters between the powers who called themselves the governors and those men for whom redress was so necessary... It was my duty, having received the education that was given to me by my parents, to interpret what was going on in our midst to those simple folk, and they rose to the occasion. They realised the importance of birth in India, they realised the might of religious force, and it was they who inspired us... (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1958-94), hereinafter referred to as *CWMG*, Vol. 13, pp. 52-53).

organising the strike of Indian workers in Natal in 1913. Groups of activists, mostly without formal organisation, appear to have organised jail-going in various centres.

The British Indian Association was always involved in the resistance. It organised mass meetings where Gandhi reported on negotiations with the Government. Letters to the Government on behalf of the community and the resisters were often drafted by Gandhi and signed by the Chairman of the Association. But its role in the resistance was somewhat ambiguous.

Gandhi wrote in a letter to Gokhale on 6 December 1909 that the Central Association and sub-committees had already spent no less than £10,000 for the struggle.<sup>18</sup> He wrote to Dr. Yusuf Dadoo in 1939:

From the very commencement of passive resistance, I recognised that all Indians would not and could not join the struggle although all might be, as they actually were, in sympathy with it. Although it was open to me, being secretary, to utilise the name and prestige of the Association, I founded a separate organisation, leaving the British Indian Association free to act as it might within constitutional limits. It was possible by this arrangement to protect the non-resisters from harm, retain their sympathy and save the resisters from the embarrassment that would undoubtedly be caused by non-resisters if they were members of the same body.<sup>19</sup>

A footnote in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* indicates that Gandhi was referring to 'Passive Resistance Association'. But there is no mention of a Central Association or Passive Resistance Association in Gandhi's writings or in *Indian Opinion* during the struggle. The funds received from South Africa or from abroad, in support of the struggle and for relief to the families of resisters, were kept in a separate account, known as passive resistance fund, with Gandhi in charge. He made disbursements in consultation with his associates but their identities are not known, except for A.M. Cachalia, Chairman of the British Indian Association.

The Natal Indian Association was formed after the struggle had begun in Natal in 1913 since the leadership of the Natal Indian Congress did not support the struggle. The Association did not seek to lead the struggle but helped the Indian workers on strike with the provision of food and other supplies. Local passive resistance committees were also formed in towns outside Durban to help the resistance.

After the strike was over and Gandhi was released from prison, the Natal Indian Association assumed a role similar to that of the British Indian Association in the Transvaal.

What emerges from the writings of Gandhi and the *Indian Opinion* is the lack of a formal organisation leading the struggle.

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<sup>18</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 10, pp. 96-98

<sup>19</sup> *Harijan*, 19 August 1939; *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 91-92. Gandhi was advising Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, leader of the radical group in the Transvaal Indian Congress, who advocated passive resistance while the leadership of the Congress was opposed.

Major decisions were made in mass meetings where there was heated discussion.<sup>20</sup> Gandhi faced opposition from Pathans at a mass meeting in February 1908, called to endorse the agreement of 30 January with General Smuts. At another mass meeting in August 1908, at which Gandhi reported on concessions made by the Government and expressed hope that a satisfactory agreement could be reached, it was decided not to accept any agreement without the repeal of the Asiatic Act. There was often a feeling among some Indians that Gandhi was too naïve in trusting the Government.

The decision to renew passive resistance in 1913 was taken at a mass meeting convened by the British Indian Association in Johannesburg. The decision to invite women to participate in resistance was apparently taken at a meeting of Gandhi with leading passive resisters.<sup>21</sup>

Workers on plantations and in Durban and Pietermaritzburg went on strike in November 1913 on their own initiative. Gandhi, who was then in prison, had not wanted to extend the strike beyond the coal-mining area. He was, however, an unseen inspiration to the workers.

In December 1913, while Gandhi was in prison, mass meetings in several cities and towns decided to boycott a commission of inquiry set up by the Government unless two members acceptable to Indians were included.

After Gandhi was released in December, decisions on further action were taken at a mass meeting organised by the Natal Indian Association in Durban. The provisional settlement reached with Smuts in January was endorsed at a mass meeting in Durban, as well as mass meetings in other cities in Natal and the Transvaal.

After the Indians' Relief Bill was enacted, Gandhi addressed farewell meetings in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria where he explained and defended the agreement. The agreement was criticised by some Muslim merchants and others, but the attendance at mass meetings showed that it was welcomed by most of the community.

The resisters had received hardly any training except for Gandhi's speeches at mass meetings and his articles in *Indian Opinion*.<sup>22</sup> Gandhi was imprisoned or on a mission abroad for much of the time. He was in prison from 10 to 30 January 1908. He was sentenced to two months of hard labour on 14 October 1908 and

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20 As Professor Kader Asmal wrote in 2008: 'Non-violent action is a form of participatory democracy'. *Mail and Guardian*, 'The Centenary of a Bonfire, 27 August 2008', <http://mg.co.za/article/2008-08-27-the-centenary-of-a-bonfire>. Accessed 9 August 2013.

21 These decisions were taken in the Transvaal as the leaders of the Natal Indian Congress were opposed to passive resistance.

22 Gandhi considered the austere life at the Phoenix Settlement and the Tolstoy Farm as training, but the number of persons in the two settlements was small. Austere life was essential training for jail-going. But in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the volunteers had to be trained to withstand brutal assaults and even savage torture.

to three months with hard labour in February 1909. He was away on a deputation in Britain from 21 June to 30 November 1909. A.M. Cachalia, Chairman of the British Indian Association, was imprisoned and several acting chairmen were swiftly sent to prison, as were all members of the executive. The resisters were disciplined and followed Gandhi's guidelines despite the absence of their leaders.

As Gandhi was to say later:

In a satyagraha army everybody is a soldier and a servant. But at a pinch every satyagrahi soldier has also to be his own general and leader.<sup>23</sup>

In short, the example of Gandhi and the respect and confidence gained by him were the main driving force behind the resistance for much of the time rather than an organisation. Gandhi, in fact, did not believe in the need for an elaborate organisation to lead the struggle. He felt that a few resisters with the spirit of satyagraha could influence the masses.<sup>24</sup> He said in March 1930:

In South Africa the movement was not in my control during the latter part of it, when it gained considerable momentum without any action on my part. Thousands joined the movement instinctively. I had not even seen the faces of them, much less known them. They joined because they felt that they must. They had possibly only heard my name, but they saw in the twinkling of an eye that it was a movement for their liberation; they knew that there was a man prepared to fight the £3 tax and they took the plunge. ... They knew that there would be hell let loose on them. And yet they did not waver or falter. It was a perfect miracle.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Gandhi's Style of Leadership***

Gandhi's style of leadership will be seen in the following chapters. But three aspects deserve mention here.

