

# *Representing Indian toilers in Natal: Some explorations with Gandhi<sup>1</sup>*

*by Anil Nauriya*

*Was the young Gandhi more than a servant of the merchants' interests? Did he seriously take up the cause of the indentured class? Go to the documentary records and show what he did.*

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THE South African sojourn of M.K. Gandhi (1869–1948), extending with some gaps from 1893 to 1914, began at the instance of an Indian merchant. It brought him into direct contact also with Indian under-classes, including indentured labour. In this paper we explore Gandhi's representation of Indian toilers in South Africa. This representation was fivefold: addressed to British Indian law-makers, British legislators, the South African administration and law-makers, the South African judiciary and public opinion in the three

countries. When Gandhi reached what is now known as KwaZulu-Natal in May 1893, Indian indentured labour had already been around for more than three decades. Yet the lawyer Gandhi arrived at a juncture that would prove to be of historical significance. It was in 1893 that Natal attained, so far as the British classification of modes of government was concerned, a semblance of Responsible Government by becoming a self-governing colony. Power was reserved for the British Crown to disallow any Act of Natal's legislature within two years of its becoming law.

In the following year the new-found self-governing power of the colonists would see the initiation of legislative and other measures adverse to Indians in Natal.

It is sometimes suggested that the representation of the Indian toiling classes, indentured and other, in Natal by Gandhi was limited and that he had little to do with them until much later: "There is, in fact, nothing to indicate that Gandhi ever had more than fleeting or infrequent contact with indentured workers before 1913; and even that had ceased when he left Natal in 1901."<sup>3</sup> It was also argued that Gandhi's focus on the cause of the "underclasses, especially the indentured labourers" was related to his effort to maintain his claim to a leadership role among South African Indians.<sup>4</sup> Inspired by scholar James Hunt's suggestion quoted at the head of this article, we explore here the origins and extent of Gandhi's contact with the Indian underclasses in Natal and his advocacy on their behalf.

In September 1893, barely four months after his arrival in South Africa on an assignment from an Indian merchant, Gandhi wrote to Natal's Press referring, *inter alia*, to the "starvation wages" on which Indian labourers, then constituting the majority of the Indian population in Natal, came to its shores.<sup>5</sup> The Indian Immigration Law of 1891 pegged indentured Indians' wages "at 16s per month for the first year, rising to 20s per month for the fifth year".<sup>6</sup> Natal authorities proposed at this time to introduce a tax on any indentured Indian who, having emerged from indenture, stayed on as a "free" Indian. The British Government in India would acquiesce in Natal's proposal. As Gandhi later put it, Elgin, then

Viceroy of India, "sanctioned in 1894 the imposition on the indentured Indians of the £3 tax, euphemistically called a pass or licence, to remain in the Colony".<sup>7</sup> Some years later Gandhi would remind Britain's Secretary of State for India: "That tax is admitted to be severe enough, though the original proposal of the Natal Government was to secure permission to levy a £25 tax."<sup>8</sup>

The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) was established in 1894 with Abdoola Hajee Adam as President and Gandhi as Honorary Secretary.<sup>9</sup> Gandhi's initial remarks later in the year on actual instances of oppression were both severe and cautious: "If I am to depend upon one-tenth of the reports that I have received with regard to the treatment of the indentured Indians on the various estates, it would form a terrible indictment against the humanity of the masters on the estates and the care taken by the *Protector of Indian immigrants*."<sup>10</sup>

### **Some early cases**

Ill-treatment of the indentured was rampant. Gandhi made a contemporaneous record of an early instance: "An Indian named Balasundaram was, in 1894, so ill-treated by his master that two of his teeth were nearly knocked out; they came out through his upper lip causing an issue of blood sufficient to soak his long turban in it."<sup>11</sup> Gandhi sent along his Tamil clerk with Balasundaram to the *office* of the Protector of Indian Immigrants. Balasundaram had already once been to the Protector's *house* only to be told to come later to his *office*. Balasundaram went instead to the Magistrate who retained his turban and sent him to hospital for treatment. When, a few days later, Gandhi sent

Balasundaram to see the Protector in his office the latter asked for Balasundaram to be left alone in the office and then secured a written document from him saying he had no complaint to make. Gandhi questioned this: "Was it right for the Protector to have taken such a document from the man?"<sup>12</sup> Against the Protector's warning that the case would come to naught in the face of this document, Gandhi took up Balasundaram's cause before the Magistrate and secured his transfer to another employer.<sup>13</sup> According to Gandhi he succeeded because the Magistrate had earlier seen Balasundaram's injuries and had seen him bleeding.<sup>14</sup>

In mid-1895 Gandhi and his associates represented to Natal's legislature against the Indian Immigration Amendment Bill, pointing out that "so much of the Bill which provides for re-indenture and imposition of a tax in default of re-indenture, is manifestly unjust...and in direct opposition to the fundamental principles upon which the British Constitution is based."<sup>15</sup> Another representation made by them to the Viceroy of India protested "against any section of Her Majesty's subjects, be they the poorest, being practically enslaved or subjected to a special, obnoxious poll-tax, in order that a body of Colonists...may be able to satisfy their whims...or desire to exact more from the same men without any return whatsoever".<sup>16</sup> The NIC and Gandhi had by this time intervened on behalf of indentured labour and taken up not only Balasundaram's but also issues of indentured Indians relating to the railway department.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of the protests and representations, the year saw the introduction of the £3 tax through

Act 17 of 1895. Natal's legislative and other restrictions on immigration, franchise, trading and residence followed in quick succession. The condition of the indentured labourer and the ex-indentured labourer would remain among Gandhi's concerns. His next few years were taken up with representations against this or that legislation affecting the Indian community, including the Indian Immigration Law Amendment legislation which sought, inter alia, to impose a tax in default of an indentured labourer offering himself for re-indenture.<sup>18</sup> As Hugh Tinker observed, "Gandhi was quick to see that the position of the Indians in Natal was indivisible: if the indentured... were treated as inferiors, excluded from ordinary civic rights, then this inferiority would be quickly fastened upon the Indian traders and professional people".<sup>19</sup> Similar concerns had led also to the formation of the Natal Indian Educational Association and, as an *Indian Opinion* (IO) editorial observed, it was under the aegis of the NIC that the Association "was able to thrive and flourish".<sup>20</sup> Given an understanding of a mutuality of interests as pointed to by Tinker, Gandhi could not have seen his work on behalf of the under-classes as being intrinsically contradictory to the interests of Indian merchants even if he is assumed to be a creature of the latter. Such contradictions could have been conceivable only if the Indian underclasses stood in a direct economic class relation with Indian merchants. This was hardly the case where both categories of Indians were seeking a living in what was to most of them till then an alien settler economy.

The conditions of existence of the

various categories of Natal Indians reacted on one another. It was natural for Gandhi to engage with these. As early as 1894 Gandhi criticized the Vagrant Law as being “needlessly oppressive”.<sup>21</sup> Not long after this he spoke up in a letter to the Press for Roberts and Samuel Richards, both sons of indentured Indians charged under the Vagrancy Law after being stopped while returning home at night.<sup>22</sup> Gandhi defended them before the Magistrate and had them let off. The Magistrate’s decision was criticized by the police. Gandhi had thereupon written to *The Natal Mercury* and upbraided the police for calling the two “upstarts” and “other bad names”. He urged that the “fact that both are the sons of indentured Indians should not go against them”, reminding the authorities that in England a butcher’s son had “been honoured as the greatest poet”.

### **Early protest against the £3 tax**

In June 1896 when Gandhi went to India he was authorised by the NIC to inform Indian public opinion of conditions in South Africa. In a letter to the press, Gandhi protested against the Immigration Law Amendment Bill which had received the Royal assent a few days earlier:

The Bill raises the period of indenture from the original period of five years to an indefinite period and in default of re-indenture after the completion of the first five years, makes it compulsory for the Indian to return to India, of course at the employer’s expense, and, in case of non-compliance with that term of his contract, renders the defaulter liable to an annual poll-tax of £3, *nearly half a year’s earnings on the indenture scale*.<sup>23</sup>

In a press interview in India, published in November 1896, Gandhi, referring to Natal, spoke of the “crippling imposition of the £3 poll tax per annum on all who remain in the country after fulfilling their indenture”.<sup>24</sup> Before leaving India for South Africa at the end of November 1896, Gandhi had met leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915) and Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920).<sup>25</sup> This was the beginning of the Gokhale-Gandhi association. Seven years later, Gokhale would recall the impact that Gandhi made in India on that visit: “Our friend, Mr Gandhi, had come here on a brief visit from South Africa and he was telling us how our people were treated in Natal and Cape Colony and the Transvaal....Public feeling in consequence was deeply stirred.”<sup>26</sup>

Though Gandhi’s ship reached Durban seven days before Christmas, it was placed under extended quarantine and he could disembark only in mid-January 1897.<sup>27</sup> Before disembarking, Gandhi responded to the charge that he had gone to India merely to soil the name of Natal colonists by saying that “the treatment of the indentured Indians is no worse or better in Natal than they receive in other parts of the world”.<sup>28</sup> Gokhale referred to the entire matter at some length in an article in mid-1897 for the Congress organ published from England.<sup>29</sup> The Indian statesman blamed the Reuter news agency for distorting the facts set out in Gandhi’s writings.<sup>30</sup>

