GANDHI AND MANDELA

(Essays by E.S.Reddy and one by Nelson Mandela)

Compiled by E.S. Reddy

Enuga S. Reddy

Enuga S. Reddy, former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, was director of the Centre against Apartheid for many years.

Since his retirement from the United Nations, he has devoted much of his time to research and writing on the international impact of Mahatma Gandhi and to promote access to writings by and on Mahatma Gandhi. He has collected a number of unpublished letters and writings of Mahatma Gandhi in archives in the United States, South Africa and Denmark, and donated them to the Gandhi archives at Sabarmati and other institutions. He has helped to computerise and revise the extensive index to Gandhi archives at Sabarmati. He has advised and assisted several websites on Gandhi in India and abroad, and the website of the African National Congress of South Africa. He has written extensively on the history of the freedom struggle in South Africa and on Mahatma Gandhi.

His articles on Gandhi and South Africa were published in 1995 under the title *Gandhiji: Vision of a Free South Africa*.

He edited:
Gandhi and South Africa, 1914-1948 with Gopalkrishna Gandhi;
The Mahatma and the Poetess (correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu) with Ms. Mrinalini Sarabhai;

Gandhi: Letters to Americans; Friends of Gandhi: Correspondence of Mahatma Gandhi with Esther Faering (Menon), Anne Marie Petersen and Ellen Horup (with Holger Terp) and other books.

He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Durban-Westville and *Padma Sri* by the Indian government in recognition of his contribution to the struggle for freedom in South Africa and his scholarly work.

CONTENTS

MAHATMA GANDHI, SOUTH AFRICA AND SATYAGRAHA

A century ago, on 10 January 1908, M.K. Gandhi, an attorney with a lucrative practice in Johannesburg, appeared before the magistrate's court for defying an anti-Asiatic law and disobeying an order to leave the Transvaal within 48 hours. He askedfor the heaviest penalty – six months' imprisonment with hard labour – for organising defiance of the "Black Act" by the Indian community. The magistrate, however,sentenced him to two months simple imprisonment. Gandhi gladly went to prison to enjoy "free hospitality" at "His Majesty's hotel", as did 150 other resisters.

That was the first of many imprisonments of Gandhi and the first non-violent challenge to racist rule in South Africa.

Discovery of Satyagraha

Gandhi had arrived in South Africa in May 1893. A 23-year-old barrister with anunsuccessful career in India, he had accepted a one-year assignment, with a modest salary, to assist the lawyer of an Indian merchant in Natal, hoping to find better prospects in the new land. Travelling to Pretoria soon after his arrival in Durban, he was thrown off a train, assaulted by a coachman and denied a hotel room in Johannesburg - all because of his colour. These assaults on his dignity, and the knowledge of the humiliations faced by Indians, did not dishearten him but brought out the best in his personality – a strong sense of duty and an urge to serve humanity. He decided to dedicate himself to public service and settled in South Africa.

At that time, there were a little over 50,000 Indians in Natal. Of these, one-third were "indentured labourers" in plantations, mines and railways who had been brought on five-year contracts with the promise of land and rights at the end of indenture. About 30,000 were "free Indians" – those who had completed indenture and their children - and 5,000 belonged to the trading community.

The Indians contributed greatly to the development of Natal. But around the time of Gandhi's arrival, the white authorities began to impose measures to deprive Indians of elementary rights. They felt that the existence of "free Indians" would undermine white hegemony. They removed the voting rights of a few Indians who had qualified. They began to refuse trading licences to Indians. They imposed a three-pound tax on all "free Indians" to force them to re-indenture or return to India. The position of the 12,000 Indians in the Transvaal was even worse.

Gandhi helped establish the Natal Indian Congress and the Transvaal British Indian Association to make representations to the authorities. He encouraged the youth to participate in public work and provided free legal services to indentured labourers. He prepared many petitions and memoranda to the local authorities and to the British Government, and wrote numerous letters to the press in defence of Indian rights. On visits to India, he met many public leaders and editors and secured their support. He

maintained frequent correspondence with Dadabhai Naoroji and Sir Muncherji Merwanjee Bhownaggree, Indian members of British Parliament, to enable them to intervene with the government and influence British public opinion.

He spent much of his income for public service. He launched a weekly newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, not only for the Indian community, but to inform the whites in South Africa, as well as people in India and Britain, of the plight of Indians and secure their understanding and support. He set up a settlement at Phoenix, a place for simple communal living, and developed his philosophy based on truth, love and nonviolence. He led an ambulance corps of more than a thousand Natal Indians in 1899-1900, at the beginning of the Anglo-Boer War to show that the Indians were prepared to fulfil the responsibilities of citizenship. In 1906, during the Zulu rebellion in Natal, he organised a stretcher-bearer corps, though his sympathies were with the Zulus. The Zulus had rebelled against a poll tax. When some violence occurred, the whites launched a manhunt, rounded up "suspects" and brutally flogged them. Fortunately, the corps was requested to treat the Zulus. Gandhi said later: "I shall never forget the lacerated backs of Zulus who had received stripes and were brought to us for nursing because no white nurse was prepared to look after them". This experience reinforced Gandhi's faith in non-violent resistance.

Soon after the corps disbanded, the Transvaal authorities gazetted an Ordinance requiring all Indians to register with ten finger prints, and to show the registration certificates whenever demanded by the police. Gandhi saw the ordinance as full of hatred against the Indian community and an affront to the honour of India. He decided to defy the law.

At a large public meeting on 11 September 1906, attended by three thousand Indians, Gandhi warned that they should be prepared for the worst if they defied the law. The Indians considered the law so humiliating that they chose to suffer rather than submit,and took a vow "in the name of God" not to register.

When appeals to the authorities and to the British government failed, Gandhi and other Indians began to picket registration offices and court imprisonment. When a European friend suggested that Indians were pursuing "passive resistance", the weapon of the weak, Gandhi rushed to reject that term. He called the movement an expression of "soul force". Through *Indian Opinion*, he invited suggestions for a term to describe the movement and in November 1907 decided on "satyagraha", meaning determined opposition in a right cause.

Thus began a new phase in the life of Gandhi to which the years of petitions and appeals were a preparation. He developed the philosophy of satyagraha – fearless defiance of unjust laws, with a willingness to suffer and adherence to non-violence in thought and deed. A civilised and humane form of resistance to injustice, it seeks to convert the adversary and looks forward to reconciliation.

Struggle and Sacrifice

Over two thousand people defied the "Black Act" in the Transvaal and went to prison, some of them repeatedly, despite increasingly severe sentences, harsh prison conditions, confiscation of property and deportations.

The satyagraha was suspended in 1911, after the formation of the Union of SouthAfrica, in the hope of a negotiated settlement, but the talks failed. Moreover, the Cape Supreme Court ruled that all marriages not performed according to Christian rites - that is, most Indian marriages - were invalid. That made the children illegitimate and deprived them of inheritance. The Union Government ignored appeals for remedial action. Meanwhile, the authorities in Natal began to prosecute, in criminal trials, Indians who could not pay the exorbitant annual tax of three pounds each.

Satyagraha was resumed in September 1913 in both Natal and the Transvaal, and this time women were invited to join. A number of women courted imprisonment, some with infants. Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, was in the first batch of resisters and her health was shattered in prison. The resisters included men and women of all faiths, rich and poor, speaking several languages. None flinched at the increasing severity of repression. A few Europeans like Henry Polak and Hermann Kallenbach identified themselves with the Indian cause and went to prison. Exhorted by the women satyagrahis, the Indian workers in the mines went on strike.

Gandhi led the great march of 2,200 workers and their families from Newcastle to the Transvaal border – a distance of over 40 miles - and was jailed. There was then a spontaneous strike by 40,000 workers – in plantations, mines and municipalities – the biggest general strike that the country had ever seen. The government called in the army and responded with brutality. Mine compounds were turned into prisons. Ten thousand workers were jailed.