First, efforts to obtain support from the whites and those who could influence them. Gandhi placed great emphasis on securing support among the whites as the Government was responsive only to white opinion. A Committee of Sympathisers was formed in the Transvaal and it proved very helpful though it represented a small minority among the whites. A few whites identified themselves fully with the Indian cause. Hermann Kallenbach and Henry Polak were given important positions and responsibilities by the British Indian Association. Sonja Schlesin was Honorary Secretary of the Transvaal Indian Women's Association. They proved great assets to the struggle.

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<sup>23</sup> *Harijan*, 13 July 1940

<sup>24</sup> Gandhi said at a press conference on 8 March 1934: '... a non-violent general has this special advantage: he does not require thousands of leaders to successfully carry on his fight. The non-violent message does not require so many for transmission. The example of a few true men or women if they have fully imbibed the spirit of non-violence is bound to infect the whole mass in the end'. Interview to *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1960), p. 196.

<sup>25</sup> *Young India*, 20 March 1930; *CWMG*, Vol. 43, p. 43.

In negotiations with the Government, Gandhi always took note of white opinion at the time and made compromises to reach an agreement. Aware of opposition of whites to legal or illegal immigration of Indians to the Transvaal, he offered voluntary registration of Indians. He proposed limiting Indian immigration by administrative means rather than by law.

He also devoted great attention to securing full support of Indian public opinion and to lobbying in Britain.

Second, Gandhi stressed suffering as the means to show the distress and earnestness of the Indian community and thereby persuade the whites to respond. He favoured dramatic actions—such as the bonfire of registration certificates and the march of thousands of Indian workers from Newcastle to the Transvaal—to make the white community aware of the strength of feeling among Indians.

Third, Gandhi did not lose heart when the number of resisters dwindled to less than a hundred in the Transvaal, or when the strike was suppressed in Natal. He had faith that even one pure satyagrahi would prevail.

### *Unity and Disunity in the Indian Community*

The Asiatic Registration Act and the Immigration Restriction Act affected all the Indians of the Transvaal, irrespective of religion, language, education or social status. The Parsis, who had enjoyed the privileges of Europeans as regards immigration, the Muslim merchants who had tried to claim respect by calling themselves Arabs, as well as the Tamil and Telugu-speaking hawkers, were subject to humiliation under these acts. In mass meetings of Indians support to resistance was universal. But this commitment to resistance did not last long.

By the middle of 1907, some merchants began to complain that Gandhi's campaign for resistance instead of compromise was hurting Muslims.<sup>26</sup>

Gandhi wrote after the provisional agreement with General Smuts at the end of January 1908:

The entire campaign was intended to preserve the status of the well-to-do Indians. Muslims are better placed in South Africa and it was chiefly a businessmen's campaign. Had it not been for the massive effort of the Hamidia Islamic Society, we would never have won. Also, had not a large number of Muslims worked hard for it, there would have been no victory.<sup>27</sup>

When active courting of imprisonment began in August 1908, people from all communities in the Transvaal and some volunteers from Natal participated. The resisters included persons professing different religions—Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Parsi—who spoke different languages—Gujarati, Tamil and Telugu—and who belonged to different economic strata.

The resisters initially went out hawking without permit. They were sentenced

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<sup>26</sup> Most of the Indian merchants in South Africa were Muslims from Gujarat.

<sup>27</sup> *CWMG*, Vol. 8, p. 100

to one or two weeks imprisonment with hard labour. But the Government found ways to increase punishment. The courts ordered deportation to Natal for not producing the registration certificate and the usual sentence for returning to the Transvaal was three or more months with hard labour. The courts imposed fines on the merchants, without option of a prison sentence, and their goods were auctioned. These measures persuaded most merchants to abandon resistance after serving a short sentence. But some Muslim and Parsee merchants—such as A.M. Cachalia, Ebrahim Asvat, Parsee Rustomjee and Dawad Mahomed—were prepared to suffer longer and multiple terms in prison. Resistance was kept up by the Tamil minority in the Transvaal which was relatively poor.

Two deputations were sent by the Indian community to London to obtain support from the British Government—the first consisting of Gandhi and H.O. Ally in 1906 and the second with Gandhi and Haji Habib in 1909. After the first deputation, Ally sent a telegram in July 1907 to Syed Ameer Ali, member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London and a member of the South Africa British Indian Committee (SABIC), expressing his opposition to Gandhi's continued campaign against the Asiatic Registration Act as it would ruin 'thousands of my co-religionists who are all traders while the Hindus are mostly hawkers.' He sought the intervention of the Committee against the passive resistance.<sup>28</sup> SABIC then sent a cable to the British Indian Association advising Indians not to court imprisonment.<sup>29</sup>

During the visit of the second deputation in 1909, when Generals Botha and Smuts conceded the demands of the struggle, except for the removal of discrimination against Asiatics in the Immigration Restriction Act, Haji Habib asked Gandhi to tell Lord Ampthill, Chairman of SABIC, that he would accept the offer.

Tell him from me that I accept General Botha's offer on behalf of the conciliation party.<sup>30</sup> If he makes these concessions, we will be satisfied for the present and later on struggle for principle. I do not like the community to suffer any more. The party I represent constitutes the majority of the community, and it also holds the major portion of the community's wealth.

After translating Habib, Gandhi conceded that Habib represented the majority of Indians in the Transvaal. He said:

My colleague is right when he says that he represents a numerically and financially stronger section. The Indians for whom I speak are comparatively poor and inferior numbers, but they are resolute unto death. They are fighting not only for practical relief but for principle as well.<sup>31</sup>

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28 *CWMG*, Vol. 8, p. 100

29 *Indian Opinion*, 27 July 1907; *CWMG*, Vol. 7, pp. 123-24.

30 Haji Habib and H.O. Ally, who avoided arrest by leaving the Transvaal in 1907, returned and set up a British Indian Conciliation Committee in June 1909 to seek a compromise with the Government.

31 Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter 32

While there was much opposition to resistance, the entire Indian community agreed on the demands of the resisters and some merchants provided it material support.

In 1913, when the resistance was extended beyond the Transvaal and Natal became the main theatre, there was strong opposition by the leaders of the Natal Indian Congress, including M.C. Anglia who had earlier courted imprisonment in the Transvaal. At a mass meeting of the Congress on 19 October 1913, Gandhi was criticised by one of its secretaries for eroding the position of the merchants. Sensing that a group was hostile to him, Gandhi requested the Chairman to adjourn the meeting. Gandhi and his supporters formed a Natal Indian Association which provided valuable support to the resistance. Despite the opposition of the Natal Indian Congress to passive resistance, many merchants provided food and other supplies to the Indian workers on strike.