By July 1897 the Indian community registered its opposition to four Bills passed by Natal’s legislature: the Quarantine Bill, the Immigration Restriction Bill, the Trade Licences Bill and the Bill to protect

Uncovenanted Indians from liability to arrest. These measures were opposed for their overt and covert anti-Indian and restrictive nature, introduction of language restrictions, and for their “want of straightforwardness”; in the case of the last measure the stated intention was to protect unindentured Indians from arrest, yet police liability for wrongful arrest was to be dropped and a virtual licence given to arrest any Indian found without a pass, making it instead an “engine of oppression”.<sup>31</sup>

Indentured Indians and “free Indians” did not exist in secluded airtight compartments. On 2 March 1898, Gandhi took up the case of an ex-indentured man, Somnath Maharaj, for a retail licence.<sup>32</sup> According to Gandhi, racial considerations determined the rejection of the licence.<sup>33</sup> A week later he took up the case of Jusa Jana and other “squatters” on the basis of a similar matter concerning Musa decided by the Supreme Court, which had rendered illegal the imposition of a fine upon them; Gandhi now sought refunds in their and Musa’s cases in the light of that court’s decision.<sup>34</sup>

A few months later Gandhi wrote to Natal’s Government urging changes in immigration legislation in the interests of indentured labour.<sup>35</sup> He objected to the provision permitting employers to impose penalties for absence even where the labourer has gone to lodge a complaint and also to provisions permitting deduction of wages in circumstances connected with the complaint.

During the South African War (1899–1902), Gandhi helped organise the Indian Ambulance Corps in Natal.<sup>36</sup> Hundreds of “free Indians”, including the ex-indentured, offered their services.<sup>37</sup> When the Indian Ambulance

Corps was formed in 1899, indentured Indians “voluntarily came forward to help the military authorities as stretcher-bearers”.<sup>38</sup> The work done by the Corps was appreciated officially and in the press.<sup>39</sup> Gandhi’s association with the Corps began also a deeper involvement with indentured Indians. Writing to the “Grand Old Man of India”, the statesman, Dadabhai Naoroji, Gandhi emblemized, as he would do again, the heroism of “Prabhu Singh, an indentured Indian who rendered signal service at Ladysmith”.<sup>40</sup>

### **Girdhari, Saria, Jantze, Chellagadu and Abarrah**

Between August and December 1900 Gandhi appeared in court for indentured labourers Girdhari and Saria.<sup>41</sup> The latter was accused of destroying corn while hoeing the field and convicted by a Natal magistrate. Gandhi argued in review that the conviction was bad because the Magistrate had not allowed Saria to call witnesses. Accepting Gandhi’s argument, the court set aside the conviction.<sup>42</sup> Girdhari had been convicted for being absent from roll call on a Sunday. Gandhi argued that it was unlawful to require indentured servants to appear for roll call on Sundays as they were free by law from working on Sundays. Though this argument was rejected, the conviction and sentence of 14 days’ “hard labour” were set aside as not being warranted merely because Girdhari “happened to be absent the moment his name was called”.<sup>43</sup> Gandhi took up also the cause of Girdhari’s spouse, Jantze, who had been accused, in the same episode, of “refusal of duty” and of “being abusive”.<sup>44</sup> The appeal succeeded and the conviction in Jantze’s case was reversed because of irregularities in the trial.<sup>45</sup>

During December 1900–January 1901, Gandhi defended Chellagadu, an indentured man who had been sentenced by a Verulam Magistrate to “a fine of £1 or, in default, imprisonment on a charge of neglect of work on the sugar estate of one Wilkinson to whom Chellagadu’s master had transferred him.”<sup>46</sup> The imprisonment in default of the fine was to be for a week with hard labour. Gandhi went in appeal to the Circuit Court. His argument that Chellagadu could have been transferred to another employer only after obtaining the consent of the Protector of Immigrants was not accepted by the Judge.<sup>47</sup> The Supreme Court declined to interfere with the Circuit Court decision on the ground that in cases of appeals to the Circuit Court from the Magistrate’s Court, the Supreme Court lacked review jurisdiction.<sup>48</sup>

Thwarted by technicalities, Gandhi felt that the issue needed to be settled on merits and sought remission of sentence by the Governor.<sup>49</sup> The Protector of Immigrants, concerned also about the implied whittling down of his own powers in the event of employers shuffling around labour on their own, considered the court’s decision erroneous; the Governor declined relief even though he admitted to an impression that the judicial decision was wrong.<sup>50</sup> Evidently, the matter did not end there. The controversy reached the Viceroy of India who was advised by his officials that “they did not think any action was required”.<sup>51</sup>

Shortly before his return to India in 1901, Gandhi appeared before the Ladysmith Magistrate for an Indian barber, Abarrah, who had been charged under the Pass Law for failing

to produce a pass from his employer.<sup>52</sup> “How could he do this when he was his own employer?” asked Gandhi. Abarrah was discharged. There was another aspect to this case that was considered “important to the Indian community”.<sup>53</sup> This was the meaning of “coolie” which had apparently been used in the relevant law. Gandhi cited the case of *Mrs Vinden v Corporation of Ladysmith*, in which the Supreme Court had decided that the term translated as “indentured Indian”. This Abarrah was not, having come to Natal “of his own will”.<sup>54</sup>

### **To India and back: 1901–1902**

The following month Gandhi left for India, ready to return if needed. He reached home by mid-December 1901.<sup>55</sup> He moved the resolution on South Africa at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress at the end of December.<sup>56</sup> Gandhi criticized Natal’s legislation concerning the indentured.<sup>57</sup> He drafted a memorial to the British Secretary of State for India against legislative moves in Natal that would extend the £3 tax to make it payable also by major children (males who had attained the age of 16 years and females of 13 years) of the Indians liable to the tax.<sup>58</sup> The memorial recalled that “the original proposal of the Natal Government was to secure permission to levy a £25 tax” and pointed out that it was “now evidently sought to reach the same figure as much as possible by taxing the children of the indentured men after they have attained the artificial majority” and condemned the measure as “manifestly unjust”.<sup>59</sup> Gandhi was called back to South Africa in November and returned by December 1902.<sup>60</sup>

Curzon, then Viceroy of India, was requested in a petition drafted by

Gandhi on behalf of Natal Indians to “not allow Indian labour to be exploited for the one-sided benefit of Natal.”<sup>61</sup> And further that “if the Colony is not prepared to grant the indentured Indians the elementary rights of British citizenship, viz., freedom of settlement in the Colony, to discontinue importing Indian labour.”<sup>62</sup> In a letter to Naoroji, then in England, Gandhi briefed him about recent moves in Natal, noting that denial of opportunity to settle in Natal after expiry of indenture would make the system “unadulterated slavery for a term of years”.<sup>63</sup> Gandhi suggested, “The solution is simple and most effective, viz., prohibition of indentured emigration to Natal.”<sup>64</sup> This end he would doggedly pursue.

#### **1903–4: On jail-going and “an unacceptable levy”**

Restrictions were placed by the Immigration Restriction Act, 1903 on Indians going to the Transvaal from Natal without a special permit. By January 1904 Gandhi had utilized his journal also to condemn the Indentured Labour Draft Ordinance in neighbouring Transvaal, involving restrictions on movement of the indentured and envisaging their compulsory repatriation on pain of imprisonment after completion of tenure. The measure, Gandhi argued, was “a sad commentary on the state of modern civilization”, would turn several into “beasts of burden” and was a “crime against humanity”.<sup>65</sup> In the same mid-January issue of his journal, Gandhi provided early indication of a strategy that would before long be utilized also in Natal when he advised, in relation to another Transvaal measure, that in case of prosecution of persons trading without licence, they “should rise to

the occasion, decline to pay any fines, and go to gaol.”<sup>66</sup>

In May 1904, responding to a debate in Natal’s Assembly, Gandhi wrote: “We are against Indian labour under indenture because (it)...is, in the words of the late Sir William Wilson Hunter, perilously near to slavery. We can never reconcile ourselves to the Capitation Tax of £3 tax annually which is the price the law exacts from the Indian for his freedom...after he has given the best five years of his life to the Colony for a paltry wage.”<sup>67</sup> The statement was a further indication of the struggle that was to come. Clearly, a defiance policy had begun to take shape in Gandhi’s mind well before the Phoenix settlement near Durban was founded by him in November–December 1904.<sup>68</sup>

#### **1905 and a striking comparison**

Gandhi saw the interconnection between the treatment of indentured and other Indians in Natal. Critiquing the Natal Municipal Corporations Bill, gazetted in 1905, he went further, making in March of that year, a sharp comparison: “Indeed, *the indentured Indian deserves, if anything, better treatment than the free Indian*, because the former has been invited and induced to come to the Colony and has contributed not a little to its prosperity.”<sup>69</sup> Gandhi’s engagement with the workers in Natal’s municipal bodies would continue through his South African years. In April Gandhi would mull again over the indentured plight, this time noting despondently, in his Gujarati columns, the large sums collected as the £3 tax and adding, “Where there was no remedy, one has to reconcile oneself to the situation.”<sup>70</sup> This mood was apparently short-lived; he found encouraging

