

Thayanayagie Pillay (Thailema)

### ***Satyagrahi***

This letter, signed by thirty treason trialists, is addressed to Thayanayagie Pillay, better known as Thailema, who lived right next door to the Marieamman Temple on the corner of Grand and Sixth Streets in the Asiatic Bazaar. The Treason Trial, which had begun in the Drill Hall in Johannesburg in December 1956 with 156 accused, most of whom had been acquitted by 1959, was in its last phase with the trial in Pretoria of the most prominent anti-apartheid leaders in the country. Their hearing, which began in August 1959, would end in March 1961, when they too would be acquitted.

During this period, Thailema's home was a hive of activity. By seven every morning, Mrs Moodley, her friend and neighbour, and one or two other women, appeared at her door to prepare breakfast for the thirty accused.

They cut up the bread that came in every day from voluntary donations, made sandwiches and filled one of those old-fashioned metal milk cans with coffee.

Then Thailema's brother-in-law, Sooboo, and her son, Visoo, after packing the breakfast into the green-and-cream station wagon, headed for town.

As the trial was being held at the old synagogue on Paul Kruger Street just around the corner from the Good Shepherd Church, Father Nye had made the churchyard available for serving the meals.

Sooboo drove into the churchyard where he and Visoo served the breakfast. The coffee and sandwiches were always there in time to refresh the accused before the day's session began.

Meanwhile, back at the house, the women, cutting up vegetables and meat, were preparing lunch. When this was ready, the green-and-cream station wagon carried the women with their pots to the Good Shepherd Church. In the half-hour

for lunch, Thailema and her helpers made sure that everyone was served.

They had no time for anything else. When they returned home, they washed all the dishes and set them up for the next day.

The green-and-cream station wagon became something of an icon of the Treason Trial.

Years later, an attempt to hijack it was aborted when the hijackers recognised it as the vehicle used to support their comrade leaders.

In order to provide her meals-on-wheels service, Thailema had organised a supply of vegetables and groceries from the people in the Asiatic Bazaar, who very willingly dropped off contributions at her house. There was even a Mr Cohen from the city who sent in bulk amounts of oil and other groceries that lasted for several weeks at a time. W

hen they ran short, Thailema went to the traders and shopkeepers in the location, appealing for donations or for goods at reduced prices. Generally, the shopkeepers were very obliging; only a few, afraid of showing open support for the treason trialists, turned her away.

After about a year, during which the team at Thailema's house had worked with unflagging enthusiasm and energy, two other women's groups offered to share the responsibility for the lunches. Then Thailema's team rotated with them, each group taking on the task for a week at a time with Thailema's group still providing breakfast every day. Periods of respite occurred when the trial was in one of its many adjournments.

On three or four occasions during these years, a harsh knocking on the door in the early hours of the morning woke the family. When the door was opened, two or three security policemen barged in to confront Thailema, demanding information about her suppliers and funders.

Thailema, a tall, plump woman in her fifties, with black hair pulled back into a bun, always stayed calm.

She gave vague answers: the money came from overseas; she didn't know the people who sent supplies.

Once or twice, they took her off to the police station, but Thailema remained unruffled.

When she returned home, she brushed it all off, "They just asked me some questions."  
[1]

Thailema came from a family of political activists. Her father, CK Thambi Naidoo of Johannesburg, had worked closely with MK Gandhi from 1906 - 1914, the time of the first Satyagraha campaigns. A principled, disciplined and brave fighter, Thambi Naidoo, according to Thailema, "thought only of his duty and not of his personal affairs". Once when a group of protesters under his charge was picketing against the TARC (Transvaal Asian Registration Certificate), Gandhi came to tell him that his wife had given birth to a stillborn child. Apparently Thambi retorted very sternly, "Do you not see that I am on duty? Go and bury the child yourself." Some believed that his unwavering commitment set an example even for Gandhi, whose secretary is credited with saying, "No Thambi Naidoo, no Mahatma Gandhi." Thambi's grandson claims, "Mahatma Gandhi came here a lawyer and we made him a politician."

Life for the families of those early satyagrahis was very uncertain.

Though Thambi's wife, Veerammal, and the children understood the importance of his involvement in political activities, they found it hard to survive without him. When he was imprisoned, Veerammal had to take on his role as provider. As a mother, she understood the needs of her seven children, but the requirements of her husband's substantial business were beyond her and the responsibility terrified her. Instead of running the business, she began to dismantle it, selling off horses and carts one by one until there was nothing left to sell, no money to pay the rent and, when she and her children were put out on the street, no home.