After the final settlement in June 1914, Gandhi was criticised by a number of Muslim merchants as it did not deal with the grievances of merchants and did not recognise plural marriages of Muslims. At a meeting of Muslims in Johannesburg on 15 July, Gandhi was severely attacked by H.O. Ally.

As Gandhi said many years later:

Some fell and some weakened, and some opposed me bitterly...<sup>32</sup>

### ***Struggle for the Honour of India, not for Personal Interest***

A very significant feature of the struggle was that the resisters were defying the law and making sacrifices not for their personal interests but for the honour of India.

The Transvaal Government made substantial concessions during the resistance, as did Gandhi. The Government agreed to voluntary rather than compulsory registration and to permit most former residents of the Transvaal to return. By 1909, only one major problem remained. Gandhi asked that the Immigration Restriction Act should be of general application, without restriction on Asiatics, even though, in its administration, only about six educated Indians a year may be admitted. General Smuts agreed to the admission of six persons as a special case, but was not willing to amend the Act. The resisters, under the influence of Gandhi, were not prepared to accept a racial taint in law which they considered an insult to India and Indians.<sup>33</sup>

Gandhi claimed, in a letter to Count Leo Tolstoy on 10 November 1909, that the struggle had enormous significance:

In my opinion, this struggle of the Indians in the Transvaal is the greatest of modern times, inasmuch as it has been idealised both as to the goal as also the methods adopted to reach the goal. I am not aware of a struggle in which the participators are not to derive any personal advantage at the end of it, and in which 50 per cent

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<sup>32</sup> CWMG, Vol. 49, p. 203

<sup>33</sup> CWMG, Vol. 10, pp. 149-54

of the persons affected have undergone great suffering and trial for the sake of a principle... If it succeeds, it will be not only a triumph of religion, love and truth over irreligion, hatred and falsehood, but it is highly likely to serve as an example to the millions in India and to people in other parts of the world, who may be down-trodden and will certainly go a great way towards breaking up the party of violence, at least in India.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Women and Children in Resistance***

Another significant feature of the resistance was the courting of imprisonment by Indian women in a political struggle.

Women in the Transvaal were anxious to join the resistance when their husbands and children began to court imprisonment, but Gandhi hesitated for fear that they may not be able to take the treatment in prison. He decided in 1913, after consultation with his associates, to invite women to join the struggle because of the invalidation of Hindu, Muslim and Zoroastrian marriages. He chose at first those who had resided in the Tolstoy Farm or the Phoenix Settlement and were trained to follow an austere life.

The entry of women into the battle had an immediate effect in encouraging workers to go on strike, swelling the number of resisters from less than a hundred to thirty or forty thousand. The incarceration of women, including Kasturba Gandhi, under sentences of three months with hard labour, provoked an outrage all over India.

The youth, many of them born in South Africa, were the backbone of the struggle. Valliamma, a teenager, became a symbol of heroism. She refused release from prison despite her illness and died a few days after release. Nagappan and Narayansamy, two other martyrs, were also young.

Many children of resisters went to prison soon after they reached the age of 18 or even before. They were among the most determined resisters.

### ***Cooperation between Indians and Chinese***

Another notable aspect of the struggle in the Transvaal was the close cooperation between Indians and Chinese.

After the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, British territories in the Caribbean, Mauritius, South Africa and Fiji looked upon India and China as reservoirs of cheap labour. Tens of thousands of Chinese were brought to work in the mines in the Transvaal under inhuman conditions, while Indians were imported to Natal as indentured labour. After the Liberal Party came to power in Britain in 1906, the Chinese labourers were repatriated. Less than a thousand Chinese—mainly traders and farmers—remained.

When Indians began to resist the Asiatic Registration Act, the Chinese too

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<sup>34</sup> CWMG, Vol. 10, p. 224

decided to defy the Act which affected them equally. Gandhi defended the Chinese who were charged for refusing to register under the Act.

Altogether 150 Chinese went to prison.<sup>35</sup> More than twenty Chinese were deported to Colombo though they were from China and Hong Kong. H.S.L. Polak, who was then in India as representative of the Transvaal Indian community, met them in Colombo and took them back to Durban. The number of Chinese in prison was probably higher than the number of Indians in prison when Gandhi and Smuts reached the provisional settlement in May 1911.

The Chinese honoured Gandhi and his associates—H.S.L. Polak, L.W. Ritch and Hermann Kallenbach—for their help during the struggle.

While Indians and Chinese cooperated closely they had their own organisations and carried on their campaigns in parallel as Indians claimed rights as British subjects and Chinese looked for protection from their Government.

§ § §

Part I of this volume contains a brief history of the passive resistance, describing the leadership of Gandhi as well as the role of his associates and of the masses who participated in the resistance.

In Part II, we present information, mainly from published sources, on hundreds of resisters whose courage and sacrifices contributed to the success of the struggle.

We have omitted reference to fines imposed by courts, unless there was no option of prison, as almost all resisters chose prison.

We would welcome any additional information and photos from descendants of the satyagrahis or others to enable scholars to prepare a more comprehensive history of the struggle which initiated a new form of resistance against oppression, injustice and conflict.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to the many librarians, archivists, scholars and descendants of resisters for their kind cooperation; to Ramachandra Guha and Tridip Suhrud for their constant encouragement; and to Vivek J. Desai, Managing Trustee of Navajivan Trust for readily agreeing to publish this book; to Navajivan Press for providing many photographs; and to Apurva Ashar for his patient and creative efforts in designing this book.