Curzon's speech urging the "eventual abolition of the £3 tax" which reached him by May.<sup>71</sup> By early August Gandhi renewed his attack on the £3 tax as "unjustifiable" and "a blot on the fair name of Natal".<sup>72</sup>

By June 1905 Gandhi, in a letter to Naoroji, opined that indentured immigration to Natal needed to be suspended "unless the Natal Government would cease their anti-Indian activity and amend, at any rate, the Dealers' Licences Act so as to give the aggrieved party the right to appeal to the Supreme Court".<sup>73</sup> In November 1905 Gandhi called for investigation into a "painful revelation" reportedly made by officials of Natal's Verulam jail that "it is customary with certain estates employing large numbers of Indians to get their coolies, when ill, convicted of some minor offence in order that they may be cured of their sickness at the expense of the Government and returned fit for work".<sup>74</sup> He compared this with conditions faced by indentured Indians in British Guiana forty years earlier.<sup>75</sup>

Gandhi criticized a 10 per cent reduction made in the wages of African and Indian labour employed in municipal departments in Durban, observing that the saving effected was paltry while the existing burdens were huge. He pointed out: "*Practically all the free Indians employed by the Corporation come from the indentured class, and these have to pay an annual tax of £3 for the privilege of being a 'free' British subject in a British colony, and beyond this (a very large drain on a poor man) there is to be a further annual tax of £1.*"<sup>76</sup>

In the face of legislative and administrative initiatives directed against Asians, counter-blasts such as those conducted by or through

Gandhi had also begun, directly or indirectly, to have an impact. In 1905, for instance, the Imperial Government refused assent "to the Bill passed by the Legislature of Natal in 1905 for amending and consolidating the laws relating to municipal corporations" on the ground that the "Bill contained provisions imposing disqualifications on racial grounds".<sup>77</sup> Gandhi had in his letter to Naoroji criticized the legislation as "intended to deprive the Indian of the municipal franchise".<sup>78</sup>

### **Penalising labour in Natal: Gandhi's criticism**

In March 1906 Gandhi highlighted the case of Motai, an indentured Indian near Ladysmith.<sup>79</sup> On learning that he had to pay a poll tax, Motai reportedly "mortgaged his ear-rings for one pound, at an interest of half-a-crown per month, and paid the tax". Even after paying, he was taken to a magistrate and fined 10 shillings for not paying in time. Gandhi questioned the invoking of such a penalty clause: "To make the poor people not only pay the tax, but when they come to pay it, to impose on them a fine seems to us to be the height of injustice."<sup>80</sup> He advised against fines and arrests in such cases. A prosecution in Natal for recovery of the annual £3 tax from an ex-indentured man, and his wife, whose personal jewellery was taken as security under the Court's direction, evoked from Gandhi a condemnation of the tax and of "the grievous hardship that indentured Indians, who become free, have to suffer, by reason of the imposition."<sup>81</sup>

### **Natal indentured as inspiration in Transvaal**

A draft Asiatic Ordinance had been gazetted in the Transvaal in August 1906 which for its discriminatory provisions

Gandhi described as “abominable”.<sup>82</sup> In May–June 1907 Gandhi welcomed a strike in Natal by indentured Indians working for the Durban Corporation and appreciated their willingness to go to jail on a reduction of the rice ration, underlining this Natal example as an inspiration in the Transvaal. Praising their courage, Gandhi asked: “If indentured labourers can do so much in self-interest, who will deny that the Indian community in the Transvaal ought to do no less?”<sup>83</sup>

### **Sukhaie’s death and the scales of justice**

In June 1907 Gandhi criticized an Umgeni court in the case of Sukhaie, an indentured worker. Sukhaie’s death was caused by his employer who, though convicted, got off lightly. Gandhi wrote: “At Thornville junction, a European cruelly beat up an Indian and the latter died. The European was prosecuted and fined £10.... This is a blood-curdling case. The Indian lost his life, but the European got off with a fine of £10.... But we are not to think of revenge.... If we are to cure a disease, its cause must first be ascertained.”<sup>84</sup> He stressed in this context the need for the NIC to take steps for ending the indentured labour system.<sup>85</sup>

### **1908: Early Gandhi plan for agitation against indentured system**

Meanwhile, an agitation began in the Transvaal related to grievances of Asians as a whole.<sup>86</sup> By the time Gandhi emerged from imprisonment in the Transvaal at the end of January 1908, he had had varied racial experiences out of prison and inside.<sup>87</sup> He had also come into personal contact with many indentured and ex-indentured labourers.

In the following month many Durban-based Indians, including P.S. Aiyar, Bernard Gabriel, S.E. Dahnookdharie, V. Lawrence, A. Christopher and others of the Natal Indian Patriotic Union (NIPU), wrote to appreciate “the work done by Mr Gandhi with reference to the Indian passive resistance movement in the Transvaal”.<sup>88</sup> In September 1908 a meeting was held in Durban under NIPU auspices, chaired by Aiyar, in which a demand was made for a Royal Commission to inquire into the grievances of (Natal) Indians. Various grievances were mentioned by the chairman of the meeting, including the difficulties caused by imprisonment of Indians unable to pay the £3 tax. It was Henry Polak, Gandhi’s close associate, who, participating in the meeting, urged Natal Indians to follow the example of the Transvaal Indians and resort to Passive Resistance; he suggested that after collecting information on the incidence of the £3 tax, a programme could be taken up of refusal to pay the tax and to “suffer the necessary consequences of imprisonment”.<sup>89</sup> Polak’s suggestion was a reflection of the direction in which Gandhi’s own mind was working. By this time Gandhi had concluded that an agitation based on Satyagraha would be needed to end the indentured system. He arrived at the drastic conclusion that no improvement in the indentured system seemed possible. In an article published in October 1908, days before his re-arrest for two months, he wrote, “The main duty of Natal Indians in this matter is to start an agitation on a big scale, to adopt satyagraha, if necessary, and bring the system of indenture to an end.”<sup>90</sup> The following year, Gandhi would call for an agitation against the £3 tax as well.

### **Gandhi's 1909 call for stir against £3 tax**

In February 1909 Gandhi was again arrested and sentenced to a prison term of three months.<sup>91</sup> With the process for the formation of the Union of South Africa under way in 1909, and no let-up in the discriminatory provisions, Gandhi hardened his stance especially with regard to affairs in Natal and the Transvaal. In the "Statement of Natal Indian Grievances", understood to have been drawn up by Gandhi in August 1909 for presentation in London by the Natal Indian delegation, a demand was made for the abolition of the £3 tax.<sup>92</sup>

Plans for a larger confrontation with South African authorities had begun to form in Gandhi's mind. In November 1909 Gandhi, then in England, invited Gokhale to South Africa to participate in the struggle as it would give it world importance: "If you are arrested and imprisoned, I should be delighted."<sup>93</sup> In the following month, immediately after his return from England, Gandhi asserted the need for an agitation for the abolition of the £3 tax. Only about a year had passed since he had spoken of adopting Satyagraha to end the indenture system. Gandhi declared that the community would be "remiss in its duty" if it did not continue to support the agitation for abolition of indentured labour. By this time Gandhi had left no one in doubt about his coming agitation also against the £3 tax: "According to us, indenture is an evil thing [in itself]. *But there is also the £3 poll-tax on the indentured labourers. There must be an agitation for its removal.*"<sup>94</sup>

This exhortation, made in December 1909, casts doubt also on the proposition advanced in a section of late 20th-century academic writing

that "Gandhi, struggling to maintain his credibility in the role of national spokesman for the South African Indians", included the question of abolition of the £3 tax on ex-indentured labour "*swiftly*" in his "political platform" from 1912 lest he be undercut in the mobilization of underclasses by the Colonial Born Indian Association.<sup>95</sup>

### **Indian ban on indentured labour for Natal**

Gandhi and his associates had come to the conclusion that the usual legal remedies were systemically subverted in the case of indentured labour.<sup>96</sup> A resolution moved by Gokhale in February 1910 in the Imperial Legislative Council in India to empower the Governor-General in Council to bar indentured labour from going to Natal was accepted.<sup>97</sup> Gandhi reiterated that "no Indian can claim that the indentured is happy".<sup>98</sup> The Government of India was empowered to designate countries to which Indian emigration could be prohibited and its decision to stop indentured emigration to Natal was conveyed to the Legislative Council in India on 3 January 1911.<sup>99</sup> The new provision became operative from 1 July 1911.