Gandhi inspired the community by his example. He was sentenced to prison four times, served more than seven months in prison, and suffered hard labour and solitary confinement. He was paraded through Johannesburg in prison garb. He gave up his lucrative legal practice and adopted celibacy to devote all his energies to service. In turn Gandhi was inspired by the courage and sacrifice of women and the steadfastness of the workers. He said of the workers: "These men and women are the salt of India; on them will be built the Indian nation that is to be."

The government was obliged in the face of the determination of the Indian community, backed by national agitation in India and pressure from Britain, to sign an agreement with Gandhi, conceding all the main demands of the satyagraha. Gandhi presented the Minister of the Interior, General J.C. Smuts, with a pair of sandals he made in prison. General Smuts wore them for many years "even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man".

Africans Inspired by Gandhi

Gandhi then left for India on 18 July 1914, where he was to lead millions of people in an epic struggle for independence.

The success of the satyagraha in South Africa and of the independence struggle in India was a source of inspiration to peace movements, to Dr. Martin Luther King and his associates in the movement against racism in the United States and to non-violent revolutions for freedom in Africa and for the overthrow of corrupt dictators around the world.

n South Africa, Gandhians and Communists united, under the leadership of Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. G.M. Naicker, to launch passive resistance in 1946 against legislation to restrict Indian land ownership (the "Ghetto Act"). Gandhi guided them until he was assassinated on January 30, 1948. The Indian Government complained to the United Nations, making the struggle a matter of international concern. Over two thousand people went to prison, including some Africans, whites and Coloured people who joined the resisters in solidarity.

While the resistance did not succeed in securing the repeal of the "Ghetto Act", it inspired Nelson Mandela and other young leaders in the African community to organize mass action against racist rule. Children of Gandhi's adversaries – Bram Fischer and Patrick Duncan – joined the struggle and suffered persecution.

In 1952, the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress launched the "Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign" in which more than 8,000 people of all racial origins went to prison. The government was able to provoke some violence and enacted new legislation providing for the whipping of resisters. When the government closed all avenues of peaceful protest, banned the people's organizations, and restricted all their leaders, Mandela and others decided that they could no longer limit the struggle to strict non-violence. They formed a multi-racial underground organisation to conduct sabotage and other actions while taking care to avoid loss of innocent lives.

The government resorted to indiscriminate arrests, torture and long terms of imprisonment to suppress the movement. But the urge for freedom could not be extinguished. It burst forth in the 1980s in a mass democratic movement, a fearless non-violent confrontation with the rulers which made several racist laws inoperative. This movement and international pressure forced the white rulers to release Mandela and other prisoners and negotiate a peaceful transition to democratic rule.

Nelson Mandela on the Relevance of Gandhi

The world marvelled when Mandela and his colleagues eschewed any spirit of revenge and achieved the "miracle" of national reconciliation as they proceeded to establish a non-racial democratic government in May 1994.

Mandela, who had become the symbol of resistance even while incarcerated for more than 27 years, said in the 1990s: "The values of tolerance, mutual respect and unity for which he (Gandhi) stood and acted had a profound influence on our own liberation movement, and on my own thinking". Gandhian philosophy, he said, had enabled them to mobilise millions of people in the defiance campaign. It "contributed in no small measure to bringing about a peaceful transformation in South Africa and in healing destructive human divisions that had been spawned by the abhorrent practice of apartheid." It continued to inspire South Africans in their efforts for reconciliation and nation-building.

The present President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, elaborated in Phoenix on 27 February 2000:

> "For our present fight against poverty, against homelessness, our struggle for the sustainable development of all our people, in our efforts to overcome the inequalities of apartheid and colonialism, in all our battles, the legacy of Gandhi lives on and has become rooted in the heartbeats of our people."

World-wide Interest in Gandhi

Interest in Gandhi spread widely in the West in the 1950s with the civil rights movement led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the United States and the protests against nuclear weapons and the war in Vietnam. It has increased with the passage of time and spread to all continents as ethnic and other conflicts, corrupt dictatorships otected by major powers, international terrorism and fear generated by the amassing of arms made people search for a saner alternative.

The interest in satyagraha led to the study of the views of Gandhi on other aspects of life and encouraged movements for simple life, deep ecology, animal rights and respect for all religions.

llustrative of the influence of Gandhi are numerous scholarly studies on his life and thought published each year. The number of websites on Gandhi and the content of those websites have greatly increased in the past decade, and the number of those looking at those websites has increased even more. Search engines for news report that Mahatma Gandhi is in newspapers around the world every day. I have been receiving numerous requests from students in universities and high schools, and even primary schools, especially in the United States for information on Mahatma Gandhi.

Sixty years after Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a fanatic, the thought ofMahatma Gandhi not only lives on but has caught the imagination of people all over the world. They feel, as Mandela stressed in his message to the international conference on the centenary of satyagraha in New Delhi in February 2007:

"In a world driven by violence and force, Gandhi's message of peace and nonviolence holds the key to human survival in the 21st century."

GANDHI THE PRISONER : A COMPARISON

by

Nelson Mandela

Gandhi threatened the South African Government during the first and second decades of our century as no other man did. He established the first anti-colonial political organisation in the country, if not in the world, founding the Natal Indian Congress in 1894. The African People's Organisation (APO) was established in 1902, the ANC in 1912, so that both were witnesses to and highly influenced by Gandhi's militant satyagraha which began in 1907 and reached its climax in 1913 with the epic march of 5000 workers indentured on the coal mines of Natal. That march evoked a massive response from the Indian women who in turn, provoked the Indian workers to come out on strike. That was the beginning of the marches to freedom and mass stay-away-from-work which became so characteristic of our freedom struggle in the apartheid era. Our Defiance Campaign of 1952, too, followed very much on the lines that Gandhi had set.

So in the Indian struggle, in a sense, is rooted the African. M.K. Gandhi and John Dube, first President of the African National Congress, were neighbours in Inanda, and each influenced the other, for both men established, at about the same time, two monuments to human development within a stone's throw of each other, the Ohlange Institute and the Phoenix Settlement. Both institutions suffer today the trauma of the violence that has overtaken that region; hopefully, both will rise again, phoenix-like, to lead us to undreamed heights.

During his twenty-one years in South Africa, Gandhi was sentenced to four terms of imprisonment, the first, on January 10, 1908 to two months, the second, on October 7, 1908 to three months, the third, on February 25, also to three months, and the fourth, on November 11, 1913 to nine months hard labour. He actually served seven months and ten days of those sentences. On two occasions, the first and the last, he was released within weeks because the Government of the day, represented by General Smuts, rather than face satyagraha and the international opprobrium it was bringing the regime, offered to settle the problems through negotiation.

On all four occasions, Gandhi was arrested in his time and at his insistence - there were no midnight raids, the police did not swoop on him - there were no charges of conspiracy to overthrow the state, of promoting the activities of banned organisations or instigating inter-race violence. The State had not yet invented the vast repertoire of so-called “security laws", that we had to contend with in our time. There was no Terrorism Act, no "Communism Act", no Internal Security Act, or detentions without trial. The control of the State was not as complete; the Nationalist police state and Nationalist ideology of apartheid were yet to be born. Gandhi was arrested for deliberately breaching laws that were unjust because they discriminated against Indians and violated their dignity and their freedom. He was imprisoned because he refused to take out a registration certificate, or a pass in terms of the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act (TARA), and "instigated" others to do likewise.

When apartheid was still in its infancy, we too, like Gandhi, organised arrests in our own time through the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign, but by the end of the sixties, the violence of the State had reached such intensity that passive resistance appeared futile. We were literally pulled out of our beds and dragged into prison. Our Defiance, instead of bringing relief, provoked the Government into passing the so-called security laws in a bid to dam up all resistance. This should not mislead the reader into thinking that Gandhi's resistance did not provoke harsh measures against him and his followers. The Indians suffered terrible reprisal - they were deported to India and several groups spent time navigating back and forth, between the ports of Bombay and Durban in third class steerage because they refused to disembark in India, insisting they would only do so on their mother soil, South Africa.