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<sup>35</sup> *Indian Opinion*, 7 May 1910

Scenes outside Hamidia Mosque, Pretoria 1908



Registration Certificates go up in flames outside the mosque



Mass meeting outside the Hamidia Mosque in Johannesburg



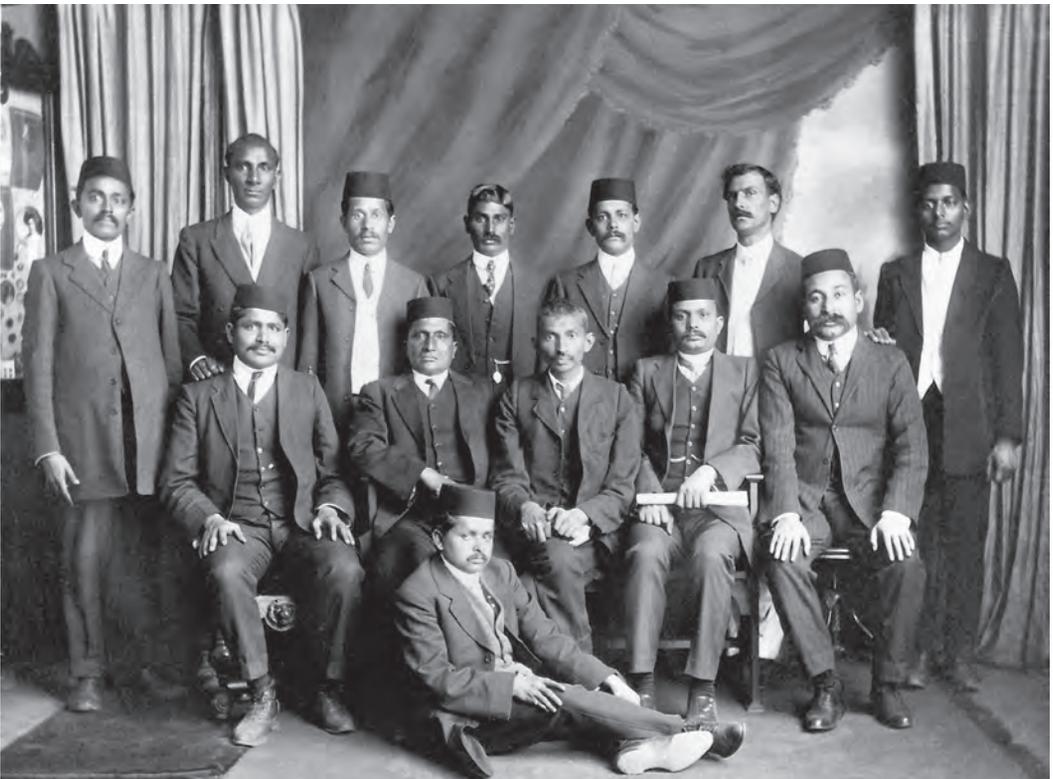
Passive Resisters from Natal who proceeded to Johannesburg to assert their rights as British Indians during the Transvaal satyagraha. Standing: L-R: SJ Randeira, MC Anglia, HI Joshi. Seated: L-R: Parsee Rustomjee, Dawad Mahomed, Adam HG Mahomed.



Indian Passive Resistance Volunteers in Pretoria  
 Back Row: Ebrahim Noor, Govind Prag, Goolab Rudra Desai, Moosa Suliman, Hoosen Bia; Vali Mahomed.  
 Centre Row: AFC Beg, Babu Gangaram, Goolam Mahomed Abdool Rashid, Ahmed Cachalia, GP Vyas.  
 Front Row: Cassim Sidoo, Khooshal Sita

Source:

Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal



Gandhi (seated centre) in Pretoria in 1910



Chinese passive resisters with their leader Leung Quinn <sup>2</sup>



Leung Quinn  
Acting Chairman,  
Chinese Association of  
the Transvaal <sup>1</sup>



Henry SL Polak <sup>2</sup>

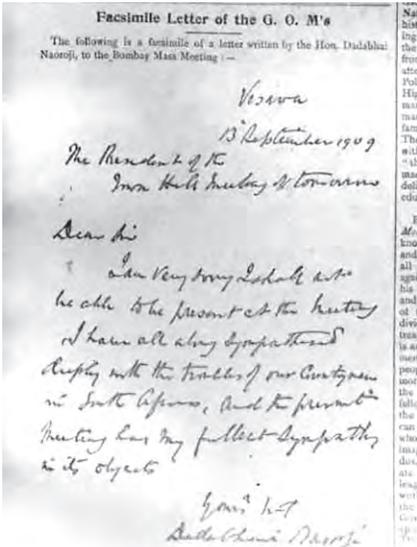
Sources:

1 *Indian Opinion* 21 January 1911

2 Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal

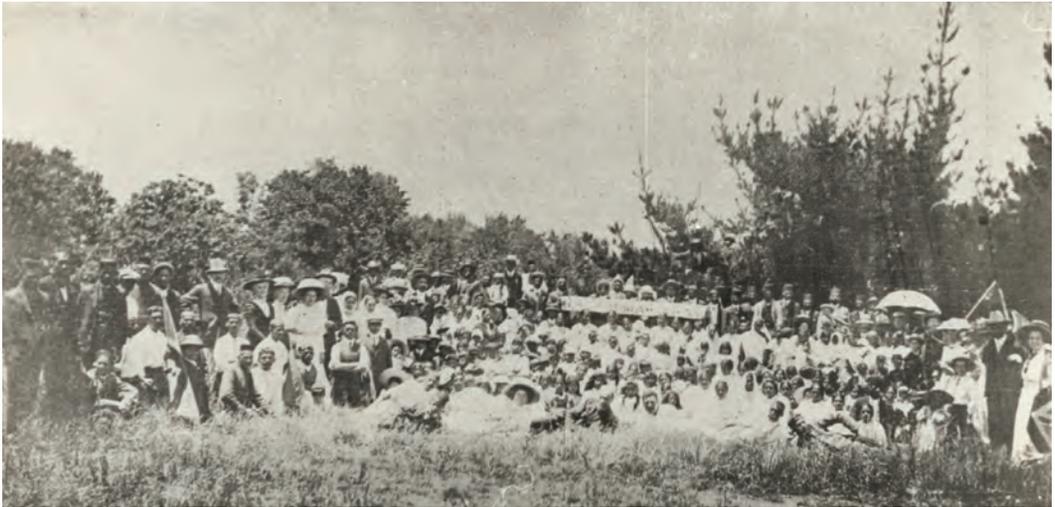


Johannesburg Passive resisters released from prison. Gandhi can be seen second from left in the bottom photograph.



Tolstoy Farm. Hermann Kallenbach, purchased the farm of 1100 acres from Johannesburg Town Council in 1910. 2

A facsimile of the letter written by the Honourable Dadabhai Naoroji to the Bombay mass meeting in 1909 1



Tolstoy Farm picnic 2 Sources: 1 Indian Opinion, 22 January 1910. 2 Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal.



Phoenix Settlement. Established in 1904



Gandhi with Hermann Kallenbach, Johannesburg 1910.