They were rescued by her brother who took them all into his home on President Street.

When he too was arrested, they were destitute again.

This was how it was for many activists' families.

Gandhi became very concerned about this situation. When his friend and follower, Hermann Kallenbach, an architect, offered him a farm of 11 000 acres at Lawley, twenty-one miles south west of Johannesburg, as a refuge for the satyagrahis and their families, Gandhi gratefully accepted. That was how Tolstoy Farm, named in honour of the Russian author whom he greatly admired, came into being in 1910. For Gandhi, the farm was much more

than a refuge. It was a training camp, a place where

*satyagrahis*

could arm themselves for the struggle through the practice of self-discipline and self-sacrifice.

Thambi took his family to live at Tolstoy Farm.

In this peaceful, beautiful place, Veeramma recovered her equilibrium and built up the strength and courage through the practice of satyagraha to become a role model for her daughter.

Thailema was about four years old when she went to live at the farm. Her first memories were of the simple life they led there.

At the beginning, there was nothing on the farm so they lived in tents until they had built their houses. Because they had to keep costs down, they became vegetarians and cultivated a large vegetable garden. Orange, apricot and plum trees were abundant on the farm

so the settlers had plenty of fruit.

In this little kibbutz, every

individual, including older children, had tasks.

Thambi, who did the marketing, was also in charge of sanitation. Veerammal was a cook.

Others, under the guidance of Hermann Kallenbach, made sandals and clothes.

Thayanayagie's four brothers, with other boys, had to fetch water from the springs about three quarters of a mile away. They carried the water in buckets hanging from poles slung over their shoulders.

Thayanayagie, who sometimes went with them, sat on the rocks minding their clothes while they went swimming in the river.

Gandhi, using home remedies, took on the duties of ministering to the sick. When Thayanayagie got the measles, Gandhi wrapped her in a wet sheet covered with Condy's Crystals. Feeling

miserable, cold and clammy, she clung to her mother sobbing loudly, but Gandhi would not be denied.

Carrying her outdoors in the cold sheet, he put her down on a bench in the sunshine.

Lying there swaddled in the sheet absorbing the warmth of the sun, she was cured of the rash. Inspired by his example, she too, much later in her life, would use similar methods to cure sick people.

In 1912, at Gandhi's invitation, Professor Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a highly influential leader in the National Congress of India, came to South Africa to study the conditions under which Indian immigrants lived. As he was the first prominent Indian to visit the country, the Indian community turned his tour of South Africa into a celebratory event. A group of Gandhi's protégés, which included Thayanayagie's brothers, went to welcome Gokhale at Klerksdorp Railway Station, his first stop in the Transvaal. Gandhi and Kallenbach, who had gone to Cape Town to receive him on his arrival, were on the train with him.

They were taken in a procession to a reception in the town.

They made similar stops at Potchefstroom and Krugersdorp before the train finally steamed into a grand reception at Johannesburg station where a dais had been erected and the Mayor was waiting to welcome Gokhale.

Thayanayagie, who was there with her mother and sister and the satyagrahis from Tolstoy Farm, couldn't keep her eyes off the floral arches that decorated Park Station or the landau drawn by four white horses in which Gokhale rode.

At the huge banquet held in his honour, it was her brother Naransamy's great feat that took pride of place in little Thayanayagie's heart.

All the youngsters at the farm, at the time of Gokhale's tour, had agreed to give up sugar and salt for a month as a test of strength of will.

Only two of the boys, one of them Naransamy, later known as Roy Naidoo, remained steadfast at the great banquet.

Thayanayagie was very proud of him.

In 1913, two statutory events that outraged the community set off new satyagraha demonstrations: the *Immigrants Regulation Act* passed to stop Indian immigration into the country and a judgment handed down in the Cape Supreme Court that invalidated all Hindu and Muslim marriages. Satyagrahis went into action.

Since the Act and the ruling closely affected women, Gandhi for the first time allowed women to take part in non-violent resistance. Not only were women to participate, they were to take the lead.

Twelve women were chosen from Tolstoy farm: Mrs. Veerammal Naidoo (Thailema's mother), Mrs N Pillay, Mrs K Murugasa, Mrs A. Perumal Naidoo, Mrs PK Naidoo, Mrs K Chinnaswami Pillay, Mrs NS Pillay, Mrs RA Mudalingum, Mrs Bhavani Dayal, Miss Minachi Pillay, Miss Baikum Murugasa Pillay and sixteen-year old Valliamma R. Munuswami Mudaliar.