Most of those deportees had in fact been born in South Africa and India was for them, a foreign country. Others like Ahmed Cachalia and E.I. Asvat lost their lucrative businesses and were forced into insolvency by their white creditors, not because their businesses were not doing well, but because they resented their 'defiance' and forced them to liquidate their assets and pay them back. Others had their property auctioned, just so that the government could extract the fines the satyagrahis refused to pay for defying unjust laws. Gandhi himself was treated with utmost indignity on several occasions, the like of which was not heaped on us. On two occasions, while being moved from Volksrust to Johannesburg and Pretoria respectively, he was marched from the gaol to the station in prison garb, handcuffed, with his prison kit on his head. Those who saw him were moved to anger and tears. For Gandhi, it was part of his suffering, part of the struggle against inhumanity.

Prison Conditions

There is great similarity in the conditions of imprisonment during our days and Gandhi's. Prison conditions changed dramatically only in the 1980s, despite the pressures exerted at the beginning of the century by Gandhi and his colleagues, and in the latter decades by my colleagues and myself. Access to newspapers, radio and television were allowed, in stages, only in the last decade as, too, were beds. In a sense, I was eased into the prison routine.

My first time in a lock-up was on June 26th, 1952 while I was organising the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign. I was held for a few days in a police cell before being released on bail. Gandhi's first imprisonment was without hard labour, in January 1908, and though sentenced to two months, he was released within 19 days. General Smuts, fearful of the momentum the passive resistance struggle was gathering, had him brought by train, from Johannesburg, to his offices in Pretoria to work out a settlement.

I too, was called out with a view to a settlement by the then head of state, Mr. P.W. Botha. They drove me to Groote Schuur, but that was in my twenty-sixth year of imprisonment - when the Nationalist Government saw that they could no longer govern the country on their own. Gandhi spent his first term of imprisonment in the Fort in Johannesburg, so did I - in the hospital section as an awaiting trial prisoner in 1962.

Gandhi describes his apprehension on being first convicted: *"Was I to be specially treated as a political prisoner? Was I to be separated from my fellow* prisoners?" he

soliloquized. He was facing imprisonment in a British Colony in 1908, and he still, at the time, harboured a residue of belief in British justice. My colleagues and I faced imprisonment in the cells of apartheid; we had no expectations that we would be given privileges because we were political prisoners. We expected the reverse - greater brutality because we were political prisoners. My first conviction was for five years in 1962, following my incognito African "tour". I began serving in Pretoria. Like Gandhi, we experienced the insides of the major Transvaal prisons. Gandhi, however, was never on Robben Island in the Cape, and we were never in Volksrust in the Transvaal.

Gandhi's approach was to accommodate to the prison conditions since, as a satyagrahi, suffering in the path of freedom and justice was part of his creed: We were never satyagrahis in that sense. We did not accept suffering, we reacted against it. I was as unco-operative on my first day of prison as I possibly could be. I refused to wear the prison shorts and I refused to eat the prison food. They gave me long trousers, and food that was somewhat more palatable, but at a heavy price. I was placed in solitary confinement where I discovered that human company was infinitely more valuable than any material advantage.

Clothing and Food

There was practically no difference in the issue of clothing given to us in 1962 and that given to Gandhi in 1908. He records, that *"After being stripped, we were given prison uniforms. We were supplied, each with a pair of short breeches, a shirt of coarse cloth, a jumper, a cap, a towel and a pair of socks and sandals." (Indian Opinion, 02-01-1909)* Our issue was almost identical.

Neither was there any difference in the diet, basically porridge, save that we were given a teaspoon of sugar; Gandhi's porridge had no sugar. At lunch, we were served mealies, sometimes mixed with beans. He spent one and a half months on a one-meal-a-day diet of beans.

He did not think it proper to complain, writing:

> "How can we complain when there are hundreds who accept these things. A complaint must have only one object - to secure relief for other prisoners. How would it mend matters if I were occasionally to complain to the warder about the small quantity of potatoes and so get him to serve me a little more? I once observed him giving me an additional helping from a portion meant for another, and thereafter I gave up complaining altogether."

He declined any favours offered to him exclusively but accepted improvements when these were shared with his fellow political prisoners. On Robben Island, we observed the same principle.

We took up issues on behalf of all the prisoners, political and non-political, never on behalf of an individual, except when an individual was personally discriminated against. In prison, one's material needs are so straitened that they are reduced to almost nothing,

and if in that condition one can still think of one's fellowmen, one's humanity excels and passes all tests for fellow feeling. Gandhi passed that test superbly. I am grateful that I maintained my humanity throughout my internment as did too my immediate colleagues.

Cells

The cells in 1962 were comparable to those during the early 1900s. Gandhi describes his cell in Volksrust:

> "It had fair ventilation, with two small windows at the top of the cell, half open apertures in the opposite wall. There was no electric light. The cell contained a dim lamp, a bucket of water and a tin tumbler. For natural convenience, a bucket in a tray with disinfectant fluid in it, was placed in a corner. Our bedding consisted of two planks, fixed to three inch legs, two blankets, an apology for a pillow, and matting." (*Indian Opinion*, 07-03-1908)

We were similarly locked up with a bucket for a commode and drinking water in a plastic bottle. Though we had electricity, the lights, controlled from outside, remained on throughout the night. We had no raised planks for sleeping. We slept on a mat, on the floor. Communal cells, in Gandhi's time and ours, usually accommodated 15-20 prisoners, but that varied. The worst Gandhi experienced was sharing a cell, with accommodation for 50, with 150 prisoners. (*Indian Opinion*, 28-03-1908)

The ablution facilities in Gandhi's time were worse than in ours, two large stone basins and two spouts that served as a shower, two buckets for defecation and two for urine - all in the open, since prison regularitions did not allow privacy. The one grilling routine that some of his compatriots suffered was absent from ours. Ahmed Cachalia, for instance, was left in a cold bath with other prisoners for hours and developed pneumonia as a consequence.

Prison Routine

Our prison routine and Gandhi's were remarkably similar, but then why wouldn't they be? In prison everything stands still. There is one way to treat prisoners, and that way doesn't change. During my first decade of imprisonment, we were up at 5.30 a.m., we rushed through our ablutions, folded our bedding and lined it against the wall and stood to attention for inspection.

Once counted, we filed for our breakfast, and then filed to be counted again before being sent to work. Work stopped at 4.30 p.m., when there was further counting; when we reached the compound, we were stripped naked and searched. By 5.30 p.m. we had had our supper and were locked up for the night.

Now let us look Gandhi's account of his prison routine:

"The prisoners are counted when they are locked in and when they are let out. A bell is rung at half-past five in the morning to wake up the prisoners. Everyone must then get up, roll up his bedding and wash. The door of the cell is opened at six when each prisoner must stand up with his arms crossed and his bedding rolled up beside him. A sentry then calls the roll. By a similar rule, every prisoner is required to stand beside his bed, while he is being locked up [at night]. When the officials come to inspect the prisoners, they must take off their caps and salute him. All the prisoners wore caps, and it was not difficult to take them off, for there was a rule that they must be taken off, and this was only proper. The order to line up was given by shouting the command *fall in* whenever an official came. The words *fall in* therefore became our daily diet. They meant that the prisoners should fall in line and stand to attention. This happened four or five times a day. The prisoners are locked up at half-past five in the afternoon. They read or converse in the cell up to eight in the evening. At eight, everyone must go to bed, meaning that even if one cannot sleep, one must get into bed. Talking among prisoners after eight constitutes a breach of Gaol Regulations. The Native prisoners do not observe this rule too strictly. The warders on night duty, therefore, try to silence them by knocking against the walls with their truncheons and shouting, *Thula! Thula*!" (*Indian Opinion,* 21-03-1908).