Pioneer Settlers of Tolstoy Farm: Top Row: (unknown), Coopoosamy Naidoo, Gopal Naidoo, Manilal Gandhi, Burjorsing and Rajkumar. Middle Row: Mrs Thambi Naidoo and Baby, Mrs Lazarus and Mrs John's Baby, Mrs John, Gandhi, Kallenbach, Joseph Royeppen, Ramhorry, and Pragji K. Desai. Bottom Row: Ramdas Gandhi and three Naidoos.



Gandhi Promotes Soccer Matches 1910. Pretoria passive resisters with striped jerseys vs Johannesburg Passive resisters with plain jerseys played in Rangers Ground, Mayfair, Johannesburg

1st row, Standing from left: Unknown, S.B. Medh, Murugas (Thabla) Naidoo, H. Kallenbach, C.K. Thambi Naidoo, Chairman Transvaal Tamil Benefit Society; M. K. Gandhi, Miss Sonja Schlesin, L.W. Ritch, G. Isaacs, Khusal Bai, Sorabji, Shapurji. 2nd row: Subraya Padayachy, Acting Chairman Pretoria. Tamil League; Venugopal Naidoo, D. Lazarus, K. Raja Rethnam, Perumaal Naidoo, V.S. Manickum Pillay, Billy K.G. Pillay, Sooboo Naidoo, V. Chetty, Newyoki, V.S. Pillay, Chairman Pretoria Tamil League; Chinapa, R. Kathira Velloo Padayachy, J.K. Philips, H. Moonsamy. 3rd row: Francis Pillay, Murugas Pillay, Govindasamy Masthan Padayachy, Johnny Peters, Ramlall Mooloo, Chairman Pretoria Indian Congress; N.K. Pillay, Johannesburg Captain; Boblal Maharaj, Pretoria Captain; G.H. Moona, David Anthony, V. Naidoo, David Mooideen, Narsoo Naidoo, David Ernest, N.S. Pillay. 4th row: R.R. Frank, John Andrews, H. Masootoo Pillay, K. Jaganathan Pillay, Chinasamy Pillay, Jimmy Chetty, D. Patel, S. Arunachala Padayachy, Aron John, Govindasamy Pillay.



Gandhi with his colleagues at Phoenix settlement.



M.K. Gandhi, Kasturba Gandhi, Sonia Schlesin (extreme right) and others on Tolstoy Farm, June 1912



Gopal Krishna Gokhale in South Africa, 1912. Taken at Heidelberg Station.  
Front row center: Gandhi and Gokhale

Pass under Act 17, 1895

No. 9308      D

Pass the Indian Immigrant

*Bandker*

Colonial Number *6921*

Sex *M*      Age *39*      Height *5' 5"*

Build & Marks *Scar left face, cut mark right ear.*

...he having paid the Annual Income of (£3) Three Pounds sterling, as required by Section 6, Law 17, 1895.

This Pass expires on the *23<sup>rd</sup> April 1901*

and must then be renewed.

Issued at the

R.M. Office *Durban*

*24 June 1900*      *J.P. Swainson* / R.M.

Proof of payment of £3 tax 1



L: Golden Shield presented by the Durban General Reception Committee to Hon. G. K. Gokhale 2  
 R: Silver Shield presented by the Mahomedan community of Natal to Hon. G. K. Gokhale 2



Silver and Gold Casket presented by South Coast Indians to Hon. G. K. Gokhale 2

Sources:

1 Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal. 2 *Indian Opinion* 23 November 1912.



Members of the reception committee during the visit of Gopal Krishna Gokhale to South Africa, Durban, 1912.



Greyville Cricket Club, Durban. Seated fourth from left: Parsee Rustomjee next to Gandhi



Mr. Gokhale's visit to Johannesburg. The Triumphal Arch erected outside Park Station in his honour 1



Abdoolla Hadji Adam 2



First Wedding at the Phoenix Settlement. Group of settlers with visitors on the occasion of the marriage of A.H. West in 1908. From right to left seated: J.M. Gool (Cape Town), Parsee Rustomjee, Kasturba Gandhi, Rev. Ireland (who performed the marriage ceremony), Mrs Pywell (Mr West's mother-in-law). A.H. West, Mrs West and Miss West (sister of A.H. West, also known by the settlers as Devibhen). 2



The Transvaal Deportees in Madras in 1910. Together with Mr Selavaraju Mudalier, Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyer, Mr. G.A. Natesan, Mr. Krishnaswami Chettiar (in front rank but one). 3



The 60 Indians deported to India by the Transvaal Government 4

Sources:

1 *Indian Opinion* 9 November 1912

3 *Indian Opinion*, 15 October 1910

2 Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal

4 *Golden Number of Indian Opinion* 1914



Striking Indian mineworkers, led by Gandhi during their march from Newcastle to the Transvaal



Striking workers from Elandslaagte Colliery march into town. David Harris, the Mine Manager who was known for his fiery temper, followed them accompanied by mounted polices. The photograph shows the strikers marching into the yard of the old Magistrates Court in Murchison Street in Ladysmith. Harris tried to address the strikers. 1



The Indian strikers went and squatted passively at the side of the yard. Suddenly the police and Carbineers were ordered to charge and dashed forward fielding batons. The Magistrate had called to David Harris and had a restraining hand on his shoulder. Harris was known as 'Bullneck' to his workers, a strong powerful man. In his anger he was ready to make 'mincemeat' of the rioters. 1



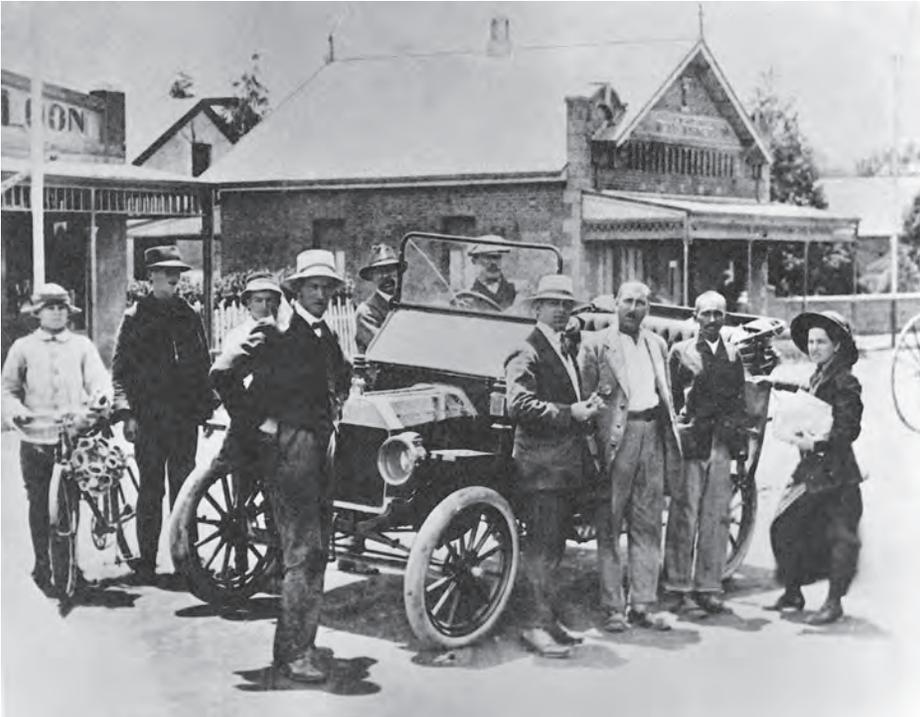
As the police charged with flailing batons the Indians fled, leaving papers, food, clothing and even suitcases scattered about the yard. They were pursued the length of Murchison Street. Harris was fuming and the Magistrate Austin "wisely took Harris for a cooling drink at the Royal".