Veerammal, who was pregnant at the time, took her tiny toddler, Seshammal, Thailema's younger sister, with her. The women, some with babies and young children, went to Vereeniging where they hawked without licences in order to court arrest, but nothing happened.

Meanwhile at the Phoenix Settlement in Natal, Gandhi had organised a group, including four women, to march across the Natal border without permits.

This group led by Gandhi's wife, Kasturbha, was detained on 23 September 1913 and sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour.

Following their example, the women from Tolstoy Farm also crossed the border, but again nothing happened. Since they had geared themselves for this expedition, it was most frustrating not to have their brave defiance acknowledged. Clearly, more drastic action was needed. Thambi Naidoo took them to the coalmines in Newcastle where they moved among Indian coalminers urging them to protest against the crippling £3 poll tax.

When the miners came out on strike shortly afterwards, the women were at last arrested.

On 21 October, 1913, having been sentenced to three months with hard labour, they joined their comrades from Phoenix in the Pietermaritzburg Prison.

Thailema's mother and her baby sister, Seshammal, were both in jail.

They were still in prison during the great march of satyagrahis from Natal across the Transvaal border that began in November 1913 and ended in December with the arrest of Gandhi and hundreds of others. When Veerammal and the other women were eventually released in February 1914, they were weak and ailing. Harsh prison conditions had seriously undermined their health. Veerammal, however, despite being pregnant, had withstood the ordeal better than most and twelve hours after her release, gave birth to a son. The sixteen-year old satyagrahi, Valliamma, who had been reduced to little more than a skeleton, was immediately confined to bed on her release. Gandhi, greatly moved by this young girl's dedication, went to her bedside to speak to her.

*"Valliamma, you do not repent of your having gone to jail?"....*

*"Repent? I am even now ready to go to jail again if I am arrested,"*

*said Valliamma.*

*"But what if it results in your death?" ...*

*"I do not mind it. Who would not love to die for one's motherland?"*

*was the reply.[2]*

Valliamma died on 22 February 1914, a week after her release.

In the same year, Gandhi's negotiations with Smuts, which led to the Indian Relief Act that gave no relief regarding the major restrictions stifling economic growth and development, brought his work in South Africa to an end.

After twenty-one years in the country, Gandhi returned to India taking Thayanayagie's four brothers with him to continue their education under his tutelage.

Thambi, with the rest of his family, came back to Johannesburg where they all resumed their normal routines.

Thambi took up his business as a produce merchant once again, Veerammal resumed her roles as housewife and mother and the children went back to school.

Thayanayagie and Seshammal, who attended the school for Coloured and Indian children in Market Street, found that as a result of moving about so much, they were the oldest children in their classes. Thayanayagie, who turned fourteen at the end of Std 3 (Grade 5), was considered too old to stay in school and did not continue.

Seshammal stayed on until Std 7 (Grade 9).

When the struggle against unjust laws that had been interrupted by WWI, was taken up again in 1919, Thambi became one of its leaders. Renewed resistance aimed at old laws as well as new

more stringent proposals to restrict the development of Indian business enterprises, led to the formation of the South African Indian Congress which united activists from the Transvaal, Natal and the Cape. Thambi Naidoo, in Johannesburg, organised meetings, addressed gatherings and took part in protest activities with his teenage daughters by his side. He encouraged them to speak out against oppression.

Thayanayagie, who was a rather shy young girl, needed his help with her speeches but Seshammal, a fiery young idealist who composed her own orations, declaimed her ideas in the same vociferous style as her father.

When prominent leaders from India, following in Gopal Krishna Gokhale footsteps, began visiting South Africa to assess the plight of Indians in the country, Thayanayagie and Seshammal had the opportunity to meet them. In 1924, when Mrs Sarojini Naidu, the renowned poetess, who became president of the National Congress of India as well as president of the South African Indian Congress, addressed a gathering, Thailema and Seshammal, in white saris with red rosettes, acted as hostesses.

Mrs Naidu's powerful oratory along with her insightful assessment of conditions in South Africa made a tremendous impression on Thayanayagie. This encounter with a formidable woman leader inspired her to assert her power as an activist.

Later, despite efforts to confine her to the role of traditional wife, she would become a leader in her community.

