

thousands of Indians settled in South Africa will be deprived of the security of residence in South Africa for which they fought for eight years and which they thought they had won. At least a quarter of the Indian settlers of South Africa are subjects of the Baroda and the Kathiawar states. If any law considers them as aliens, surely it has to be altered. It is an insult to the states and their subjects to treat the latter as aliens.

### INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

*In 1919 the Transvaal legislature passed laws restricting the then Indian traders and their successors to particular Townships. The disabilities of Indian traders multiplied and became the subject of an acute agitation and threatened to revive passive resistance. On receipt of a cable early in August, 1919, from the British Indian Association, Natal, Mr. Gandhi wrote as follows in the Indian Review :—*

I have just received the following cablegram from Mr. Ibrahim Ismail Aswat, Chairman of the British Indian Association, Johannesburg :

"Bill assented 23rd June, promulgated 3rd instant. Restricts companies acquiring further fixed properties and holding bonds as prior to company law. Re-affirms Gold and Townships Acts operating on new licensees after 1st May and restricting present traders and successors to particular townships. Deputation waiting His Excellency urging withhold assent on ground class legislation. Government promised another commission during recess investigate Indian question throughout Union as concession to the detractors in Parliament. Fear further restrictive legislation. Community request you appeal Viceroy propose Royal Commission. India representing Union local Indian interests. Convened Union Indian Conference 4th August, great success. Decided united action. Many of the association pledged resist any cost.—Aswat."





The cablegram bears out what I have said in my letter to Sir George Barnes\* and what I said at the recent meeting at Poona. The restrictions are clear—1. No further holding of landed property in the Transvaal; 2. No new trade licences within the area affected by the Gold Law and the Townships Act; 3 the present holders and their successors in title to be restricted as to trade to the townships in which they are now trading.

As I have already remarked, this means virtual ruin of the Indian settlers in the Transvaal. Their only means of livelihood to the largest number is trade, and the largest number of Indians is to be found probably within the gold area. If the Act stands, they must die out in the natural course.

*\* In the course of the correspondence between Mr. Gandhi and Sir George Barnes, Mr. Gandhi wrote:—*

Do you know that the Indians of South Africa raised an ambulance corps which served under General Smuts in South Africa? Is this new law to be their reward? I ought not to bring in war services in order to secure the protection of an elementary right which considerations alike of honour and justice entitle them to. I commend to your attention the report of the Select Committee of the Union House of Assembly.

The Union Government, unmindful of their trust and equally unmindful of their written word, accepted the amendment "prohibiting the holding of mortgages by the Asiatics on property except as security for *bona fide* loan or investment and providing that any Asiatic Company which acquired fixed property after the 1st instant should dispose of the same within two years or a further period as fixed by a competent Court with a rider that in the event of failure to do so the property might be sold by an order of the Court." I am quoting from Reuter's cable dated 23rd May from Capetown. You will see this completes legalised confiscation of property rights throughout the Transvaal and virtually the trade rights within the gold area of the Indian settlers. There was no evasion of Law 3 of 1885. Indians did openly what the law permitted them to do, and they should be left free to do so. I do not wish to prolong this tale of agony. The Government of India are bound to protect the rights of the 5,000 Indian settlers in the Transvaal at any cost.





In the cablegram the word 'assent' occurs twice. It says the Bill has been assented to and it refers to a deputation that is to wait on H. E. the Governor-General of South Africa requesting him to withhold assent. The second use of the word 'assent' refers probably to a clause in the Letters Patent providing for the vetoing of class legislation. The clause is undoubtedly to be used under exceptional circumstances. No one can deny that the Asiatics Act constitutes a very exceptional circumstance warranting the exercise of the Royal veto.

The most important part of the cablegram, however, is the fact that the commission promised by the Union Government is to be appointed as a "concession" to "the detractors" of Indians in the Union Parliament. Unless, therefore, the Government of India take care, there is every likelihood of the commission, like the committee of the South African Assembly proving to the British Indians a curse, instead of a blessing. It is, therefore, not unnatural that the British Indian Association urges that H. E. the Viceroy should propose a Royal Commission upon which both the Union and the Indian interests are represented. Nothing can be fairer than the proposal made by Mr. Aswat. I say so, because as a matter of right no commission is really needed to decide that Indian settlers are entitled to trade in South Africa where they like and hold landed property on the same terms as the European settlers. This is the minimum they can claim. But under the complex constitution of this great Empire, justice is and has often to be done in a round-about manner. A wise captain, instead of sailing against a head-wind, tacks and yet reaches his destination sooner than he otherwise would have. Even so, Mr. Aswat





wisely accepts the principle of a commission on a matter that is self-evident, but equally wisely wants a commission that would not prove abortive and that will dare to tell the ruling race in South Africa that, as members in an Empire which has more coloured people than white, they may not treat their Indian fellow-subjects as helots. Whether the above proposal is accepted or some other is adopted by the Imperial Government, it must be made clear to them that public opinion in India will not tolerate confiscation of the primary rights of the British Indian settlers in South Africa.