By the time he returned home, the Indians returned to the mines. 1

Source: 1 Klip River Annals 1913, Talana Museum, Dundee



Gandhi with H. Kallenbach, G. Isaac and Mrs Polak at Pietermaritzburg Station, December 1913



R-L: Sonja Schlesin, Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach, during the Satyagraha campaign 1913



The 'Great March' to the Transvaal





Leading Indian Passive Resisters at Pietermaritzburg. This photograph taken after a meeting of Indians in November 1913. Gandhi seated in the centre, Polak on his left and Parsee Rustomjee on his right. Charlie Nulliah (second row extreme right)



Thambi Naidoo addressing crowd in Durban at the Indian Football Ground during the strike



Some of the Kimberley passive resisters



Passive resisters of Germiston. Seated in the centre is Lalbahadur Singh, the Chairman of the Germiston Indian Community.

Sources:  
Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal.



Gandhi, Sonia Schlesin and Dr. Hermann Kallenbach



Gandhi (seated) with Rev. Charles Freer Andrews (top left) and W.W. Pearson, 1914.



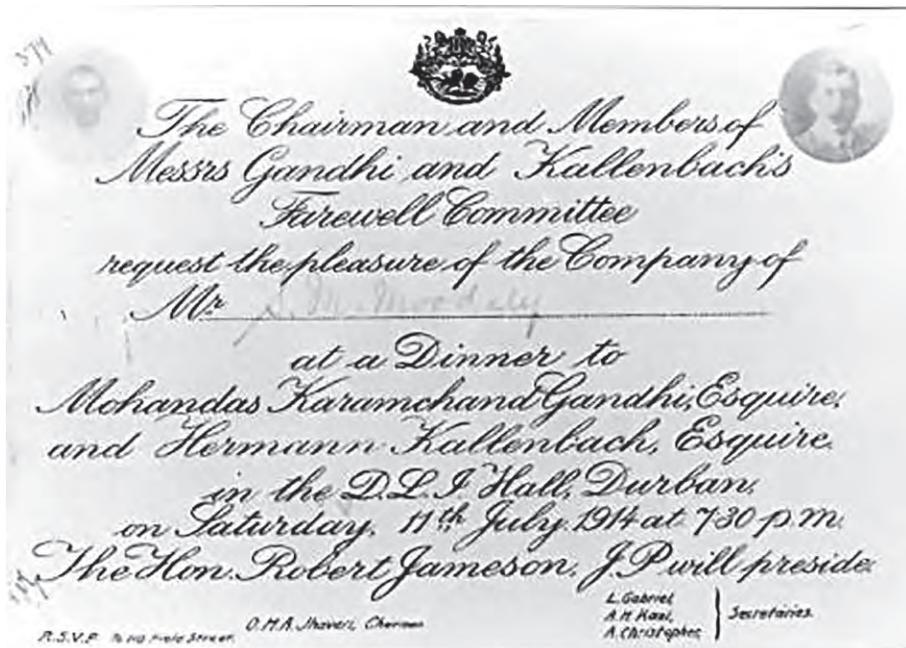
Gandhi addressing the Verulam farewell meeting 1914



Gandhi Farewell reception Verulam



Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi in Durban before their departure to India 1914



Gandhi's farewell dinner invitation, Durban 1914 1

Sources:

1 Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, University of KwaZulu Natal.



Gandhi addressing a farewell meeting in Durban, July 1914



Gandhi and Kasturba Gandhi farewell in Cape Town 1914

*PART II*  
**THE RESISTERS**

*The* small Indian community in South Africa made enormous sacrifices in their passive resistance (satyagraha), led by M.K. Gandhi, against oppressive and racist measures instituted by the Governments from 1907 to 1913.

The struggle began in the Transvaal against the Asiatic Registration Act of 1907 which required male Asiatic residents of the Transvaal—Indians and the Chinese—to register again with ten thumb prints and carry the certificates to be produced on demand by the police and other officials. This humiliating measure, similar to the pass laws imposed on the Africans, was soon supplemented by the Immigration Restriction Act which made it difficult even for former residents of the Transvaal to enter the province.

In the first phase of the struggle until the end of January 1908, when the authorities agreed to accept voluntary registration, about 200 men were imprisoned for picketing or for not registering under the Act. The government, however, refused to abolish the Asiatic Registration Act after almost all the persons concerned registered.

The second phase of the resistance began in July 1908. More than one-third of the adult Indian males suffered imprisonment and harsh prison conditions, as well as arbitrary deportations, by defying the Asiatic Act and the Immigration Restriction Act of 1907. Many stalwarts were reduced to poverty. A provisional agreement was reached in 1911, a year after the Union of South Africa was formed, but the government failed to implement the agreement. Instead Asiatics were subjected to new indignities and harsher implementation of laws.

The struggle had to be renewed all over the Union in September 1913. Women were invited to join the movement as the courts declared all non-Christian marriages invalid in South Africa and the Government refused to enact legislation to restore the earlier situation. About forty women went to prison, mostly for three months with hard labour.

Indian workers were encouraged to suspend work as the Government broke its promise to abolish the obnoxious £3 annual tax in Natal on former indentured workers, their wives and children. The response was far beyond expectations. About forty thousand Indian workers went on strike, several were killed or injured and thousands confined in prisons and mine compounds.

This part of the book contains information obtained from available sources on the persons who participated and sacrificed in the resistance, as well as those who provided significant assistance though they did not court imprisonment.