Hard Labour

Hard labour is hard, and made infinitely harder by the warder who stands over you and forces you to work beyond your endurance, beyond human endurance. Gandhi, like us, had plenty of hard labour, and both his comrades and mine, survived to tell our tales. He describes a particular day in Volksrust prison.

The day was very hot, all the Indians set to work with great energy. The warder was rather short of temper. He shouted at the prisoners all the time to keep on working. The more he shouted, the more nervous the Indians became. I even saw some of them in tears. One, I noticed, had a swollen foot. I went on urging everyone to ignore the warder and carry on as best he could. I too, got exhausted. There were large blisters on my palms and the lymph was oozing out of them. I was praying to God all the time to save my honour so that I might not break down. The warder started rebuking me. He did so because I was resting. Just then I observed Mr. Jhinabhai Desai fainting away. I paused a little, not being allowed to leave the place of work. The warder went to the spot. I found that I too must go and I ran. (*Indian Opinion,* 09-01-1909).

They splashed water on the fainted Jhinabhai and revived him. Jhinabhai was taken to his cell by cab. That hot day repeated itself on Robben Island in the early sixties.

We, like Gandhi's Indians, had been working at a brisk pace for three hours one day, when fatigue set in and some of us stopped to stretch our bodies. The warder was on to us, swearing and shouting. Then he turned to Steven Tefu, old enough to be his grandfather, very erudite, highly educated, and shouted at him, "Get on boy!"

Tefu drew together his dignity and reprimanded the warder in high Dutch, thoroughly confusing him. The outcome for Tefu was better than that for Jhinabhai.

As was the experience of Gandhi, we were marched off to work in groups of 30. He writes,

> "At seven, work starts. On the first day, we had to dig up the soil in a field near the main road for purposes of cultivation." (*Indian Opinion,* 29-5-1909).

They quarried stones and carried them on their heads. We worked on the lime quarries, and the sun shining on the whiteness blinded our eyes. There were times when Gandhi agonised and wondered whether he had done the right thing by exposing his compatriots to the pain and indignity, but his firm conviction came to his rescue.

> "If to bear suffering is in itself a kind of happiness, there is no need to be worried by it. Seeing that our sole duty was to break free from our fetters by enduring every hardship rather than remaining bound for life, I felt light in the heart and tried to instill courage in the others."

African Prisoners

During his imprisonment in Pretoria, all his fellow prisoners were Africans (Natives as they were then referred to, even by ourselves), and they, seeing him so different from them, were curious to know what he was doing in prison. Had he stolen, or dealt in liquor?

He explained that he had refused to carry a pass. They understood that perfectly well. "Quite right," they said to him, "the white people are bad." Gandhi had been initially shocked that Indians were classified with Natives in prison; his prejudices were quite obvious, but he was reacting not to "Natives", but criminalised Natives.

He believed that Indians should have been kept separately. However, there was an ambivalence in his attitude for he stated,

> "It was, however, as well that we were classed with the Natives. It was a welcome opportunity to see the treatment meted out to Natives, their conditions (of life in gaol), and their habits."

All in all, Gandhi must be forgiven those prejudices and judged in the context of the time and the circumstances. We are looking here at the young Gandhi, still to become

Mahatma, when he was without any human prejudice, save that in favour of truth and justice.

Confrontations with Criminals

Political prisoners are prisoners of conscience, and as such, very different from other prisoners. The two are bound to meet and mix and the experience can have unpleasant consequences. Gandhi had such experiences, so did I. After my first conviction, I was transported to Pretoria prison in a closed van with a member of the notorious Msomi Gang and as the van reeled and lurched, I was swung against him. I could not trust the man for I feared he was a police plant.

Gandhi writes about a night he spent in Johannesburg prison in 1909. His fellow prisoners appeared to be wild and murderous and given to "unnatural ways". "Two of them tried to engage him in conversation. When he couldn't understand them, they jeered and laughed at him. Then the one retreated to a bed where another prisoner was lying. The two exchanged obscene jokes, uncovering each other's genitals." *(Indian Opinion,* 1909)

On another occasion, he was assaulted by a prisoner in a lavatory.

> The lavatories have open access. There are no doors. As soon as I had occupied one of them, there came along a strong, heavily-built, fearful-looking Native. He asked me to get out and started abusing me. I said I would leave very soon. Instantly, he lifted me up in his arms and threw me out. Fortunately, I caught hold of the door frame and saved myself from a fall. *(Indian Opinion,* 1909)

Gandhi and I shared one great good fortune - we were very much in the public eye and once it got out that some undue suffering or indignity was heaped on us, there was public reaction. The assault on Gandhi became an issue of protest in India and the British parliament and from some liberal white quarters in South Africa.

Solitary Confinement

Gandhi suffered solitary confinement in Johannesburg in 1908 and in Pretoria in 1909, not because he was defiant and uncooperative: Gandhi was a model prisoner; but because the authorities wanted to separate him from his comrades: they feared his influence upon them. His cell was 70 square feet, the floor was covered with pitch, at night there was a constant dim light and the warders switched it on and off four to six times as a warning that they were around. The cell was completely bare. He paced the floor, up and down, and the warder shouted at him, *"Gandhi, stop walking about like that, my floor is being spoilt." "Even when I went for evacuation, a warder stood by to keep watch. If by chance he* did *not know me, he would shout, Sam come out now."* Every Indian man was referred to as Sam, or Sammy in those days and much after, even as every African male was John: every African woman was Annie and every Indian woman, Mary.

I recall my own periods in solitary confinement and they were no different. The worst aspect of solitary confinement, apart from being cut off from human company is the deprivation of exercise and fresh air. It tells on your health. You are given hard labour in your cell, instead of going out with the prison gang. Gandhi's hard labour was sewing together worn out blankets and being the person he was, he tackled it with meticulous care, sitting on the floor and bending over his work, week after week. He developed severe neuralgia and his lungs were infected, but he never shirked his duty.

Gandhi taught himself Tamil in prison, I taught myself Afrikaans. Gandhi writes that one of the most important benefits he derived from being in prison was that he got the opportunity to read books. He read voraciously, whenever he could, even standing below the dim globe, snatching whatever light he could. In three months, he read 30 books, ranging from works by European philosophers like Thoreau to religious scriptures, like the Koran, Bible, Gita, and Upanishads. He read in English and Gujarati. Books were also my refuge, when I was allowed them. Gandhi writes that they rescued the mind from wandering off “like a monkey" and dwelling on unpleasant thoughts. The worst punishments are those unpleasant thoughts, concerns over families, about those who are ill and those in want. Both Gandhi and I went through periods when our spouses were also in prison. On several occasions, his sons, Harilal and Manilal, were also in prison.

Gandhi's most painful experience must have been when he was told that his wife, Kasturbai, was critically ill. He was given the option to pay his fine and rush to her bedside. His commitment to satyagraha would not allow him to do so. He wrote her a letter in Gujarati - it was embargoed by the prison authorities because they couldn't read Gujarati. He had to content himself with sending her a message in his letter to his son. My most trying times in prison were when my son was killed in an accident and when my mother died. I mourned alone.

So endured Gandhi the prisoner at the beginning of our century. Though separated in time, there remains a bond between us, in our shared prison experiences, our defiance of unjust laws and in the fact that violence threatens our aspirations for peace and reconciliation.

INDIA AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID

[Paper written at the request of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid for a special meeting in
honour of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, in October 1985. Published by the United Nations Centre against Apartheid and reprinted in London and New Delhi.]

1. Introduction

India's contribution to the struggle against apartheid has been highly praised by the leaders of the freedom movement in South Africa. Nelson Mandela, the outstanding leader of that movement, paid a handsome tribute to India and its leaders in a letter smuggled out of Robben island prison in 1980. Great appreciation has also been expressed by African leaders for the role of India since 1946 in promoting international support for the freedom struggle in South Africa, and its many actions and initiatives in solidarity with the oppressed people of thatcountry.