### **1911: Renewed demand for abolition of £3 tax**

As the immediate tussle in the Transvaal with which he had been involved approached some resolution in 1911, Gandhi turned his attention again to the oppressive legislation prevailing in Natal, preparing a memorial on behalf of the NIC to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.<sup>100</sup> This demanded, among other things, the "total abolition" of the annual £3 tax on those

who had completed their indenture, an imposition it described as “cruel and tyrannical”.<sup>101</sup>

In the Transvaal Gandhi was able to declare in May 1911 that a “provisional settlement” had been reached; if the legislature ratified the official assurances, noted Gandhi, passive resistance would “undoubtedly cease on the question that gave rise to it”.<sup>102</sup> Gandhi’s statement on the occasion gave notice also that if there were no legislative ratification, a pan-South Africa movement would follow.<sup>103</sup> In September, Gandhi’s journal reported on a meeting of Indians in Durban held “through the agency of Mr P. S. Aiyer of the *African Chronicle*”, at the premises of Gandhi’s friend Parsee Rustomjee, at which “The Anti £3 Tax League” was formed with Gandhi’s associate, V. Lawrence, as secretary.<sup>104</sup>

### **The assault on Obligadoo**

An instance of how the “system”, meaning the Protector of Immigrants, the police and the magistracy, could crumble in the face of power and influence was provided by the case of Obligadoo, an Indian who was not released despite expiry of his indenture and was even flogged by his employer.<sup>105</sup> Gandhi and his journal came down heavily on the “cruel assault”.<sup>106</sup> The flogging was severe enough for the journal to remark that Obligadoo would “probably bear the marks of the flogging for life”; the incident resulted in the employer, a “prominent Durban Town Councillor”, being convicted by the Umlazi Court for taking the law into his own hands but fined merely two pounds.<sup>107</sup> Before this Obligadoo was himself arrested more than once and sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour each time he had sought to complain to the

Protector or to the magistrate against his “master”. Later, a proceeding for theft appears to have been initiated against Obligadoo for allegedly taking part of the money from the sale of milk. Gandhi was evidently unconvinced of the case against Obligadoo and asked for a copy of the charge sheet to study the counts on which the prosecution was based.<sup>108</sup> He was equally unimpressed by a subsequent contract purportedly signed by Obligadoo.<sup>109</sup>

### **Gandhi warns of “big battle” against the £3 tax**

In November 1911 Gandhi gave public notice of the coming agitation against the £3 tax, the need for which he had underlined two years earlier. Describing the statement made on the subject in the Imperial Parliament by Lewis Harcourt, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, as “most unfortunate”, Gandhi declared:

If it represents the settled policy of the Union Government, they are in for a big battle, not of words but of action. The free Indians owe it as a duty to themselves and to their poor brethren to act so as to secure repeal of the obnoxious levy. With the stoppage of the introduction of indentured labour from India the last vestige of justification for the levy ceases. The Imperial Government cannot so easily be allowed to shirk their obvious duty. If the levy is wrong, neither the Royal sanction nor the determination of the Union Government can make it right. The sooner the Natal Indian Congress makes the position clear as to the steps to be taken by the Indian community the better it will be for all concerned. The iniquitous tax must be removed at any cost.<sup>110</sup>

The letters Gandhi wrote from Johannesburg to Albert West in November–December 1911 shed light, a year

before Gokhale's visit to South Africa, on Gandhi's road map for the struggle against the £3 tax and reveal that passive resistance on this question was receiving his active consideration if other possibilities of redress proved ineffective.

Two days after the publication of Gandhi's public warning in response to Harcourt, he wrote to Albert West setting out a sequential plan of action:

With reference to the £3 tax, the first step is not to advise the men to refuse to pay the tax, but for the Congress to send a petition to the Prime Minister, signed by all the Indians in Natal – say 15,000 signatures. There should be a mass meeting held. The Congress should then ask the Indians in the other provinces to support. We must then await the reply from the Prime Minister. Then there should be a petition to Parliament next year, and, if Parliament rejects the petition, there should be an appeal to the Imperial Government by the Congress aided by the other Associations in South Africa. Finally, the refusal to pay the tax! Then, undoubtedly, the Congress should undertake to feed the wives and families of those who may be imprisoned.<sup>111</sup>

Gandhi asked Albert West to collect material on cases where the tax had been remitted and also those where remission had not been granted.<sup>112</sup> It is doubtful that he saw resort to passive resistance on this issue in the context of preserving his own leadership. For, mulling over the next moves, he in fact hoped that if influential Europeans in Natal could be persuaded to sign the petition, *the repeal of the tax might be achieved without passive resistance*.<sup>113</sup>

When the Government offered to consider specific cases of hardship involved in the £3 tax, Gandhi asserted that “every case of the exaction of this

tax is a specific case of hardship”.<sup>114</sup> He added, for good measure, “Our columns have been full of cases of hardship, especially on women.”<sup>115</sup> The year 1911 closed with Gandhi's renewed demand for the abolition of the annual £3 tax, “this unjust and cruel imposition”, upon the ex-indentured men, women and children.<sup>116</sup>

### **Taxing the re-indentured: Gandhi's criticism and the Naik and Mudaly cases**

By 1911–12 Gandhi's interface with indentured labour was already of long standing. He was deeply involved in the question whether there was a liability to pay the £3 tax in the case of Indians who had entered into a period of re-indenture or contract of service under the provisions of Act 19 of 1910. According to Gandhi such persons were not liable to pay the tax. The issue appears to have come to a head with the summons served on Devaragulu, who had entered into a civil contract (that is, a contract under the Masters and Servants Act) with an Indian in Durban, and on 21 other Indians who were under re-indenture, for non-payment of the £3 tax.<sup>117</sup> Devaragulu's case and other related cases seem to have evoked a stiff response from Gandhi. It was not possible, he asserted, “to come to any other conclusion than that it was never intended that ex-indentured Indians would have to pay the £3 tax during the time of their re-indenture or contract of service”.<sup>118</sup> He gave notice to the authorities: “The tax itself we have always fought against, tooth and nail, and we shall continue to do so until this pernicious and unjust law is wiped off the Statute-book.”<sup>119</sup> To him it was a “breach of faith”.<sup>120</sup> Gandhi declared: “The free Indians owe it as a duty to

themselves and to their poor brethren to act so as to secure repeal of the obnoxious levy."<sup>121</sup>

In N. Mudaly's case, the Supreme Court's Natal Division decided differently from Gandhi's interpretation.<sup>122</sup> Earlier, in Vencatachale Naik's case, brought up in November 1911, the court in Umlazi had held that the charge ought not to be imposed on him. Gandhi and the NIC had been relying on Naik's case.<sup>123</sup> In fact, as Gandhi pointed out, government departments had hitherto also been acting on a similar interpretation.<sup>124</sup> The new judgment in Mudaly's case amounted to an extension of the net to which the £3 tax would apply and made it all the more necessary to get rid of the levy altogether. In the face of Government inaction to correct the situation, Gandhi observed:

So we have the spectacle of a great Government using its tremendous power to tyrannize over poor defenceless Indians – men and women who have given their very life-blood in making Natal a prosperous country. It is the duty of the Natal Indian Congress to boldly defend these poor people.<sup>125</sup>

In March 1912 Gandhi congratulated Gokhale, who had moved a resolution in the Indian Legislative Council at Calcutta to put an end to the system of indentured labour not just in respect of Natal but universally. Although the resolution was defeated by 33 votes to 22, Gandhi remarked: "Mr Gokhale is not a man to leave off a thing after he has once undertaken it. It is reasonable, therefore, to hope that the system of indentured labour – that remnant of slavery – would end in the near future."<sup>126</sup>

### **Jadubansi's case: Gandhi's inquiry**

Gandhi had occasion to make a detailed inquiry into the case of Jadubansi, an Indian indentured woman.<sup>127</sup> He dealt at length with the case, having come into personal contact with her in April 1912. He recorded that Jadubansi's child was burnt and only after a fortnight was the child sent to the hospital where it died. Hardships followed, she was refused food, her wages were withheld, she was kicked and otherwise ill-treated. Gandhi writes: "We took Jadubansi to the Protector of Indian Immigrants, laid the information before him, and left her in his charge, pending inquiries into her grievances. The matter was referred to the employer who flatly denied that he neglected the child, and accused the mother of neglect."<sup>128</sup> The Protector's request to transfer her to another employer was refused. As Gandhi put it: "The employer refused, and it seems that it was not possible for the Protector to carry his protection any further, and the officers of the law arrested Jadubansi and she was sent to prison for desertion."<sup>129</sup> Jadubansi refused to return to her employer, who finally consented to permit her to return to India as she had wished. Gandhi summed up: "Even one such case condemns the whole system, because it shows what horrible things are possible in the outlying districts."<sup>130</sup>

### **Gokhale's visit**

It was at this point that Gokhale visited South Africa in October–November 1912. In 1896, Gandhi had invited the "great men of India" to visit South Africa and had promised them "a right royal welcome".<sup>131</sup> In 1909 he had invited Gokhale to *participate* in the struggle in the Transvaal.<sup>132</sup> When Gokhale came to South Africa in 1912,

his visit was, as Gandhi had desired, an *intervention* in the prevailing situation. Apart from the discussions with South African authorities, Gandhi arranged in Inanda for Gokhale to meet John Dube, currently president-general of the African National Congress or the South African Native National Congress as it was then known.<sup>133</sup> Before leaving South Africa, Gokhale appears to have been assured by the Union Government that “the immigration laws would not be applied inconsiderately” and came away with the impression that, as Gandhi put it, “the cruel Three Pound Tax which the labouring class is made to pay will be repealed”.<sup>134</sup> Within months of Gokhale’s departure from South Africa, the Union Government started renegeing on these assurances. The new Immigration Bill was criticised by Gandhi who, observing that it failed to give effect to the provisional settlement and created a legal racial bar, indicated that it might be time for “becoming once more His Majesty’s guests in his gaols in South Africa”.<sup>135</sup>