The first chapter contains a list of Satyagrahis and the second contains biographical notes on some resisters. The third chapter is a list of workers who were killed wounded or imprisoned.<sup>1</sup> The last chapter is a note on some of those who provided significant assistance to the struggle.

These lists cover only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of resisters, most of whom are unknown.

*Indian Opinion*, the main source for the preparation of the lists, gave only the first names in many cases and the spellings of the names were not always consistent so that there may be a few duplications. Many of the names appear only in the Gujarati edition of *Indian Opinion*, and their spellings in English in *CWMG* may not be accurate, especially in the case of South Indian names.

The names of women resisters are in italics.

The following abbreviations are used for the principal sources:

*IO*—*Indian Opinion*

*GOLDEN NUMBER OF INDIAN OPINION*—*Golden Number of Indian Opinion, 1914, Souvenir of the Passive Resistance Movement of South Africa 1906–1914* (Phoenix: Indian Opinion Press, 1914)

*CWMG*—*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1958–94)

*IND REV*—*Indian Review*, Madras

*NAYAR*—Sushila Nayar, *Mahatma Gandhi, Volume IV—Satyagraha at Work*, (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1989)

*BRAMDAW*—Dhaneé Bramdaw (ed.). *The South African Indian Who's Who and Commercial Directory, 1936–37* (The Natal Witness, Limited, Pietermaritzburg, 1935)

*PHOENIX CENTENARY*—*Commemorating the Centenary of Phoenix Settlement 1904–2004* (Gandhi Development Trust, Durban, 2004)

*PRETORIA TAMIL LEAGUE*—Pretoria Tamil League, *A Tribute to a Great Man, Mahatma Gandhi*, 1981

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1 Satyagrahis (passive resisters) were those who defied the oppressive laws and courted imprisonment to secure all the minimum demands of the struggle. The workers were on strike only for the abolition of the £3 tax. This distinction does not in any way imply that the striking workers made less sacrifices or contributed less to the success of the struggle. Workers who were arrested during the resistance in the Transvaal are listed among the Satyagrahis as they were not on strike in protest against the £3 tax but defied the anti-Asiatic laws like other resisters.

## NAMES OF RESISTERS

# I.

This list includes some persons who did not court imprisonment but were arrested on the charge of inciting the strike of Indian workers. Fines imposed by the courts are not indicated, unless there was no option of prison, as all resisters chose prison instead of paying fine.

All the resisters in the 'first phase' (up to the end of January 1908) were released on 31 January 1908. All those arrested before May 1911 were arrested in the Transvaal; some of them had come from Natal.

- ABRAHAM, Louis Gabriel—Deported in 1910. (*IO*, 30 April 1910).
- ACHARY (ACHARIA), T. Subramania—Store-keeper. Possessed Natal domicile certificate and had property in Natal. Son of R. Appasamy Pather of Durban. Studied up to matriculation in Trichinapoly. Crossed Natal-Transvaal border with Gandhi in March 1910. Deported from the Transvaal to India. (*IO*, 19 March and 6 April 1910; *IND REV*, June 1910).
- ACOOJI, Ismail—of Krugersdorp. Deported from the Transvaal to Natal. (*IO*, 30 January 1909).
- ADAJANIA, Sorabji Shapurji—See 'SHAPURJI, Sorabji' in 'Biographical Notes'.
- ADAM, Ebrahim—of Krugersdorp. Deported from the Transvaal to Natal. (*IO*, 30 January 1909).
- ADAM, Essa—Deported. (*IO*, 30 April 1910).
- ADAM, Sheikh—Butcher. Sentenced to one month with hard labour. (*IO*, 31 October 1908).
- ADAM, Valli Amodjee—Sentenced to one month with hard labour in 1909. Deported in 1910. (*IO*, 27 March 1909 and 30 April 1910).
- ADIA, Ismail Essopjee—of Pretoria. Sentenced to three days with hard labour. (*IO*, 19 September 1908).
- ADIA, Moosa Essop—Pretoria storekeeper. Fined £1 for trading without licence and given no option of serving imprisonment. He refused to pay. His store was forcibly closed while attaching goods. (*IO*, 29 August and 5 September 1908).
- ADIA, Moosa Ismail—Satyagrahi in the first phase. Ordered on 19 January 1908 to leave the Transvaal by 1 February for not registering under the Asiatic Act. (*IO*, 25 January 1908).

ADIKELAN—Arrested. Sentenced to deportation. (*IO*, 21 May 1910).

AHMED, Abdool—of Klerksdorp. Sentenced to four days or a fine of one pound in August 1908 for trading without licence. He went to jail but paid the fine the next day. (*IO*, 15 August 1908).

AHMED, Essop—of Heidelberg. Storekeeper. Fined £5 without option of prison. (*IO*, 29 August 1908).

AHMED, Ismail—of Roodepoort. Sentenced to seven days with hard labour for trading without licence. (*IO*, 17 October 1908).

AHMED, Ismail—Hawker. Sentenced to seven days for trading without licence. (*IO*, 15 August 1908).

AHMED, Mirza Hoosen—Sentenced to six weeks in prison with hard labour. (*IO*, 14 November 1908).

AHMED, Moosa—Crossed the Natal-Transvaal border in August 1908, along with 11 others, to claim his right, under the Transvaal Immigration Restriction Act, to enter the Transvaal as a pre-war resident. He had permits and registration certificate under the Peace Preservation Ordinance. He refused to give thumb impressions under the Asiatic Act. (*IO*, 29 August 1909).

AJIJ, Abdul—Ordered to leave the Transvaal within seven days. (*IO*, 3 October 1908).

AKOOJEE, Alibhai—Wholesale and retail merchant in Pretoria. Satyagrahi in the first phase. Did not register under the Asiatic Act and was ordered to leave the Transvaal within 14 days. (*IO*, 18 January 1908). Left for India in April 1908. (*IO*, 18 April 1908).

AKOOJEE, Ismail—Sentenced on 21 July 1908, to four days for hawking without licence. He paid licence fee but refused to register under the Asiatic Act. (*IO*, 25 July 1908).

AKOON—Friend and servant of Mehtab family. Sentenced in October 1913 to three months with hard labour and released from prison in January 1914. (*IO*, 14 January 1914). See also 'MEHTAB, Mrs. Sheikh.'

ALALKHARIA, Moosa—Potchefstroom. Ordered to leave the Transvaal by the end of 5 January 1908 for being without registration certificate. (*IO*, 1 February 1908).

ALI, Essa—Grocer. Charged for trading without licence. (*IO*, 3 October 1908).