While such expressions of appreciation are most gratifying, it must be emphasised that the contribution by the Government and people of India to the freedom movement in South Africa is more than an act of solidarity. It has deep roots in India's own struggle for freedom and dignity.

The humiliations and indignities to which the people of Indian origin were subjected in South Africa, and the struggle for their human dignity led by Mahatma Gandhi, have had a great influence on the Indian national movement.

Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, it had developed an international outlook, espousing uncompromising opposition to colonialism and racism and recognising that India's own freedom was meaningless unless all the peoples under colonial and racist domination were free. It felt a particular affinity with the freedom movements in South Africa and other African countries.

Soon after assuming office as Prime Minister in the Interim Government of India, Pandit Nehru declared at a press conference on September 27, 1946: The kernel of our policy is the ending of colonialism all over Asia, or for that matter, in Africa and elsewhere and racial equality ... and the end of domination or exploitation of one nation by another."

This, he stressed, was the only way to bring about world peace and progress. While India was concerned with the treatment of people of Indian origin in South Africa as an affront to the dignity and honour of the nation, he saw the issue in the context of even greater oppression of the African majority.

India, therefore, took the lead in ensuring United Nations consideration of apartheid and in promoting solidarity with all the oppressed people. The Government and people of India have entertained great respect for the liberation movement in South Africa and its

leaders, and have been unequivocal in support of their struggle. The contributions made in that cause, and in implementation of the United Nations resolutions, were never regarded as a sacrifice but as a national duty. It may be useful to trace the evolution of India's concern and commitment, not only for an understanding of the role of India, but also for pointing to the lessons of its long experience of solidarity with the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

2. Gandhiji in South Africa

> "The oldest existing political organisation in South Africa, the Natal Indian Congress, was founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1894. He became its first secretary and in 21 years of his stay in South Africa we were to witness the birth of ideas and methods of struggle that have exerted an incalculable influence on the history of the peoples of India and South Africa. Indeed it was on South African soil that Mahatmaji founded and embraced the philosophy of *Satyagraha*." – Nelson Mandela in a letter from prison in 1980

After the abolition of slavery, the British settlers in the Natal arranged with the Indian Government to recruit indentured labour for their sugar, tea and coffee plantations. Thousands of poor and illiterate Indians were enticed to go to South Africa with promises of attractive wages and repatriation after five years or the right to settle in Natal as free men. The first indentured labourers reached Natal on November 6, 1860. They were soon followed by traders and their assistants.

After some time, the whites faced serious competition from the traders, as well as the labourers who became successful market gardeners after the expiry of their indenture. They began an agitation to make it impossible for Indians to live in Natal except in semi-slavery as indentured labourers. In 1893, when Natal was granted self-government, the Government began to enact a series of discriminatory and restrictive measures against the free Indians.

The Indian traders who had settled in the Boer Republic of Transvaal were also subjected to similar discrimination, while Indians were excluded from the Orange Free State. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a young and diffident barrister, arrived in South Africa in 1893 to represent an Indian trader in Natal in a civil suit against an Indian trading firm in Pretoria. Within days, he encountered bitter humiliations such as being pushed out of a train and being assaulted for walking on a footpath. The experience steeled him: he decided never to accept or be resigned to injustice and racism, but to resist.

He helped found the Natal Indian Congress in 1894, bringing together Indians of all classes, speaking a variety of languages, into one organisation to struggle for their rights. It was the first mass organisation in South Africa.

Proceeding to India in 1896, he travelled all over the country publicising the situation in South Africa, meeting leaders of the Indian National Congress, editors and others. When he returned to Durban in January 1897, he was brutally assaulted by a white mob and barely escaped lynching. The incident was widely reported in India and England, and the British Government was obliged to instruct the Natal authorities to take action against his assailants. Gandhiji refused to prosecute them and went on with his work.

When the Anglo-Boer War broke out in 1899, the British Government gave as one of the reasons the discrimination against British subjects of Indian origin in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Gandhiji organised an ambulance corps on the British side, though he felt sympathy for the Afrikaners. At the end of the war, however, the British administrators enforced more stringent restrictions on the Indians in the Transvaal.

In 1907, the Transvaal Government enacted the "Black Act" (Asiatic Registration Act) requiring compulsory registration and finger-printing of Indians. The Indian community defied the law under the leadership of Gandhiji, and many were imprisoned in this first *Satyagraha* (non-violent resistance) launched by him.Within a few months, General Smuts agreed to release the prisoners and repealthe Act in return for voluntary registration by the Indians.

But the Government broke the promise and maintained the Act, though with some amendments, so the Indian community resumed the struggle in 1908. Thousands of Indians burnt their registration certificates. The *Satyagraha* continued this time for several years as the white authorities, who were negotiating for "selfgovernment", resorted to harassment rather than mass arrests.

Gandhiji went in a deputation of Indians to Britain in 1909 to oppose the granting of self-government to South Africa under white rule, and met with many members of Parliament and public figures. But the British Government ignored the pleas of the Indians - and, indeed, of the African majority - and transferred power to the white minority in 1910.

Meanwhile, the *Satyagraha* received wide attention in India. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a prominent national leader with whom Gandhiji was in constant communication, initiated a debate in the Legislative Council of India and secured a resolution in 1911 to prohibit recruitment of indentured labour for Natal.

Subsequently, with British encouragement, Gokhale visited South Africa in 1912 and met Generals Botha and Smuts who undertook to repeal the Black Act and abolish the poll-tax. But again the undertaking was not kept. Moreover, the Indian community was infuriated at a judgement of the Cape Supreme Court in 1913 declaring all marriages, other than those according to Christian rites and registered with the Registrar of Marriages, beyond the pale of law in South Africa.

Gandhiji then revived the *Satyagraha* on a much bigger scale, inviting women and indentured labourers to join. Tens of thousands of workers in the Newcastle coal mines and in plantations on the Natal coast went on strike and defied brutal police violence. Thousands of Indians went to jail.

Public opinion in India reacted strongly and even Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, criticised the South African Government and expressed his "deep and burning" sympathy for the *Satyagrahis*. There were also protests in Britain.

As a result, General Smuts reached an agreement with Gandhiji in January 1914 repealing the poll-tax and validating Indian marriages. This was a compromise, as other discriminatory measures remained, but provided some security for the Indian community. Gandhiji suspended the *Satyagraha* and left South Africa in July 1914.2

The experience of Gandhiji in South Africa had a tremendous influence in India, and he was hailed as a "Mahatma" as he proceeded to develop the Indian National Congress as a mass movement leading to the independence of the country.

In South Africa, despite his great respect and sympathy for the Africans, his political activities were confined essentially to the Indian community as it was in a particularly vulnerable position. His influence on the freedom movement in that country was, therefore, by example. But as Oliver Tambo said in New Delhi on November 14, 1980: "His imprint on the course of the South African struggle is indelible."

Gandhiji, moreover, was a great publicist who recognised that while the success of *Satyagraha* depended primarily on the courage and sacrifice of the resisters, it should obtain the understanding and sympathy of public opinion. He attracted the support of a number of whites in South Africa who soon became supporters of the African cause. Public opinion in India was aroused as on few other issues.

Gandhiji also helped promote awareness of South African racism in Britain. Before leaving South Africa, Gandhiji sent as a gift to General Smuts a pair of sandals he had made in jail. Recalling this in 1939, General Smuts wrote: "I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then, even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man."

Gandhiji was also in frequent correspondence with people in other countries, including Count Leo Tolstoy, who wrote to him:

> "And so your activity in Transvaal, as it seems to us, at the end of the world, is the most essential work now being done in the world, and in which not only the nations of the Christian but of all the world will undoubtedly take part."