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## INDIAN RIGHTS IN THE TRANSVAAL

*From time to time trouble rose in Transvaal between the trading people among European colonists and Indians. A policy of squeezing out the Indian petty trader was prevalent throughout the colony. A correspondent of the Times of India wrote to its columns in August 18, 1919, that South Africa cannot be run economically with the Indian in it and the white people cannot be expected to commit race suicide. Strangely enough even the Smutts-Gandhi agreement was pressed into issue. Mr. Gandhi wrote to "The Times of India":—*

No possible exception can be taken to the impartial manner in which your South African correspondent has given a summary of the Indian position in the Transvaal in your issue of the 18th instant. He has put as fairly as it was possible for him to do, both sides of the question.





It is not the additional 'brown burden on the top of the black one' which agitate 'the European Colonists in South Africa,' but "the crux of the whole question is, as your correspondent puts it, "that South Africa cannot be run economically with the Indian in it, and the white people who have made the country, cannot be expected to commit race suicide." This is not the problem that presents itself to the Boer living on the Veldt to whom the Indian trader is a blessing nor to the European housewife in the big towns of the Transvaal who depends solely upon the Indian vegetable vendor for the vegetables brought to her door. But the problem presents itself in the manner put by your correspondent to the petty European trader who finds in the thrifty and resourceful Indian a formidable rival, and with his vote which counts a great deal and with his influence as a member of the ruling race he has succeeded in making his own economic problem a race problem for South Africa. In reality the problem is whether the petty trader for his selfish end is to be allowed to override every consideration of justice, fair play, imperial policy and all that goes to make a nation good and great.

In support of the gradual but certain squeezing out process, what has been called the Smuts-Gandhi agreement has been pressed into service. Now that agreement is embodied in two letters and two only of the 30th June, 1914: the first one addressed to me on behalf of General Smuts by Mr. Gorges, Secretary for the Interior, and the second my acknowledgment of it bearing the same date. The agreement, as the letters conclusively show, is an agreement on questions which were the subject of civil—in the correspondence described as passive—resistance. The settlement stipulates only for an





extension—never a restriction—of existing rights, and as it was intended only to cover questions arising out of civil resistance it left open all the other questions. Hence the reservation in my letter of the 30th June, *viz*:—

"As the Minister is aware, some of my countrymen have wished me to go further. They are dissatisfied that trade licenses, laws of the different Provinces, the Transvaal Gold Law, the Transvaal Law 3 of 1885, have not been altered so as to give them full rights of residence, trade and ownership of land. Some of them are dissatisfied that full inter-provincial migration is not permitted, and some are dissatisfied that on the marriage question the Relief Bill goes no further than it does."

In this correspondence there is not a word about the Indian settlers not getting trade licenses or holding fixed property in the mining or any other area. And the Indians had a perfect right to apply for and get as many trade licenses as they could secure and as much fixed property as they could hold, whether through forming registered companies or through mortgages. After a strenuous fight for eight years it was not likely that I would give away any legal rights, and if I did, the community, I had the honour to represent, would naturally and quite properly have dismissed me as an unworthy, if not a traitorous, representative.

But there is a third letter, totally irrelevant considered as part of the agreement, which has been used for the curtailment of trade rights. It is my letter of the 7th July addressed to Mr. Gorges. The whole tone of it shows that it is purely a personal letter setting forth only my individual views about 'vested rights in connection with the Gold Law and Townships Amendment Act.' I



have therein stated definitely that I do not wish to restricts the future action of my countrymen and I have simply recorded the definition of 'vested rights' I discussed with Sir Benjamin Robertson on the 4th March, 1914, saying that by "vested rights I understand the right of an Indian and his successors to live and trade in townships in which he was living and trading, no matter how often he shifts his residence or business from place to place in the same township." This is the definition on which the whole of the theory of evasion of law and breach of faith has been based. Apart from the question of irrelevance of the letter I claim that it could not be used, even if it could be admitted as part of the agreement, in the manner it has been. As I have already stated on previous occasions there was a prospect of an adverse interpretation of the Gold Law as to trade licences, and there was the tangible difficulty in getting land or leases of buildings and it was by the most strenuous efforts that Indians were able within Gold Areas to retain their foothold. I was anxious to protect the existing traders and their successors *even though the legal interpretation of the law might be adverse to the Indian claim.* The vested right, therefore, referred to in my letter of the 7th July was a right created in spite of the law. And it was this right that had to be protected in the administration of the then existing laws. Even if, therefore, my said letter can be incorporated in the agreement, by no canon of interpretation that I know can it be said to prevent the Indians *morally* (for that is the meaning of the charge of breach of faith) from getting new trade licences in virtue of the law of the land. Indians openly and in a fair fight gained in their favour a legal decision to the effect that they could obtain trade licences against tender of the licence fee even within the