### **Munien’s case: punishment as its own end**

A frequent judicial response to indentured labour is illustrated by Munien’s case decided by the Verulam magistrate: “Munien, an Indian, was charged for default of payment of £3 tax arrears. He was sentenced to 14 days’ imprisonment with hard labour for contempt of court even after the amount due was paid.”<sup>136</sup> Gandhi called the sentenced imposed by the Verulam magistrate “cruel” and condemned Cabinet Minister J. W. Sauer for the attitude adopted when the subject came up in the legislature. According to Gandhi, Sauer did so “because the matter was one that concerned only a poor, neglected ex-indentured

man, belonging to a race that is unrepresented in the House”.<sup>137</sup> Gandhi charged the magistrate with being “more jealous of obedience to his orders than of the welfare of those who had the misfortune to appear before him”, noting that the magistrate himself “gave it as a reason for his vindictive judgement that Munien was punished as an example to others, so that his orders might be obeyed by them”.<sup>138</sup> The magistrate’s judgment was quashed on appeal.<sup>139</sup>

### **Sarjoo’s matter, Magistrates’ Courts Act, £3 tax**

In September 1913, Sarjoo, an ex-indentured worker, failed to pay the £3 tax and was prosecuted in the Verulam Court. Citing Sarjoo’s case, Gandhi charged the local government with having “broken faith with the Government of India by resorting to the Magistrates’ Courts Act to thrust the poor men and women into gaols for non-payment”.<sup>140</sup> The argument is set out at length by Gandhi, who has explained the background and implications of the “blood tax” as he called it: “It ought never to have been imposed.”<sup>141</sup> The Magistrates’ Courts Act was utilized by the Government to criminalize non-payment of the “blood-tax”, though the original understanding between Natal and the Government of India had been that non-compliance with the tax would involve civil (as distinct from criminal) recovery processes only.<sup>142</sup>

Earlier in September, passive resistance was revived on five issues that included also the £3 tax.<sup>143</sup> This Gandhi maintained must “go at any cost”.<sup>144</sup> It was the “sorest question from many points of view”.<sup>145</sup> It was, he said, “the central point of the struggle”.<sup>146</sup>

### **Ahir Budree and Sivpujan Budree**

Among those arrested in the 1913 struggle was Ahir Budree, one of the oldest Indian residents in Natal, who had come to South Africa as an indentured labourer from Bihar in 1881. He was an early client of Gandhi in South Africa, who refers to him even in 1908 as an “old client of mine”.<sup>147</sup> A photograph of Ahir Budree, who was vice president of the Transvaal Indian Association (TIA), appears in an *IO* supplement at the height of the 1913 struggle; despite having seemingly accumulated some resources – much of his litigation handled by or through Gandhi concerns property – Ahir Budree retained the appearance of a typical Indian poor peasant.<sup>148</sup> He was sentenced at Volksrust on 25 September 1913 to three months’ imprisonment.<sup>149</sup> His son, Sivpujan Budree, a student at the Phoenix school, was also arrested in September 1913.<sup>150</sup> As Gandhi would write later, he valued the elder Budree (along with Jairam Singh, who was TIA president), not merely as a client but also as a leader of those who had undergone the indentured experience.<sup>151</sup>

### **Strikes by colliery, railway and plantation workers**

On 17 October 1913 Gandhi visited the coalfields near Newcastle and “urged indentured Indians to strike until Government promised repeal of £3 tax”.<sup>152</sup> Three days later Indians employed with the railways struck work at Dannhauser and were sentenced on the following day at Newcastle.<sup>153</sup> On 23 October Gandhi had informed the press from Newcastle: “We are advising the strikers to leave the mines and court arrest, and failing arrest, to march to Volksrust.”<sup>154</sup> Gandhi had addressed Indian coal workers and asked them to remain on strike.<sup>155</sup> The press reported: “Hundreds of Indians,

chiefly from the South African Colliery, visited Dundee...and were addressed by Mr Gandhi [sic], who urged them to remain on strike, and as a result a number who had returned to work have again come out.”<sup>156</sup> According to one report, when miners were pressurised to return to work they “declined to listen”, and replied that they “were only prepared to receive instructions or advice from Mr Gandhi”.<sup>157</sup> Gandhi reportedly asked workmen in sugar plantations not to go back to work till the £3 tax was repealed.<sup>158</sup> Gandhi was charged before a Dundee magistrate on 11 November 1913 with inducing indentured Indians to leave Natal. He replied to the charge with a statement that he “should continue to advise the Indians to strike until the £3 tax was withdrawn”.<sup>159</sup> By the end of November the strikes had spread to urban areas, market gardens and the plantations in Natal and were being described as “universal” with the total strikers in Durban alone estimated at five thousand.<sup>160</sup> Before long tens of thousands of persons were on strike.<sup>161</sup> The Ballengeich mine was gazetted as a government jail.

### **Gandhi’s arrest**

Several issues had by now converged. Indian women declared in May 1913 in the context of a judgment by the Cape Supreme Court affecting the legality of non-Christian marriages that they “would offer passive resistance and... suffer imprisonment rather than...the indignity...the...judgement subjects them”.<sup>162</sup> Ultimately Kasturba Gandhi, Valiamma and other Indian women were imprisoned. After being charged before the Dundee court on 11 November, Gandhi himself was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of £60 or nine months in prison with hard labour. He

opted for the latter, telling the court that “he felt that there was no other method of having the grievances remedied”.<sup>163</sup> Later in the month, Albert West, the acting editor of Gandhi’s journal, was arrested at the Phoenix settlement and charged with “harbouring indentured people”.<sup>164</sup> The Durban docks were affected and the “working of ships” reportedly “assumed a serious aspect”, with Indians, “both indentured and free”, not turning out for work.<sup>165</sup> Police fired on Indian strikers in at least two incidents with loss of life in the closing days of November 1913. Among those killed were Selvan, Subbrayya, Ragavan and Pachiappa(n).<sup>166</sup> Guru-vadu succumbed to his injuries on the following day.<sup>167</sup>

In Volksrust prison, Gandhi would recall later, new passive resisters came in as prisoners every day. Among them was Hurbatsingh, a 70-year-old ex-indentured Indian from Natal who refused to leave prison when Gandhi offered to arrange for his release on account of old age and prison hardships; Hurbatsingh died in Durban jail on 5 January 1914.<sup>168</sup> Throughout this period strikes continued. Reporting some of the sentences passed, *IO* noted: “The men were emphatic that unless the tax was removed and Mr Gandhi liberated, they would not work.”<sup>169</sup> At the re-commencement of the struggle, Gandhi had made it clear that “this time passive resistance is not merely against the Government and the Europeans of South Africa, but it is equally against the Imperial Government”.<sup>170</sup> He had by now moved to the conceptual edge of the Empire, effectively interpreting loyalty to it as being related to adherence by the state to the principles of the British Constitution.

### **Breaking free**

With pressure mounting on the authorities, there were demands for release of the prisoners and an inquiry. Released from prison on 18 December 1913, Gandhi spoke three days later at a Durban meeting dressed as an indentured labourer.<sup>171</sup> It was the beginning of a series of sartorial and other changes intended to identify himself with the poorest of the poor. The Indian women, including his wife Kasturba, began to be released soon after Gandhi’s release. At the end of September 1913, Dr Abdurahman, in his presidential address to the annual conference of the African Political Organisation held in Kimberley, had drawn attention to the Indian struggle. In his speech Dr Abdurahman had said: “If a handful of Indians, in a matter of conscience, can so firmly resist what they consider injustice, what could the coloured races not do if they were to adopt this practice of passive resistance?”<sup>172</sup>

### **Soorzai’s death inquiry**

The assault by an estate manager on an indentured person, Soorzai (also known as Amhalaran), on 27 November 1913, and his death a fortnight later were vigorously followed up by Gandhi’s paper with the magisterial inquiry being covered extensively.<sup>173</sup> Gandhi was in prison at the time of the incident but was released by the time the inquiry was conducted. The acting editor of *IO*, A. H. West, testified to having seen Soorzai on the day of the assault because the victim, along with others, had come to Gandhi’s Phoenix Settlement to complain. Iyama, Soorzai’s widow, also gave evidence in the case.<sup>174</sup> Soorzai’s funeral appears to have been an occasion for a demonstration of quiet solidarity, particularly by the Natal Indian Association.