The efforts of Gandhiji thus helped to attract international attention to the issue of racism in South Africa long before the United Nations began considering the matter.

3. Solidarity of Freedom Movements

"... there is a real moral bond between Asiatics and Africans. It will grow as time passes." - Mahatma Gandhi in *Harijan*, February 24, 1946

> "It would be a grave omission on our part if we failed to mention the close bonds that have existed between our people and the people of India, and to acknowledge the encouragement, the inspiration and the practical assistance we have received as a result of the international outlook of the All India Congress."- Nelson Mandela in his letter from prison in 1980.

Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian National Congress developed a strong international outlook, with the elimination of colonialism and racism all over the world as the foremost concern, and established contacts with freedom movements in other countries. Africa had a special place, partly because of the concern of Mahatma Gandhi.

Pandit Nehru, for his part, was always passionate in denouncing the humiliation of Africa and felt that Asia had a duty to help Africa regain its dignity and freedom. He said in his address to the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi on March 23, 1947: "We of Asia have a special responsibility to the people of Africa. We must help them to their rightful place in the human family."

And in his concluding statement at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung on April 24, 1955, he declared:

> We have passed resolutions about conditions in this or that country. But I think there is nothing more terrible than the infinite tragedy of Africa in the past few hundred years. Everything else pales into insignificance when I think of the infinite tragedy of Africa ever since the days when millions of Africans were carried away as galley slaves to America and elsewhere, half of them dying in the galleys... even now the tragedy of Africa is greater than that of any

> other continent, whether it is racial or political. It is up to Asia to help Africa to the best of her ability because we are sister continents.

There were friendly contacts between Indian and African leaders during the course of their struggles for freedom.3 Both Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru repeatedly stressed the solidarity of Asian and African peoples and advised the Indians in Africa to identify with the African majority. One of the first acts of Pandit Nehru, after becoming Prime Minister in the Interim Government of India, was to send instructions to Indian envoys in Africa that India did not want Indians to have any special privileges at the cost of Africans anywhere. He called upon the Indians to co-operate with Africans in order to gain freedom for Africans.

The Indian national movement, which began in the 1880s, and the South African national movement, which began three decades later, developed on parallel lines - in organisation, forms of resistance and ideology - in protracted struggles against powerful forces. India had, therefore, a special appreciation of the concerns and aspirations of the latter.

The bond between the national movements of India and South Africa became stronger during the Second World War. The Indians in South Africa were no longer recent immigrants, but were born in South Africa and developed deep roots in that country. With the encouragement of the Indian national movement, they recognised that their destiny was linked to that of the African majority and increasingly participated in joint struggles against racist measures. The militants - from Gandhians to Marxists - under the leadership of Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. Monty Naicker, took over leadership of the community by the end of the war, from the so-called "moderates" who were compromising with the racist regime, and entered into a pact with the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) in 1947.

Moreover, while the Allies professed to be fighting for freedom, Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, made it clear that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to India, while General Smuts, the South African Prime Minister acclaimed in the West as a liberal, was equally determined that equality was not for the blacks. Freedom had to be wrenched by struggle in both countries.

For instance, Indian leaders attended the All Races Conference held in London in 1911 together with African leaders of South Africa. Pandit Nehru represented the Indian National Congress at the International Congress against Imperialism held in Brussels in 1929. This conference was also attended by Mr. Josiah Gumede, the President of the African National Congress of South Africa. The India League in London maintained

close contact with African exiles in London and several Indians attended the Pan African Congress held in Manchester in 1945.

In India, the national movement launched the final assault against colonial rule in 1942 - the "Quit India" movement under the slogan "do or die". In South Africa, the African Youth League was established by young militants calling for "positive action": Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, who are still leading the struggle, were among its founders.

4. Complaint to the United Nations in 1946

"In South Africa racialism is the State doctrine and our people are putting up a heroic struggle against the tyranny of a racial minority. If this racial doctrine is going to be tolerated, it must inevitably lead to vast conflicts and world disaster..." - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in a broadcast on September 7, 1946

India's complaint to the United Nations in 1946 on racial discrimination against Indians in South Africa was made even before the establishment of a national Government, because of strong public sentiment in the country.

The Smuts-Gandhi agreement of 1914 had given only a respite to the Indian South Africans. Anti-Indian agitation was revived by the whites after the First World War, and the Union Government introduced new discriminatory measures in violation of the agreement. After protests from India, talks were held between the colonial Government of India and the Union Government: a compromise was reached in the Cape Town Agreement of 1927 and confirmed by a joint communiqué of 1932. These agreements were also virtually repudiated by South Africa.

In 1943, Natal passed the "Pegging Act", restricting the right of Asians to acquire land. Then, in 1946, the Union Government passed the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act to segregate Indians in trade and residence. The Indian community launched a passive resistance campaign on June 13, 1946. Many Indian men and women were imprisoned by the police or assaulted by white gangsters.

In response to public pressure in India, the Government of India felt obliged to request the United Nations General Assembly, in a letter of June 22, 1946, to consider the question of the treatment of Indians in the Union of South Africa. On July 7, 1946, it prohibited exports to or imports from the Union of South Africa.

At that time, South Africa accounted for 5.5 per cent of India's exports, and about 1.5 per cent of India's imports. The Interim Government was established on September 1, 1946, before the*8* General Assembly session, with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime

Minister. The new Government made sure to emphasise the wider context of the dispute between India and the Union of South Africa. It resisted moves by Western Powers to deal with the Indian complaint as a legal problem and insisted on its consideration as a political matter.

Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Chairman of the Indian delegation to the General Assembly in 1946, said in her opening statement:

> "... The way this Assembly treats and disposes of this issue is open to the gaze, not only of those gathered here, but of millions of people in the world, the progressive peoples of all countries, more particularly the non-European peoples of the world - who ... are an overwhelming section of the human race ... The issue we have brought before you is by no means a narrow or local one. ... The bitter memories of racial doctrines in the practice of States and Governments are still fresh in the minds of all of us. Their evil and tragic consequences are part of the problems with which we are called upon to deal ... India firmly believes that imperialism, political, economic or social, in whatever part of the world it may exist and by whomsoever it may be established and perpetuated, is totally inconsistent with the objects and purposes of the United Nations and its Charter.

During the session, a multiracial delegation from South Africa led by Dr. A.B. Xuma, President-General of the ANC, and including Mr. H.A. Naidoo and Mr. Sorabji Rustomji of the Indian Congresses and Mr. H.M. Basner, a Senator representing African voters, arrived in New York. The Indian delegation constantly consulted them and enabled them to contact many Governments. Mr. V.K. Krishna Menon, a member of the delegation, shared the platform with them on November 17, 1946, at a public meeting in the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem.

Because of the composition of the United Nations at the time, with most Asian and African nations still under colonial domination, it was with great difficulty that India was able to secure a two-thirds majority for a resolution on its complaint.

At the same session, India played an active role in opposing and frustrating the manoeuvres of the South African Government to annex South West Africa (now Namibia). It strongly supported a resolution moved by Poland and Egypt against religious and so-called racial discrimination. India became the target of vicious propaganda by the South African Government and earned the disfavour of its Western friends.The annual discussions of the Indian complaint built up a sentiment against racial discrimination in South Africa, and against apartheid, which became the official policy after the National Party came to power in 1948.

5. Initiative on Apartheid

On June 26, 1952, the ANC, the South African Indian Congress and the Coloured People's Organisation launched a non-violent "Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws" in which 8,000 people of all races were imprisoned forcontravention of discriminatory laws.

India, together with 12 other Asian and Arab States, called on the General Assembly to consider the wider issue under the title "question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the Government of the Union of South Africa". Their explanatory memorandum deserves to be recalled.