gold area. To this they were perfectly morally entitled. There cannot be any question of a legal breach. There trade rivals would long ago have made short work of any legal breach. Lastly supposing that the law was adverse to the Indian claim my definition could not be pleaded to bar any agitation for amendment of the law, for the whole of the settlement, if the nature of it was of a temporary character, and the Indians, as definitely stated in my letter of the 30th June, could not be expected to rest content until full civic rights had been conceded. The whole of the plea, therefore, of breach of faith is, I venture to submit, an utterly dishonest and shameless piece of tactics, which ought not to be allowed to interfere with a proper adjustment of the question.

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### ANOTHER S. A. COMMISSION

*In response to the agitation in South Africa and in India, a Commission was appointed by the Union Government to investigate the trade and other questions which caused grave irritation to the Indians; and Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India announced in November, 1919, the inclusion of Sir Benjamin Robertson, Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces in the Commission to represent the Government of India, Interviewed by the Associated Press, Mr. Gandhi said on the subject of enquiry and the composition:—*

It is a matter of very great regret that Mr. Montagu's message to His Excellency the Viceroy so materially alters the position. I do, however, feel that any agitation insisting upon the appointment on the Commission of Indian representatives may damage our





case which is so overwhelmingly strong. If a representative like Mr. Sastri is appointed along with Sir Benjamin Robertson to put before the South African Government and the forthcoming Commission the Indian case, it would be the next best thing. In my opinion our effort should be to concentrate upon securing a proper reference to the Commission in the place of the very narrow one, we are led to believe, is likely to be suggested by the Union Government. The *Times of India* is really rendering a great service in moulding and consolidating public opinion on this question, irrespective of class or race. It is not enough that merely the trade question is referred to the Commission. The whole of the Law 3 of 1885 must come under review leaving aside for the time being the question of political status. Our goal must be the restoration of full trading and property rights of Indians lawfully settled in South Africa. This is what even Australia has allowed although it was Australia which led the anti-Asiatic cry. We must also guard against the Commission whittling down any of the rights already being enjoyed by the settlers. By no canon of justice or propriety can the existing rights be taken away from the Indian settlers, but if we do not take care and provide beforehand there is every danger of such a catastrophe happening. It actually happened with the Select Committee of the Union Parliament whose findings produced the new legislation we so much deplore.

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# Indians in the Colonies

## RECIPROCITY BETWEEN INDIA AND THE DOMINIONS

*At the Madras Provincial Conference held at Nellore in June, 1915, Mr. G. A. Natesan moved a resolution thanking Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi for the invaluable services they had rendered to the Motherland by their heroic struggle in South Africa. Mr. Gandhi, in acknowledging the thanks of the Conference, spoke as follows:—*

In so far as sentiment enters into the claims of India, with regard to the status of Indians in the Empire, it seems possible that by a measure of reciprocal treatment as between India and the Dominions this difficulty could be surmounted. Given an outlet for Indian emigrants in East Africa, it ought not to be beyond the powers of statesmanship to arrange that India should have the power to exclude white men of the working class, just as the Dominions exclude Indians. Or rather it might be arranged that the number of Indians to be admitted to any one of the white States of the Empire should bear a relative proportion to the white population of the State. As a matter of fact, if the proportion agreed on is to avoid the necessity for removing some of the Asiatics now in the Dominions, it will have to be something like twice as great as the number of the whites in India in relation to the total population. The existing white community in India, inclusive of troops,





bears the proportion of about 1: 2,002 of the native population. In Canada there are now about 3,000 Indians in a total population of 8,000,000. A 1: ratio 1,000 as suggested would, therefore, permit the Indian colony in Canada to be increased by about 5,000. In Australia there are rather more than 5,000 Indians, and under 5,000,000 white men at present, but the excess over the 1: 1,000 ratio is trifling. In New Zealand, where there are about 1: 250 Indians, this ratio is almost exactly conformed to by the existing situation. South Africa presents a difficulty since the South African Indians already exceed a proportion of one to ten of the white residents. But South Africa differs from its sister Dominions, since it is the only one which has a native population of more than negligible size. The Indian section of the composite racial problem—presented by the Union—might perhaps be adjusted somewhat by offering inducements to South African Indians to transfer themselves to East Africa. The conferring of full political rights on the small Indian communities domiciled in the Dominions would then be the only step necessary to meet every legitimate aspiration of Indians for equality of treatment and the recognition of their claims as British subjects.