In 1930, Thayanayagie Naidoo married Perumal Pillay. Their families, friends for many years, had emigrated from Mauritius together, made their way to Kimberley and from there to the Reef, the gold-mining area of the Transvaal, before they went their separate ways, the Pillays to Pretoria, the Naidoos to Johannesburg.

Though they settled in different cities, ties of marriage kept them close. Veeramal, Thayanayagie's mother, was from the Pillay family, so when Thayanayagie married Perumal, she was in a sense returning home.

The Pillays, though not as driven as Thambi Naidoo, were activists in their own right. Thayanayagie's husband, Perumal, Fisher to his friends, was a member of the Transvaal Indian Congress, and had taken part in the discussions that led to the Cape Town agreement of 1927, which advocated the repatriation of Indians. Believing it to be a democratic option for those who wanted it, Fisher had involved himself in the scheme.

When he realised that he was assisting the PACT Government of JBM Hertzog to reduce the local Indian population and abandon returnees to an uncertain fate in the mother country, he actively opposed the scheme.

Fisher, a thin, dark man brought his bride, Thayanayagie, to the family home on the corner of Grand and Sixth streets in the Asiatic Bazaar. Thayanayagie, a tall, slender woman of the same height as her new husband, was in her early twenties when she came to live in the four-bedroom wood and iron structure that accommodated her mother-in-law, six brothers-in-law and one sister-in-law. Her father-in-law, had left his wife, Achieammal, and seven children, and returned to Mauritius.

At first Achieammal had struggled to maintain the produce trade started by her husband but, with the help of friends, she survived. As her sons grew older, took over the business and developed it, her life became easier. Fisher's marriage was also a boon as there was now another woman in the house to help her care for the family. As other sons married, bringing home their spouses, her burdens became lighter.

Fisher's eldest brother, Krishnan, also known as G.S. Krishnan and Krishnannè, became the headmaster of the Tamil School on Cowie Street. As the cultural and religious leader of the Tamil community in the location, he initiated the construction of the Marieamman temple on Sixth Street, designed the gopuram and supervised its construction. Perumal's sister, Ama, who married Thayanayagie's brother, Naransamy (Roy) Naidoo, Gandhi's protégé, went to live in Johannesburg. Alongside her husband, she too became actively involved in the struggle for human rights in South Africa. When her daughter, Shanti, was born, Achiammal brought her granddaughter to live with them in the Asiatic Bazaar.

So the house accommodated several branches of this extended family.

Thailema's daughter, Sintha, shared a bedroom with four others: her grandmother and her sister, Daya, in one bed, Shanti and another of her sisters in a second bed while she slept on a stretcher between the two.

Though the Pillays made additions to the wood and iron home each time a new bride entered the house, these were never sufficient for their needs and as long as they lived in the location, they had to put up with congested conditions.

After she married, Thailema discovered that Perumal had a drinking problem and became abusive when he was high. Once when her brother Roy was visiting from Johannesburg, Perumal began shouting at her. Having read the signs of abuse, Roy, who wanted Thailema out of that situation, offered to take her and the children back to Johannesburg. But Thailema would not go; satyagrahis are trained to endure suffering, not run away from it.

Besides, her family had arranged her marriage and she could not dishonour them.

So she put up with Perumal's rages.

Once when he locked her out of the bedroom, their youngest daughter, Vasugie, who shared the same bedroom, cried herself to sleep because her mother wasn't there.

In the morning, surprised to find her mother in the room, she asked her how she had got in. When Thailema answered, "You let me in,"

[3]

Vasugie was surprised; she couldn't remember any such thing.

Perumal constantly threatened the most dreadful violence against his wife. "You just come and sleep on this bed and I'll set it alight." He actually carried out this threat a couple of times. After Perumal's brothers, Krishnannè and Nadasen moved into their own homes on the opposite side of Sixth Street, Thayanayagie with all the children would spend nights with them whenever Perumal was in one of his rages. But by five o' clock the next morning, Thailema was back seeing to things in her own house.

After he was involved in a car crash, Perumal lost the use of his right arm and that affected his ability to earn a living. His brother, Sooboo, whose café on Boom Street was doing very well, extended his support to Thailema and her children. As she did not want to be totally dependent on Sooboo, she began her own home catering business.

At first she made and sold spices, then expanded her trade to include the sale of meat, fish and vegetables.