ALI, Noor—Deported from the Transvaal to India. (*IO*, 16 April 1910).

ALI, Syed—of Springs. Sentenced on 19 August 1908 for seven days with hard labour for trading without licence. Suffered ill-treatment in prison. (*IO*, 26 September 1908).

ALIBUX, Abdul—Satyagrahi in the first phase. (*IO*, 18 January 1908).

ALIMIA—Sentenced to seven days with hard labour for hawking without licence. (*IO*, 1 August 1908).

ALLI, Hassim—General dealer. Fined, with no option of prison. (*IO*, 31 October 1908).

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

## II.

*Anglia, Mahomed Cassim:* A leading Durban merchant, with municipal franchise, Anglia was Joint Secretary of the Natal Indian Congress. He had been in the Transvaal in 1897 as managing partner of a company. In August 1908, together with Dawad Mahomed, Parsee Rustomjee, and Shapurji Randeria, he crossed into the Transvaal by train to test his right, as a pre-war resident and an educated person, to enter the Transvaal under the Immigration Restriction Act. They refused to give thumb impressions. They were arrested in Pretoria, on 27 August, and deported the next day. They re-entered the Transvaal and were sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour.



Anglia told the court on that he had come to the Transvaal with full knowledge of the penalties of the Asiatic Registration Act. He held that to register under the Act was to degrade the Indian community. It did not leave an atom of self-respect to them. His objection was a religious one, to the element of compulsion and the principle of segregation. That would largely disappear if the law were of general and not special application. He referred to the distinction in the Act against Turkish Mahomedans, even of European birth, who were required to register while Turkish Christians were not. The Act was not a measure of identification but of religious prejudice. It was contrary to the Mahomedan religion to submit to an Act distinguishing any section of the community.<sup>2</sup>

Anglia went to England in 1909 as a member of the Natal Deputation.

He later turned against passive resistance and gave evidence before the Indian Inquiry Commission which almost the entire Indian community boycotted. He founded the weekly *Indian Views* in July 1914.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Indian Opinion*, 15 August 1908, *Indian Opinion*, 12 September 1908.

<sup>3</sup> *Indian Opinion*, 12 September 1908. Bhana and Vahed, *The Making of Political Reformer*, p. 131.

**Aswat (Asvat)<sup>4</sup>, Ebrahim Ismail:** From Surat district, India. A ‘thorough going passive resister’ of Vereeniging.<sup>5</sup> Member of Committee of British Indian Association (BIA) and Secretary of the Johannesburg branch. On 1 February 1909, he was elected Acting Chairman of BIA when A.M. Cachalia went to prison. He served three terms of imprisonment in 1908–09: jailed for one week in November 1908 for hawking without licence; sentenced on 3 March 1909 to three months with hard labour; sentenced again on 20 October to three months with hard labour.<sup>6</sup> On 23 January 1909, Aswat followed A.M. Cachalia’s example by informing his creditors of his determination to resist the anti-Indian laws and placing all his assets at their disposal. He wrote to them: ‘My liabilities are roughly £2,000, and my assets £4,000.’<sup>7</sup>

After he went to prison, his brother Moosa Aswat, who was left in charge of his store, was sentenced to one month with hard labour for trading without licence. Another brother, Mahomed, was sentenced to three months with hard labour for the same offence.<sup>8</sup> The store was re-opened on 11 May 1909. Volunteers came forward to manage the store and fifteen of them were arrested in turn and sentenced to three months with hard labour.<sup>9</sup>

Aswat was released from prison on 19 January 1910. His weight had declined from 135 to 116 pounds and he was suffering from rheumatism of the legs.<sup>10</sup>

He was President of Transvaal branch of the Non-European United Front when it was formed in 1938, with Dr. Yusuf Dadoo as secretary. His daughters, Zainab Asvat and Amina Cachalia were active in the liberation movement. He died on 3 July 1940.

**Bandhu Etwary, Mrs:** Was born in Pietermaritzburg. Married Gangadeen Bandhu on 10 February 1902. She took part in the passive resistance campaign in 1913 and suffered three months imprisonment with her 18-month-old baby.<sup>11</sup>



4 The family now uses the spelling ‘Asvat’.

5 *Golden Number of Indian Opinion*, 1914.

6 *Indian Opinion*, 7 and 17 April and 23 October 1909.

7 *Indian Opinion*, 30 January 1909

8 *Indian Opinion*, 13 and 20 March 1909.

9 Esse Asmal, Suji, P.K. Naidoo, A. Varadan Chettiar (a young man of 19 who had already undergone four terms of imprisonment), N.M. Naidoo, Govindjee, Raju Naidoo, Muthu, S.S. Pather, T. Candasamy Mudaley, S.R. Naidoo, Kaloo, Chokalingam Moodaley, Fakir Bhikha, and Vassan Pema. *Indian Opinion*, 22 and 29 May, 5 and 12 June 1909.

10 *Indian Opinion*, 22 January 1910. About ill-treatment in prison in November 1908, see *Indian Opinion*, 19 December 1908.

11 *Bramdaw*, p. 61

**E. S. REDDY**, former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Director of its Centre against Apartheid, has since his retirement devoted his time to research and writing on Gandhi and on the freedom struggle in South Africa.

The books he edited or wrote about Gandhi include: *Gandhiji and South Africa, 1914–1948* (with Gopalkrishna Gandhi); *The Mahatma and the Poetess*, being a selection of letters exchanged between Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu (with Mrinalini Sarabhai); *Gandhiji's Vision of a Free South Africa*; *Mahatma Gandhi: Letters to Americans*; *Mahatma Gandhi: Interviews to Americans*; and *Friends of Gandhi: Correspondence of Mahatma Gandhi with Esther Faering* (Menon), Anne Marie Petersen and Ellen Horup (with Holger Terp).

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Enuga S. Reddy and Kalpana Hiralal have, with focused attention and total commitment to accuracy and objectivity, vivified a great passage in the history of decolonization and the great Afro-Asian awakening. They tell us how the struggles of the people of Indian origin in South Africa began in the first decade of the twentieth century, deepening and widening with each phase in its progress, flowing into the much larger movement for the dismantling of apartheid on that land. They have enriched our knowledge of the panoramic sweep of what is seen as Gandhi's historic struggle, to show how ably and definingly he was supported and inspired by his fellow satyagrahis, who included amazingly gifted and courageous women, and like the men in it, came from all the Indian communities living there. The book is a masterpiece of historiography, documentation and insightful research, placing on the table little known and less understood facts.

**Gopalkrishna Gandhi**

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