They said:

> The race conflict in the Union of South Africa resulting from the policies of apartheid of the South African Government is creating a dangerous and explosive situation, which constitutes both a threat to international peace and a flagrant violation of the basic principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms which are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.
>
> Although Africa's importance in world affairs is increasing rapidly, many parts of that continent still remain subject to racial discrimination and exploitation. The founding of the United Nations and the acceptance by the Member States of the obligations embodied in the Charter have given to peoples of these areas new hope and encouragement in their efforts to acquire basic human rights. But, in direct opposition to the trend of world opinion, the policy of the Government of the Union of South Africa is designed to establish and to perpetuate every form of racial discrimination which must inevitably result in intense and bitter racial conflict...
>
> a social system is being evolved under which the non-whites, who constitute 80 per cent of the population of the Union of South Africa, will be kept in a permanently inferior state to the white minority. Such a policy challenges all that the United Nations stands for and clearly violates the basic and fundamental objectives of the Charter of the United Nations..."It is therefore imperative that the General Assembly give this question its urgent consideration in order to prevent an already dangerous situation from deteriorating further and to bring about a settlement in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter."

To stress the importance attached by India to this issue, leaders of the Indian delegation personally led the annual debates until 1957 (when, with the independence of Ghana,

India requested Ghana to take the lead). For, India recognised apartheid as a unique and grave menace to peace, rather than one of many human rights violations in the world.

Pandit Nehru said in the Lok Sabha in April 1958: "There are many conflicts which divide the world and this question of racial conflict in South Africa is as grave as any other issue. "In South Africa, it is the deliberate, acknowledged and loudly proclaimed policy of the Government itself to maintain this segregation and racial discrimination. This makes the South African case unique in the world. It is a policy with which obviously no person and no country which believes in the United Nations Charter can ever compromise, because it uproots almost everything the modern world stands for and considers worthwhile, whether it is the United Nations Charter or whether it is our ideas of democracy or of human dignity."

While the original Indian complaint remained on the agenda of the General Assembly for several years, Pandit Nehru recognised that it had become part of the larger issue. He said in a speech in Rajya Sabha on December 15, 1958:

> The question of the people of Indian descent in South Africa has really merged into bigger questions where not only Indians are affected but the whole African population along with... any other people who happen to go to South Africa and who do not belong to European or American countries.

He said in the Lok Sabha on March 28, 1960, a week after the Sharpeville massacre:

> "The people of Indian descent in South Africa, as we all know, have had to put up with a great deal of discrimination and suffering and we have resented that. But we must remember that the African people have to put up with something infinitely more and that, therefore, our sympathies must go out to them even more than to our kith and kin there."

The two items were merged in 1962 under the title "Policies of apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa". India joined the African States in calling for Security Council discussion of apartheid after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. It co-sponsored the General Assembly resolution of 1962 urging all States to impose sanctions against South *11* Africa and establishing the Special Committee against Apartheid.

In the specialised agencies of the United Nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Commonwealth, as well as in numerous other organisations and

forums, India was active in calling for the isolation of the apartheid regime and support for the liberation struggle.

6. Support to Africa

> "... we regard Nelson Mandela as one of the foremost proponents of freedom - freedom of man. We regard him also a friend of India. We admire him. We have honoured him as one of our own heroes and our thoughts are often with him and his family..." - Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in an address to the African Students Association in New Delhi, January 11, 1982.

> "This is the time when all the non-white people of South Africa, and even those sections among the whites who oppose apartheid should close their ranks and fight unitedly to vanquish the racist policies. The people of India will be with them." - Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, in a statement on August 16, 1985

By the early 1960s, the independent African States were able to take over the responsibility for promoting support to peoples fighting against colonial and racist domination, recognising that their cause was that of the entire continent. India lent full support to African States and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). It set an example by scrupulously implementing the resolutions of the United Nations and other international organisations. It also provided substantial assistance to the oppressed people of South Africa and their freedom movement.

Thus, while India gladly handed over leadership to African States, its role was hardly passive. In recent years, India has been obliged to assume a more active role, with the encouragement of African States, because of its chairmanship of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the difficulties encountered by African States.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi had personal knowledge of the humiliation of Africans and Asians in South Africa as she was obliged to stop in South Africa in 1940-41 on her way home from England. She was passionate in her hatred of apartheid and entertained great respect for the leaders of the resistance. She told the African Students Association in New Delhi on January 11, 1982:

> The decade of the eighties may well decide the destiny of southern Africa. The African people must win. And we, in India, reiterate our total support to you.

7. Some Observations

India has been privileged to play a special role in support of the long and difficult struggle of the black majority in South Africa for freedom and human dignity. Solidarity with the South African movement is an issue on which all segments of public opinion in India are united.

Having gone through a long struggle for independence, India has always entertained faith in the triumph of the liberation struggle in South Africa. It also showed full understanding, in the light of her own experience, when the freedom movement in South Africa was obliged to abandon strict adherence to nonviolence.

India's long experience with South Africa has influenced its approach to apartheid. For India, the distinction between colonial and racial problems in southern Africa has little basis. In South Africa, racism became "State" policy because the colonial Power, ignoring the pleas of the African majority and the Indian population, handed over power to a white minority intent on reinforcing racist domination and exploitation.

India is also not influenced by propaganda describing Afrikaners as racists and English-speaking whites as liberals. For, the Indians in South Africa suffered discrimination from the English-speaking whites in Natal as much as from the Afrikaners in the Transvaal.

Aware of the long record of breaches of undertakings by the racist authorities, India fully appreciates that the black people can have little faith in so-called "reforms" by the apartheid regime. It rejects appeasement of the racist regime and recognises that the transition to a non-racial society will need to be under the leadership of the genuine leaders of the people.

As Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said on August 19, 1985:

> South Africa must be made to see reason. It must be made to release Nelson Mandela unconditionally. The only way this can be done is to isolate totally the racists. It is futile to hope that co-operation in any manner with that regime will give anyone leverage or influence, so as to change things for the better.

While the experience of India is perhaps unique, it has relevance for other States that have been seized with the problem of apartheid, at least since the United Nations began to discuss it in 1952. South Africa is a microcosm of the world with people of different national and racial origins. The racist regime in that country has been pursuing a criminal, indeed suicidal policy, while the freedom movement has consistently espoused

the need to establish a just and non-racial society in the interests of all the people of that country.

India, with a million people in South Africa tracing their origin to it, has made a clear choice in total support of the liberation struggle. Why is it that other countries of origin - especially of the white minority - are unwilling to make such a choice and act accordingly? Why is it that some of them even use their historic links as a justification for collusion with apartheid to the detriment of all the people of South Africa?

India, a poor country, gave up over 5 per cent of its export trade in 1946 to demonstrate its repugnance of racism in South Africa. Why is it that the major trading partners of South Africa are unwilling to give up their trade with South Africa, which amounts to one per cent or less of their total trade? Are they less committed to the struggle against racism?

The leaders of India have educated public opinion on the situation in South Africa and secured widest public support for all measures recommended by the United Nations. Why is it that Governments in the West are still resisting demands of public opinion in their own countries for action against apartheid?

India, a country which suffered from alien domination and exploitation, has accepted responsibility to assist Africa in its striving for total emancipation fromcenturies of humiliation. Why is it that Governments of countries that ravaged and plundered Africa seem unwilling to shoulder their moral responsibility?

It is to be hoped that the heroic struggle now being waged by the men, women and children of all racial origins in South Africa will persuade the Governments concerned to reassess their positions and contribute fully to the international efforts for the eradication of apartheid.

October 1985

GANDHI AND THE FORMATION OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICA

by E. S. Reddy

The birth of the African National Congress a century ago, on January 8, 1912, was a landmark in the history of Africa, marking the beginning of the end of centuries of exploitation and humiliation of the continent. It received hardly any attention at the time internationally or from the white establishment in South Africa.

M.K. Gandhi, who was then looking after the families of prisoners and ex-prisoners at the Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg, during a lull in the passive resistance movement in the Transvaal, hailed the event as representing "the awakening of Africa."