Perumal also became involved in her trading activities, bringing home vegetables, dried snoek and sometimes a springbok, which he hung from a hook on a rail in the yard so that Willie, their Khoi-San helper, could skin it. Thailema then cut it up into portions for her children to hawk in

all the locations.

In the two hours between the end of English School at one o' clock and the beginning of Tamil School at three in the afternoon, the children were going from door to door selling meat, fish, and vegetables.

Being unwilling conscripts in the catering business, the children sometimes rebelled and sneaked off to the "Greenies," vacant land on the banks of the Apies River, where they picked mulberries and stuffed themselves. When they returned home, they insisted that they had been unable to sell their wares.

Like it or not, they were their mother's distribution department. And she experimented with all kinds of goods, constantly diversifying her trade in an attempt to capture new niche markets. When she began selling eggs, her daughter, Sintha, and her son, Murthi, found that they had a market in the Boer Kamp where poor whites lived. One day, as they were trudging along with their baskets, three Boer children accosted them. "Hey, koelie, shee eiers." As Sintha and Murthi stood dumbfounded, paralysed with fear, the Boer children advanced on them, "gave Murthi two shots, took three or four eggs and ran home."

[4]

Sintha burst out laughing - as much from relief as amusement.

When Thailema began to make snack foods to sell at the market on Saturday mornings, twelve-year old Sintha, her brother, Visoo, and her father, had to catch the six o' clock bus to Church Street where they spent the day selling samoosas and moorookoo.

Thailema's difficult life was made more difficult by her teenage son, fourteen-year-old Visoo, whose hot-temper got him into trouble all the time, especially at school. On one occasion, his teacher, Mr. Andrew Anthony, sent him with a friend to collect soapstone for carving ashtrays etc. in class. When they came back, a boy in the class kicked over their potato sack full of stones and some of them broke. Grabbing the boy by the collar, Visoo hit out, and the boy's blazer tore as he tried to pull away.

That afternoon, the boy's mother came to have it out with Thailema.

She threw the jacket at her in indignation demanding that she replace it.

Visoo's granny, Atchiammal, who had a soft spot for her grandson, paid for a new jacket and saved the day.

Whenever Visoo played games, he would get into fights. Then his *kennetjie* stick became a weapon. Once, he beat up a boy, who sent a whole gang of Coloured youngsters to the house. When he saw them coming, Visoo hid under his grandmother's bed; he couldn't take on five or six at one go.

But it was at Tamil School, which he hated with a passion, that Visoo got into the most trouble. He often jammed the lock on the gate with matchsticks and other objects so that the teacher couldn't open up.

Thailema was mortified that her son, Krishnannè's nephew, would try to sabotage Tamil classes. Her brother-in-law, Krishnannè, teacher and Principal at the Tamil School, was revered by adults but children knew him as a strict disciplinarian who believed in corporal punishment. He twisted his nephew's ears so often that the boy was convinced that his uncle had elongated them. What was worse, when his uncle beat him in school, Visoo got another hiding from his mother at home. How dare he defy Krishnannè?

But Visoo felt that Krishnannè wasn't fair.

He had favourites among the children - those who were proficient in Tamil, like Ronnie Pillay and Sunnyboy.

Visoo, who was not a diligent pupil, despised them because they were.

As far as he was concerned they were just currying favour with Krishnannè.

One day, as Visoo had neglected his homework as usual, Krishnannè punched him hard on the side of his head.

Visoo, jumped up in pain, ran out, and racing along the veranda, broke every window with his *kennetjie* stick.

At the end of her tether with this very unruly, headstrong teenager, Thailema, at Krishnannè's suggestion, agreed to send him to India. In those days, it was the practice to send difficult teenage boys to the old country for a dollop of culture and good manners.

But Visoo believed, "It was go to India or be sent to the reformatory."

Of course, there was no real intention of sending him to a reformatory but he didn't know that.

He left for India in 1945 and for the next three years, lived with his grandfather in a village in Mathur, near Mayavarum in the South.

In the years that he was away, the community in South Africa undertook a passive resistance campaign to protest against the *Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act* (the Ghetto Act). In India, they were fully aware of the implications of the Ghetto Act as well as the part being played by Smuts to throttle Indian enterprise. Visoo, who knew that his mother would be involved in the demonstrations, was disturbed by news reports of passive resisters being detained and strip-searched.

He was horrified to think of his mother being humiliated like that.