### In conclusion

The Indians' Relief Bill was published at the end of May 1914.<sup>175</sup> Accompanied by some assurances, it was enacted as the Indians' Relief Act of 1914; the eighth section repealed the 1895 law and certain other provisions to the extent that these required the ex-indentured to obtain yearly passes or licences, and financial liabilities such as the £3 tax imposed under these provisions were done away with; the new enactment also remitted all arrears under the repealed provisions; and Hindu and Muslim marriages were given recognition. With that the South African Indian struggle under Gandhi's leadership came to a close.<sup>176</sup> Gandhi was satisfied with the settlement as the best under the circumstances; he did not take it as a comprehensive settlement of all issues as some seem to have implied at the time.<sup>177</sup> He took care to warn the Government: "*Complete satisfaction cannot be expected until full civic rights have been conceded to the resident Indian population.*"<sup>178</sup>

At a farewell meeting Gandhi addressed in Verulam, whose magistracy and jail he had often criticized, about 5 000 persons were present, most of them indentured Indians.<sup>179</sup> The wider involvement with issues relating to indentured Indians, miners and plantation workers, which were of course not mutually exclusive groups, had enhanced the impact of Gandhi's last and largest campaigns in South Africa. Yet Gandhi's association with these classes was neither new nor sudden. It is his involving them *as a body* in the passive resistance campaign that was new; and even this, as we have seen, had been under consideration by him *a few years prior to the actual events.*

Passive resistance involved a readiness to suffer deprivation, loss of property and also deportation. That Gandhi did not rush into involving Indian toilers in passive resistance but welcomed and encouraged their involvement when it happened as part of a natural progression of events speaks to a sense of responsibility. A glimpse of this may be had from the sequential plan that he set out in his 27 November 1911 letter to Albert West.

The evidence does not appear to support the opinion that there is "nothing to indicate that Gandhi ever had more than fleeting or infrequent contact with indentured workers before 1913; and even that had ceased when he left Natal in 1901".<sup>180</sup> The notion that the £3 tax question was hurriedly included in his programme by Gandhi in 1912 is also invalidated by his assertion three years earlier in December 1909,

"According to us, indenture is an evil thing [in itself]. *But there is also the £3 poll-tax on the indentured labourers. There must be an agitation for its removal.*"<sup>181</sup>

Clearly, the idea that Gandhi spoke merely for the Indian merchant class unduly limits understanding of complex and multi-dimensional struggles. It is useful to bear in mind also that other non-class possibilities of these struggles were contemporaneously recognized, not least in the African and coloured press.<sup>182</sup>

### NOTES

- 1 An earlier draft of this paper formed the basis of a lecture delivered by me at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. I am grateful to Anita Joshua and Sumita Hazarika for helping me shorten the paper for publication.

- 2 Hunt, James D., "Gandhi among South African Indians", *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 8, No 7, October 1986, pp. 423–433, reviewing Maureen Swan, *Gandhi: The South African Experience* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1985).
- 3 Swan, Maureen, "The 1913 Natal Indian Strike", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 10, No 2, April 1984, pp. 229–58 at p. 240. Some other academic writers have been content essentially to follow Swan in this matter over a period covering three decades. See, for example, C.G. Henning, *The Indentured Indian in Natal (1860–1917)* (New Delhi, Promilla & Co., 1993) p. 173, William Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 94–95 and Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, *The South African Gandhi: Strayer-Bearer of Empire* (New Delhi, Navayana, 2015) p. 298. The last work argues at p. 298: "...excluded from Gandhi's radar for most of his South African years were the many Indians who laboured under conditions of semi-slavery as white sugar barons and mining magnates squeezed the maximum out of their employees' five years of indenture. He rarely raised these concerns with the power-holders of Empire." While examples can be multiplied with each work appearing to rely on the other, we find it more enriching to examine such primary materials as are available.
- 4 Swan, Maureen, *Gandhi: The South African Experience* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1985) p. xvi and pp. 272–3.
- 5 Letter to *Natal Advertiser*, 29 September 1893, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (henceforth *CW*), Vol. 1, p. 63.
- 6 *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 179n. In 1876, that is fifteen years before the 1891 law, Indian indentured labour in Natal was paid 10 shillings a month in the first year, rising to 14 shillings in the last year. (Sheila T. van der Horst, *Native Labour in South Africa*, London, Oxford University Press, 1942, p. 121). Some twenty years after the 1891 law, the average wage level in the context of an *ex-indentured* Indian in South Africa was stated in 1912 by Gokhale to be 25 shillings a month.
- 7 Memorial to Lord Hamilton, 5 June 1902, *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 258. See also Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas: 1830–1920* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974) p. 282.
- 8 Memorial to Lord Hamilton, p. 258.
- 9 *CW*, Vol. 1, p. 162.
- 10 Open letter, before December 1894, *CW*, Vol. 1, p. 186. Italics Gandhi's.
- 11 *The grievances of the British Indians*, 14 August 1896, *CW*, Vol. 2, p.16.
- 12 *CW*, Vol. 2, p.17.
- 13 *CW*, Vol. 2, pp.17–18. It appears that Gandhi sent Balasundaram also to a doctor to procure a certificate about the nature of his injuries. M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, First Edition in two parts, 1927 and 1929; December 2004 reprint) pp. 141–143. The name of Balasundaram may have been incorrectly mentioned in a work written by Gandhi several years later in 1928 as Subrahmanyam. (*Satyagraha in South Africa* [Ahmedabad, Navajivan Trust, 2nd Edition, 1950 (1995 Reprint)], p. 49).
- 14 *CW*, Vol. 2, p.17.
- 15 Petition to Natal Legislative Assembly, before 5 May 1895, *CW*, Vol. 1, pp. 199–201.
- 16 11 August 1895, *CW*, Vol. 1, pp. 243–44.
- 17 *Report of the Natal Indian Congress*, August 1895, *CW*, Vol. 1, p. 249. Years later Indians working in the railways would join the 1913 strike.
- 18 Before 5 May 1895, *CW*, Vol. 1, p. 199–201.
- 19 Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, p. 283.
- 20 *Indian Opinion (IO)*, 26 January 1907. For other references see *The Second Report of the Natal Indian Congress* [post 11 October 1899], *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 105–6 and Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Early Phase* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1965) p. 439. Pyarelal refers to [H.L.] Paul, who became president of the Association, with Gandhi as secretary, and to the focus of the Association on the "colonial born Indian educated youth" and the children of ex-indentured Indians. The NIEA came into being in 1894.
- 21 Open Letter, before December 1894, *CW*, Vol. 1, p. 186.
- 22 2 March 1896, *CW*, Vol. 1, pp. 297–300.
- 23 *The Times of India*, 20 October 1896, *CW*, Vol. 2, p. 65. Italics supplied.
- 24 Interview to *The Englishman*, Calcutta, 14 November 1896, *CW*, Vol. 2, p. 102.
- 25 *CW*, Vol. 2, p. 300.
- 26 "The Elevation of the Depressed Classes", *Speeches of the Honourable Mr G.K. Gokhale, C.I.E.* (Madras, G.A. Natesan & Co., n.d., probably 1920) p. 742.
- 27 *CW*, Vol. 2, p. 162 and pp. 301–302. One reason for the anger and resentment among a section of the Europeans was the pamphlet that Gandhi had produced while in India and the picture that it reportedly depicted of ill-treatment of Indians, especially indentured Indians, in Natal.