He had become a non-violent revolutionary and a mass leader in 1906 when he realised the futility of mere petitions and deputations to the racist white authorities against oppressive laws and regulations. He decided to defy the imposition of passes and immigration restrictions against the Indians in the Transvaal and led the passive resistance movement in which about a third of adult Indian males in the Transvaal went to prison.

He had already ceased to limit his attention to the status of the Indian community and his newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, began to denounce the increasing oppression of the African people, "the sons of the soil." At a meeting of the YMCA in Johannesburg on May 18, 1908, he described his vision for the future of South Africa:

> "If we look into the future, is it not a heritage we have to leave to posterity that all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not yet seen?"

But the leaders of the white minority – the Boers and the Britons – had a different vision. They wished to unite South Africa into a Union and turn it into a country of the whites where the great majority of the people would only serve their needs. Gandhi foresaw, as the African leaders did, the consequences of this diabolic plan and desribed the Union as a union against the non-white people of the country.

After Britain approved the formation of the Union of South Africa, thereby handing over power to the white minority, ignoring the appeals and betraying the trust of the African and Coloured people, four African attorneys in Johannesburg decided to convene a conference of all the African organisations in the country to form a national congress to defend African rights. The initiative for the project was taken by Pixley ka Izaka Seme.

Seme was born in Inanda, near Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement, and he must have known of Gandhi who had been an attorney in Johannesburg before he decided to devote all his energies to the passive resistance movement.

It has become known recently from the memoirs of Pauline Podlashuk, who translated for Gandhi the last letter he had received from Count Tolstoy, that Seme visited Gandhi at the Tolstoy Farm in 1911 and had a long discussion during which Gandhi explained the Indian passive resistance movement.[1]

On July 29, 1911, Gandhi's newspaper, *Indian Opinion,* reported an interview with Seme on the progress of plans for the conference, which was held in Bloemfontein from 8 to 11 January 1912. The conference established the South African Native National Congress (later renamed the African National Congress).. The Reverend John Langalibalele Dube of Natal, founder of the Ohlange Industrial School, was elected President in his absence. Dube then sent a letter to "Chiefs and Gentlemen of the South African Native National Congress" accepting the honour and published it in his newspaper *Ilange Nase Natal* on February 2, 1912. *Indian Opinion* reproduced an extract from his letter in its issue of February 10, 1912, under the title "The Awakening of Africa." It referred to Dube as "our friend and neighbor" and called the letter a manifesto.[2]

Podlashuk, Pauline. *The Adventure of Life: reminiscences of Pauline Podlashuk*. Edited by Effie Seftel and Judy Nasatyr. Johannesburg: Pan MacMillan, 2010. Miss Podlashuk and Mr. Seme happened to go on the same train in the morning to visit Gandhi at the Tolstoy Farm. They returned to Johannesburg by the last train.

[2] The Ohlange Industrial School was near the Phoenix Settlement.

The importance attached by Gandhi to this African congress was demonstrated later in the same year. In October, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a highly respected leader of the Indian national movement and a member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council, visited South Africa at the invitation of Gandhi. The South African Government was encouraged by Britain to treat him with due respect. He was provided with a special railway car. Meetings held in several cities to welcome him were attended by many whites and addressed by Mayors. He was received by the Prime Minister, Louis Botha. During his short visit to Durban, with a heavy schedule of meetings, Gandhi took him on November 11, 1912, to Ohlange to meet the Reverend John L. Dube, now the first President of the SANNC. Gokhale received a warm welcome from the staff and students at the Industrial School and spent some time discussing the "Native question" with Dube. *Ilange Nase Natal* reported the event on November 15 under the headline "Our Distinguished Visitor."

As Anil Nauriya observed:

> "The occasion is surcharged with historical significance. Eight decades before the complete independence of South Africa, a past and a future President of the Indian National Congress (Gokhale had been President of the Congress in 1905; Gandhi became President in 1924), were calling on the leader of the African National Congress."[3]

In 1913, when the Natives Land Act was passed by the Union Parliament, Gandhi was vehement in his denunciation. An editorial in *Indian Opinion* declared:

> The Natives Land Act of the Union Parliament has created consternation among the Natives. Indeed, every other question, not excluding the Indian question, pales into insignificance before the great Native question. This land is theirs by birth and this Act of confiscation – for such it is – is likely to give rise to serious consequences.[4]

[3] Anil Nauriya, *The African Element in Gandhi*,(National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi, 2006), pages 44-45.

[4] *Indian Opinion*, August 30, 1913.

1913 was also the year of passive resistance by African, Coloured and Indian people in South Africa.

In June, African and Coloured women in the Free State began passive resistance against a new law requiring them to carry passes. They were supported by the SANNC. The authorities were eventually forced to abandon passes for women.

A few weeks later, in September, the Indian community began resistance, especially against an onerous tax imposed on Indian indentured labourers on the completion of their contracts and the non-recognition of Indian marriages. It developed into a general strike involving tens of thousands of workers in the mines, cane fields, and railways. This campaign was also significant for the participation of women and their heroism. Kasturba, wife of Mahatma Gandhi, was in the first batch of resisters.

Passive resistance and participation of women in the struggle for freedom thus became a common heritage of South Africa and India.

HOW THE "LONG WALK TO FREEDOM" BEGAN

E. S. Reddy

In March 1939, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote a series of eight articles which were reprinted in a pamphlet and later included in his book *The Unity of India* (London, 1941). Nelson Mandela read it when he was a student at the University of Witwatersrand, where he had several Indian friends. He was greatly impressed and later read Nehru's autobiography. He could recite long passages from Nehru's writings even in 1991 when I met him at Luthuli House.

At the end of the last article, Nehru wrote:

> There is no easy walk-over to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow again and again before we reach the mountain-tops of our desire … Danger and difficulties have not deterred us in the past; they will not frighten us now. But we must be prepared for them like men who mean business and who do not waste their energy in vain talk and idle action. The way of preparation lies in our rooting out all impurity and indiscipline from our organisation and making it the bright and shining instrument that will cleave its way to India's freedom." (*The Unity of India*, page 132; *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, New Delhi, Volume 9, page 520).

Nehru had been concerned with the "sorrow and tragedy" in the world with the rise of fascism – in Abyssinia, Spain, China, Palestine - and with problems which had arisen in the Indian national movement.

In 1953, Mandela ended his Presidential speech to the Transvaal African National Congress with the words:

> You can see that there is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow again and again before we reach the mountaintops of our desires …"Dangers and difficulties have not deterred us in the past. They will not frighten us now. But we must be prepared for them like men in business who do not waste energy in vain talk and idle action."

That was after the non-violent Defiance Campaign which had greatly expanded the membership and influence of the ANC, and built cooperation across "racial" lines in the struggle against apartheid tyranny. But the campaign had to be discontinued because of

the new repressive laws by the apartheid regime. Mandela sensed that new methods of struggle must be explored.

In 1965, Ruth First edited a collection of Mandela's speeches and the book, published by Heinemann in London, was entitled *The Long Walk to Freedom*. That was the title of Mandela's autobiography and of the movie released a few days before he passed away.

Two nations across the sea, two protracted and intertwined struggles for freedom and two great leaders. It is not surprising that India bestowed on Mandela the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding, the first international award he received while in prison, and, on his release, the highest national award *Bharat Ratna* (Jewel of India). He was the only person not of Indian origin to receive that award.

It is not surprising that the masses of people of India mourn the passing away of Mandela as if he was their own. The *New York Times* yesterday featured on its front page the photo of the mourners in Chennai, the city where I went to college and got my political education in the national movement while studying Mathematics.

The New York Times

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2013

BABU/REUTERS

TRIBUTE IN INDIA Children in the southern city of Chennai at a prayer ceremony on Friday for Nelson Mandela, who died Thursday.