Though Thailema was involved in the Passive Resistance Campaign, as Visoo knew she would be, the reports that he received in India were greatly exaggerated. All kinds of rumours afloat around him kept him in a constant state of anxiety about various family members. When he heard that Indians in Pretoria were boycotting the British Royal visit in 1947, he became anxious about his Uncle Krishnannè, who, as a young man, had spent fourteen years in India fighting against the British. Then he heard that the Ossewa Brandwag, in collaboration with the Germans operating from South West Africa, was blowing up petrol stations to eliminate all Coloureds, Indians and Africans.

But Visoo's agitation about happenings in South Africa soon gave way to real horror at the atrocities being perpetrated in the north of India at that time. 1947, the year of India's Independence, which should have been a time of joyous celebration, was instead a period of brutal carnage. With independence came partition, the separation of Pakistan from India, and bloody conflict between Hindus and Muslims. It was at this unfortunate time that Visoo's grandfather took him on a tour of Northern India where he witnessed horrific violence. In places like Poona and Bombay, they were afraid to go out. Shooting was random and people were dying on the streets. "They didn't know who was a Hindu or who was a Muslim, they were just killing people."

Visoo and his grandfather cut their trip short and made a beeline for home and safety.

Meanwhile in South Africa, people like his Uncle Krishnanné were celebrating India's

independence with patriotic fervour completely unaware that the new nation was being baptised in blood.

In 1948, Visoo returned to South Africa a changed young man. His experiences in India had made him value what he had in Pretoria.

"You were coming from the best. No matter how we lived, with the apartheid laws and all, you were coming from the best.

Even though there was only one toilet and one bathroom outside for five families staying on a fifty by fifty plot, you were coming from the best."

[5]

After his return from India, Visoo, about seventeen, and more responsible, began to help out in his Uncle Sooboo's café.

Uncle Sooboo and his mother had both gone to jail in 1946 during the Passive Resistance Campaign. After Thailema's month in the Pietermaritzburg Prison, she had returned to an ailing mother-in-law, to her trade and the care of her family. Her mother-in-law's illness, which she diagnosed as diabetes, was an ailment that she knew how to treat.

Her father had been a diabetic so she had learned how to test urine for sugar and to give injections.

As she liked helping sick people, she was very good with her mother-in-law and the many neighbours whom she helped with the kind of home remedies that had been used at Tolstoy Farm.

In ministering to the sick, she discovered that burdensome laws had deleterious effects on people's health.

When the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign (the Defiance Campaign) was launched in 1952, Thailema not only felt it was her duty to volunteer, she was anxious to serve; as a satyagrahi she was always ready to make her contribution and she submitted her name to the Congress. After having made arrangements for the care of her children, she waited in readiness for the call. When it came on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1952, she found that she had been assigned to Patrick Duncan's batch.

She was glad to be part of a non-racial group - the Passive Resistance campaign in 1946 had been an exclusively Indian protest. In defiance of Group Areas regulations, Duncan's group marched without permits into the Germiston location.

They were arrested and sent to jail.

But imprisonment was not a new experience for Thailema.

"Jail was almost a family shelter and at times our home address forty years ago when I was a little thing." She wished she could sacrifice her whole life, spend it all in the struggle, for she believed in Gandhi's maxim: "the good of the individual is contained in the good of all people." But she had little children and had to think of them.

After the defiance campaign and the 1956 Women's March against passes,

Thailema reached the pinnacle of her achievements when, in 1959, she provided her meals-on-wheels service for thirty satyagrahis on trial for treason, one of whom would become the first President of a democratic South Africa in 1994. She didn't live to see that day but she did live to celebrate Mandela's release after twenty-seven years in prison. Now her grandchildren, who serve in various structures of the new democratic government, reap the rewards of sacrifice and dedication that go back at least three generations to her father, Thambi Naidoo.

Satyagraha, to which Thambi's descendants dedicated their lives, did prevail in the end. Its emphasis on non-violence, which had rooted itself in the national psyche, had led to a democracy in which tremendous personal sacrifice rather than violence eventually overcame

injustice. There's no denying that there was violence and bloodshed, but far more compelling was the suffering of the millions of ordinary people who endured under cruel, demeaning conditions.

Millions of ordinary men, women and children - unknown, unsung satyagrahis.

---

[1] All quotations, unless otherwise indicated are from interviews with Visoo Pillay, Thailema's son

[2] MK Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p.259

[3] Interview Vasugie Moodley

[4] Sintha Naidoo, daughter of Thailema

[5] Interview: Visoo Pillay, 2002