- 28 *Interview to Natal Advertiser*, 13 January 1897, *CW*, Vol. 2, p. 123.
- 29 Gokhale, Gopal Krishna, "British Indians in South Africa", *India*, London, June 1897, reproduced in D.G. Karve and D.V. Ambekar, *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (New York, Asia Publishing House, 1966) Volume 2, pp. 399–408.
- 30 *ibid.*, pp. 400–1.
- 31 *CW*, Vol. 2, pp. 260–72.
- 32 *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 2–3. Some writers see the instance of Somnath Maharaj as "an example of the socio-economic progress of an overseas Indian". See Marina Carter and Khal Torabully, *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* (London, Anthem Press, 2002) p. 105.
- 33 *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 4–5.
- 34 *ibid.*, p. 5.
- 35 18 May 1899, *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 72–3.
- 36 19 October 1899, *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 113–114; 13 December 1899, *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 129; post 14 March 1899, *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 137–141.
- 37 *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 133, p. 138.
- 38 Memorial to Lord Hamilton, p. 258.
- 39 *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 140 and p. 148.
- 40 Letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, 8 October 1900, *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 168. The reference to Prabhu Singh may be compared with one made by Dr A. Abdurahman, president of the African Political Organisation, to Abraham Esau's role in the war. Some years later Gandhi noted that at a meeting of coloured people on 21 March 1906, Dr Abdurahman, emphasizing in his speech the entitlements of the coloured, referred to Esau, the black artisan who "sacrificed his life out of loyalty to the British" in 1901, as "the greatest hero of the South African War" (*CW*, Vol. 5, p. 257, *IO*, 31 March 1906).
- 41 DiSalvo, Charles, *The Man Before the Mahatma: M.K. Gandhi, Attorney at Law* (Noida, UP, India, Random House, 2012) pp. 73–76, 353n, 354n, 359n, 382n, 383, 383n, relying upon reports in Natal's press in August and December 1900.
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 383 n53.
- 43 *ibid.*, pp. 382–3, n53.
- 44 *ibid.*, p. 383 n53.
- 45 *idem*. I am grateful to Charles DiSalvo for letting me have the name of Girdhari's spouse.
- 46 *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 173 n1.
- 47 *idem*.
- 48 16 January 1901, *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 173. The cases of Girdhari, Saria, Jantze and Chellagadu are worth noting, especially as a journalist in a recent work writes, after referring to Balasundaram's case: "Gandhi himself doesn't go on to mention any subsequent cases involving indentured labourers; if there were records of such cases, they've long since disappeared." J. Lelyveld, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India* (New Delhi, HarperCollins, 2011) p. 40.
- 49 *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 173.
- 50 Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Discovery of Satyagraha – On the Threshold* (Bombay, Sevak Prakashan, 1980) Vol. 2, pp. 337–38.
- 51 *idem*.
- 52 11 September 1901; *Natal Mercury*, 12 September 1901, *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 202.
- 53 *idem*.
- 54 *idem*.
- 55 *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 206–207; pp. 210–211; see also p. 473.
- 56 *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 213–215.
- 57 *The Voice of India*, 31 May 1902, *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 252–4.
- 58 Memorial to Lord Hamilton, pp. 257–9. The memorial was signed by leading Indian figures such as Pherozeshah Mehta and Dinshaw Edulji Wacha.
- 59 *ibid.*, p. 258.
- 60 *CW*, Vol. 3, pp. 264–265. Before leaving India, Gandhi wrote to G.K. Gokhale on 14 November 1902, requesting him to "keep an eye on the Indian question in South Africa". *Idem*.
- 61 January 1903, *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 277.
- 62 *idem*.
- 63 Letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, 30 January 1903, *CW*, Vol. 3, p. 278.
- 64 *idem*.
- 65 *IO*, 14 January 1904, *CW*, Vol. 4, pp. 102–103.
- 66 *IO*, 14 January 1904, *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 105.
- 67 *IO*, 28 May 1904, *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 202.
- 68 *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 489.
- 69 *IO*, 18 March 1905, *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 380 (Italics supplied). Swan does not appear to deal with this.
- 70 *IO*, 22 April 1905, *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 417.
- 71 *IO*, 20 May 1905, *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 439.
- 72 *IO*, 5 August 1905, *CW*, Vol. 5, p. 32.
- 73 Letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, prior to June 24, 1905, *CW*, Vol. 4, p. 475.
- 74 *IO*, 4 November 1905, *CW*, Vol. 5, p. 120.
- 75 *CW*, Vol. 5, p. 121.
- 76 *IO*, 2 December 1905, *CW*, Vol. 5, pp. 15–23. Italics supplied.
- 77 Mentioned in a statement seven years later by Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies, *Hansard*, 28 Nov 1912, Natal Municipal Corporations, HC Deb., Vol. 44, ccl 499–500.
- 78 Letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, prior to June 24 1905, *CW*, Vol. 4, pp. 474–5.

- 79 *IO*, 17 March 1906, *CW*, Vol. 5, pp. 232–3.  
80 *idem*.
- 81 *IO*, 7 April 1906, *CW*, Vol. 5, pp. 265–6.
- 82 *IO*, 1 September 1906, *CW*, Vol. 6, pp. 404–5.
- 83 *IO*, 11 May 1907, *CW*, Vol. 6, p. 459.  
Gandhi found something to appreciate also in the trade union activities of the poor-white mine labourers on the Rand who, he wrote, lived “from hand to mouth” and had struck work demanding higher wages. Regardless of the reasonableness or otherwise of their demands it was for the moment “their spirit and their daring” that Gandhi commended as something “we are to think of and emulate”. (*IO*, 1 June 1907, *CW*, Vol. 7, pp. 10–11). A week earlier Gandhi had written in support of the Indian washermen at New Clare in the Transvaal against whom various accusations of uncleanliness had been brought by a correspondent writing under a pseudonym (*IO*, 25 May 1907, *CW*, Vol. 6, p. 500). Typically, Gandhi’s defiance was accompanied with a stress on self-criticism; he established an early linkage between the plight of the Indians in the Transvaal and that of the so-called untouchables in India, the *bhangis* in particular, who were considered the most oppressed. “Just as in India some of us oppress the *bhangis*...it has fallen to our lot to be treated like *bhangis* here in the Transvaal” (*IO*, 11 May 1907, *CW*, Vol. 6, p. 470). This was a link established also by Gandhi’s guide and admirer, Gokhale, and also by the Indian social reformer Mahadev Govind Ranade, from whom both Gokhale and Gandhi drew inspiration. See Gokhale’s speech, “The Elevation of the Depressed Classes”, delivered at the Dharwar Social Conference in southern India in April 1903, reproduced in *Speeches of the Honourable Mr G.K. Gokhale*, p. 742. According to Gokhale, Ranade had been “a never-failing adviser of Mr Gandhi, and had carried on a regular correspondence with him”; the gist of Ranade’s message to Indians, even as they struggled in India, South Africa and elsewhere, was: “Turn the search-light inwards” (*ibid.*, p. 742). The remarkable speech was later reprinted also in D. G. Karve and D.V. Ambekar, *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, n.d. [probably 1967] Vol. 3) pp. 260–3.
- 84 *IO*, 15 June 1907, *CW*, Vol. 7, pp. 42–3.
- 85 *ibid.*, p. 43.
- 86 This marked the beginning of passive resistance related to the Transvaal legislation on Asiatic registration.
- 87 Gandhi had been arrested on 10 January 1908 for neither registering under the legislation relating to Asians nor leaving the Transvaal.
- 88 *IO*, 21 March 1908. This statement was followed by a letter to the editor, *Indian Opinion* from P.S. Aiyar in which he sought to explain the objectives of the Natal Indian Patriotic Union (*Indian Opinion*, 4 April 1910).
- 89 *IO*, 12 September 1908.
- 90 *IO*, “Natal Indentured Labourers”, 3 October 1908, *CW*, Vol. 9, p. 83.
- 91 He was released on 24 May 1909.
- 92 10 August 1909, *CW*, Vol. 9, pp. 348–9.
- 93 Letter to G.K. Gokhale, 11 November 1909, *CW*, Vol. 9, p. 532. Gandhi wrote: “I venture to suggest that you should come to the Transvaal and join us.... If...you came...to share our sorrows and...cross the Transvaal border as a citizen of the Empire, you would give it a world-wide significance.... If you are arrested and imprisoned, I should be delighted.”
- 94 *IO*, 11 December 1909, *CW*, Vol. 10, p. 100.
- 95 Swan, Maureen, “Ideology in organised Indian politics, 1891–1948”, in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class & Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (New York, Longman, 1987) pp. 198–199.
- 96 Metha (sic) [Mehta], P. J., *M.K. Gandhi and the South African Indian Problem* (Madras, G.A. Natesan & Co., 1911) pp. 84–5. This author, a close confidante of Gandhi, wrote that Gandhi considered the “Indenture law passed by the Government of India”, meaning presumably British India’s permissive policy on indenture, as “the root-cause of most of the sufferings that the Indians have had to undergo in South Africa”. (*ibid.*, p. 79).
- 97 For the text of the resolution and Gokhale’s speech in the Council, see *Speeches of the Honourable Mr G. K. Gokhale*, pp. 509–18. See also *ibid.*, pp. 519–42 for Gokhale’s speech in the Council two years later on 4 March 1912 while moving a resolution to bar recruitment of Indian labourers under indenture for all destinations. These two speeches are also available in R.P. Patwardhan and D.V. Ambekar, *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Poona, The Deccan Sabha, 1962) Vol. 1, pp. 284–94 and pp. 349–368 respectively.
- 98 *IO*, 12 March 1910.
- 99 Patwardhan and Ambekar, *Speeches and Writings*, Vol. 1, p. 295.

- 100 15 May 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 70 and p. 70n.
- 101 *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 72–3.
- 102 *IO*, 27 May 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 90–3.  
The two points which enabled this to happen concerned the repeal of the Asiatic Registration Act (Act 2 of 1907) and removal of race-based legal inequality in immigration to the Transvaal. Official assurances were given that the racial test would go, as would the Act in question.
- 103 *idem*. Gandhi said that if legislative ratification did not come, the “same stubborn, calm and dignified resistance that was offered to Smuts could next year with equal certainty of success be offered, if need be, to the mighty Union Parliament”.
- 104 *IO*, 23 September 1911. Dealing with the formation of such organisations, Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, *Inside Indian Indenture: A South African Story: 1860–1914* (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2010) p. 372, observe: “These organisations broadened the social base of Indian politics but it would be hard to argue that they were necessarily anti-Gandhi, as the likes of Vincent Lawrence and Dada Abdullah remained loyal to Gandhi throughout his stay in South Africa and beyond.” Given Gandhi’s statements two or three years earlier on the need for *satyagraha* on the question of indentured labour and for an agitation against the £3 tax, the formation of the “Anti £3 Tax League” was in fact a step on a path pointed to also by Gandhi.
- 105 *IO*, 21 October 1911. The name is spelt in the report as Obligadoo but in one of Gandhi’s own letters as Obligadu.
- 106 *idem*.
- 107 *idem*.
- 108 Letter to A.H. West, 22 December 1911, *CW*, Vol. 96 (Supplementary Vol. VI), p. 101.
- 109 Letter to A.H. West, undated, *CW*, Vol. 96 (Supplementary Vol. VI), p. 308.
- 110 *IO*, 25 November 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 187–188.
- 111 Letter to A.H. West, 27 November 1911, *CW*, Vol. 96 (Supplementary Vol. VI), p. 94.
- 112 Letter to A.H. West, 8 December 1911, *CW*, Vol. 96 (Supplementary Vol. VI), p. 99.
- 113 *idem*.
- 114 “The iniquitous tax”, *IO*, 16 December 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 199.
- 115 *idem*.
- 116 *IO*, 30 December 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 205.
- 117 *IO*, Vol. 11, p. 179n.
- 118 *IO*, 11 November 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 181–2.
- 119 *idem*.
- 120 *IO*, 18 November 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 186–7.
- 121 *IO*, 25 November 1911, *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 187–88.
- 122 *IO*, 17 February 1912, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 235.
- 123 *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 235n4. See also *IO*, 24 February 1912.
- 124 *IO*, 27 February 1912, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 235.
- 125 *ibid.*, p. 236.
- 126 *IO*, 16 March 1912, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 246.
- 127 *IO*, 1 June 1912, *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 267–269.
- 128 *IO*, 1 June 1912, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 268.
- 129 *idem*.
- 130 *IO*, 1 June 1912, *CW*, Vol. 11, p. 269.
- 131 Speech at Public Meeting, Bombay, 26 September 1896, *CW*, Vol. 2, pp. 52–53.
- 132 Letter to G.K. Gokhale, 11 November 1909, *CW*, Vol. 9, p. 532.
- 133 For details of this visit and the report and editorial in Dube’s paper *Ilangalase Natal*, see my article, “Gandhi and some contemporary African leaders from KwaZulu-Natal”, *Natalia* 42, Dec. 2012, pp. 45–64.
- 134 *IO*, 21 December 1912, *CW*, Vol. 11, pp. 356–7.
- 135 *IO*, 12 April 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, pp. 13–14; see also *IO*, 19 April 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 36.
- 136 *IO*, 31 May 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 96n.
- 137 *IO*, 31 May 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 96.
- 138 *idem*.
- 139 *idem*.
- 140 “The £3 Tax”, *IO*, 24 September 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, pp. 204–5.
- 141 *idem*.
- 142 *idem*.
- 143 Letter dated 12 September 1913 addressed to the Secretary for Interior, *CW*, Vol. 12, pp. 182–3.
- 144 *IO*, 13 September 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 188.
- 145 *IO*, 20 September 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 195.
- 146 *IO*, 24 September 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 204.
- 147 Letter to F.H. Tatham, 14 March 1908, *CW*, Vol. 8, p. 144.
- 148 *IO*, 22 October 1913, Supplement. For a report on Gandhi, accompanied by Budree, who was travelling to court arrest as a passive resister, leaving Durban by train see *IO*, 1 Oct 1913. At Dannhauser “a large party of Indians was waiting to meet Mr Budree, who is well known there”.
- 149 *idem*.
- 150 For short notes on Ahir Budree and his son Sivpujan Budree, see Fatima Meer (ed.), *The South African Gandhi: An Abstract of the Speeches and Writings of M.K. Gandhi*,

- 1893–1914 (Durban, Madiba Publishers, 1996) p. 1183. Sivpujan Budree is present in a group photograph published in the Golden Number of *Indian Opinion*, 1914.
- 151 *Gandhi: An Autobiography*; December 2004 [Reprint of Mahadev Desai's translation], p. 266. In the *Autobiography*, Budree is spelt as Badri. After 25 September 1913, a letter from Gandhi, then in the midst of his last struggle in South Africa, addressed to an associate refers to a "jacket made by me for Budrea", illustrating both their closeness and an earlier variation in spelling: *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 211. Hugh Tinker writes that through *IO*, Gandhi came "into contact with an ever-widening circle of Indians, including the ex-indentured people who formed their own association at this time (1904) under the leadership of Jairam Singh and Badri". Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, p. 300. For another reference to Jairam Singh see Bhawani Dayal, *Dakshin Afrika Ke Satyagraha Ka Itihas* (Indore, Saraswati Sadan, 1920) p. 146. Dayal was Jairam Singh's son.
- 152 *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 653. Gandhi's visit to Newcastle on 17 October 1913 is not specifically mentioned in Swan, "The 1913 Natal Indian strike". Nevertheless, she does accept that "on the 17<sup>th</sup>, however, the movement spread beyond expectations, and within a week 2000 Indians had struck work in northern Natal". In an article, written after 23 July 1914 on board his ship leaving South Africa, Gandhi set out his own experiences of his last campaign of 1913 in "The last satyagraha campaign: My experience", *IO*, Golden Number, 1914, *CW*, Vol. 12, pp. 508–19. Gandhi gave credit to the Indian women in helping to organize the strike: "When the Phoenix batch went to prison, Johannesburg could not remain behind. The women there became restive. They were fired with the desire to be in gaol. The entire family of Mr Thambi Naidoo got ready.... The plan was that in Newcastle the women should meet the indentured labourers and their wives, give them a true idea of their conditions and persuade them to go on strike on the issue of the £3 tax. The strike was to commence on my arrival at Newcastle. But the mere presence of these women was like a lighted match-stick to dry fuel.... By the time I reached there, Indians in two coal mines had already stopped work."
- 153 *IO*, 29 October 1913. A fortnight later the Indian railway employees in Ladysmith struck work (see *The Friend*, 11 November 1913).
- 154 *IO*, 29 October 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 248.
- 155 *The Friend*, 28 October 1913.
- 156 *ibid.*
- 157 *The Bloemfontein Post*, 30 October 1913.
- 158 *The Friend*, 13 November 1913.
- 159 *The Friend*, 12 November 1913.
- 160 *The Friend*, 19 November 1913.
- 161 Maureen Swan writes: "In October and November 1913 a strike by more than 20,000 Indian workers in Natal paralyzed key areas of the economy." ("The 1913 Natal Indian strike", p. 239).
- 162 *IO*, 10 May 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 65.
- 163 *Izwe La Kiti*, 12 November 1913.
- 164 *IO*, 26 November 1913.
- 165 *The Bloemfontein Post*, 17 November 1913.
- 166 *IO*, 11 February 1914. For these incidents see also *IO*, 3 and 10 December 1913.
- 167 *idem.* The magisterial inquiry into the main incident accepted the police version. For some other reports about an earlier incident see *The Bloemfontein Post*, 26 and 27 November 1913. A photograph of Selvan's family, taken by B. Gabriel, appears in the Golden Number of *IO*, 1914. The caption reads: "Widow and sons of Selvan, a free labourer, shot dead during the strike. The eldest son, Antonimuthu, received three bullet wounds." For more on Selvan see *IO*, 20 May 1914.
- 168 Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Chapter 45, *CW*, Vol. 29, p. 248.
- 169 "Progress of the strike", *Indian Opinion*, 3 December 1913.
- 170 *IO*, 20 September 1913, *CW*, Vol. 12, pp. 192–193.
- 171 *The Friend*, 22 December 1913.
- 172 *IO*, 3 December 1913.
- 173 *IO*, 17 December 1913, 21 January, 28 January, 25 February, 4 March, 27 May 1914.
- 174 A photograph of Soorzai with his wife and child is available in Golden Number of *Indian Opinion*, 1914.
- 175 *CW*, Vol. 12, pp. 420–421.
- 176 *IO*, 8 July 1914, *CW*, Vol. 12, pp. 447–448.
- 177 See, for instance, Desai and Vahed, *Inside Indian Indenture*, p. 419.
- 178 Letter to E.M. Gorges, 30 June 1914, *CW*, Vol. 12, p. 439. Gandhi added: "I have told my countrymen that they will have to exercise patience and by all honourable means at their disposal educate public opinion so as to enable the Government of the day to go further than the present correspondence does."
- 179 A photograph of this meeting is available in *Souvenir of the Passive Resistance Movement in South Africa, 1906–1914*, *Indian Opinion*, Golden Number, 1914.

- 180 Swan, "The 1913 Natal Indian Strike", p. 240.
- 181 *IO*, 11 December 1909, *CW*, Vol. 10, pp. 99–100 [italics added].
- 182 John Dube's paper, recognising the implications for Africans of the struggle that Gandhi had been leading, observed editorially: "The Natives of South Africa are very keenly interested in the result of the present struggle between the Indian community and the South African government." *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 30 January 1914. It continued: "It is clear... that the Indian community have secured from the Government a recognition of the right of consultation either direct or indirect in matters vitally affecting their interests. This principle is of the utmost importance to those who, like so large a proportion of our people, are unrepresented in the Union Parliament.... What the Indians have gained, they have gained by passive resistance, and not by the use of violence." The African Political Organisation through its official organ, the *A.P.O.*, commented on 13 June 1914: "The Indian Relief Bill is an act of justice wrung from the unwilling hands of the Government." It added: "The thanks of the Coloured races throughout the British Empire are due to Mr Ghandi [*sic*]. He has...undoubtedly assisted to force into prominence the greatest problem that ever confronted a people, namely the relationship of Black and White in the British Empire."