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## INDIAN AND EUROPEAN EMIGRANTS

*Mr. M. K. Gandhi, in moving the Resolution on India and the Colonies at the Bombay Congress of 1915, said:—*

Mr. President and Friends,—the Resolution that stands in my name reads thus:—

"The Congress regrets that the existing laws affecting Indians in South Africa and Canada have not, in spite of the liberal and imperialistic declarations of Colonial statesmen, been justly and equitably administered, and this Congress trusts that the Self-Governing Colonies will extend to the Indian emigrants equal rights with European emigrants and that the Imperial Government will use all possible means to secure the rights which have been hitherto unjustly withheld from them, thus causing widespread dissatisfaction and discontent."

Friends,—It is an irony of fate that whilst this vast assembly will be regretting the hostile attitude that has been adopted by the Self-Governing Colonies, a Contingent of your countrymen formed in South Africa will be nearing the theatre of war in order to help the sick and the wounded, and I am in possession of facts in connection with this Contingent formed in South Africa which shows that it is composed of the middle classes which, in accordance with the *Times of India*, are going to form the future self-governing nation. Those men are drawn from ex-indentured Indians and their children, from the petty hawkers, the toilers, the traders, and yet the Colonies do not consider it necessary to alter their attitudes nor do I see the logic in altering their policy. It is the





fashion now-a-days to consider that because our humble share in not being disloyal to the Government at the present juncture, we are entitled to the rights which have been hitherto withheld from us, as if those rights were withheld because our loyalty was suspected. No, my friends, if they have been withheld from us, the reasons are different and those reasons will have to be altered. They are due, some of them to undying prejudices, to economic causes and these will have to be examined; but prejudice will have to be cut down. And what are the hardships that our countrymen are labouring under in South Africa, in Canada, and the other Self-Governing Colonies? In South Africa the Settlement of 1914 secured what the passive resisters were fighting for and nothing more, and they were fighting for the restoration of legal equality in connection with emigrants from British India and nothing more.

That legal equality has been restored, but the domestic troubles still remain and if it was not the custom unfortunately inherited for the last forty years that the predominant language in this assembly should be English, our Madras friends will have taken good care to have learnt one of the northern vernaculars, and then there are men enough in South Africa who would tell you about the difficulties that we have to go through even now in South Africa in connection with holding landed property, in connection with men who having been once domiciled in South Africa, return to South Africa, their difficulties in connection with the admission of children, their difficulties in connection with holding licenses of trade. These are, if I may so call them, bread and butter difficulties. There are other difficulties which I shall not enumerate just now. In Canada, it is not possible for these members





of the Sikhs who are domiciled there to bring their wives and their children. (*Cries of 'shame, shame.'*) The law is the same but administration is widely unequal, so unequal that they cannot bring their wives and children, and the law or the administration still remains the same in spite of declarations about justice and what not, in view of the hostilities and in view of the splendid aid which India is said to have rendered to the Empire. How are these difficulties to be met. I do not intend to go into details, but the Congress proposes that this difficulty can be met by an appeal to the sense of justice of the Colonial statesmen and by an appeal to the Imperial Government. I fear that the Congress can only do this, but the Resolution so far as it goes in one respect is inadequate to the occasion. Lord Hardinge, only a few months ago, made a fervent appeal to Indian publicists and to Indian public statesmen for helping him to an honourable solution which will retain the dignity of India, at the same time, not because of any trouble to the Self-Governing Colonies. Lord Hardinge is still waiting for an answer, that answer is not supplied by the Congress, nor can it be by the Congress; it is to be supplied by an association of the specialists, if I may so call them. The Congress has given them the lead, and it is for these associations to frame the details in which they will have to examine the rival claims and to offer to Lord Hardinge a solution which shall be saturated with details, a solution which will satisfy the Colonial Governments as well as the Indian people and will not take away anything whatsoever from the just demands that this Resolution makes. With these words I have much pleasure in proposing this Resolution.





## INDENTURED LABOUR

*The following is a pronouncement made by Mr. Gandhi during the strenuous agitation made throughout India in the early part of 1917 for the complete abolition of indenture :—*

There is no doubt that we are engaged in a severe struggle for the preservation of our honour, and that, if we do not take care, the promise made by Lord Hardinge, that indentured labour should soon be a thing of the past may be reduced to a nullity. The Viceregal pronouncement just made seems to set at rest one fear, that the system may be prolonged for a further period of five years, which, as Sir Ramakrishna Bhandarkar showed at Poona, would, in reality, mean ten years. We are thankful to Lord Chelmsford for his assurance. And we are thankful, too, to that good Englishman, Mr. C. F. Andrews, for the lead that he gave us in the matter. So soon as he gained the information from Fiji that five years' extension was taken by the planters of those lands as a settled fact, he forsook his sick-bed and his rest at Shanti Niketan, and sounded for us the call of duty.

But if one cloud, that threatened to destroy our hopes, seems to have disappeared, another equally dangerous looms on the horizon. The conditions of abolition, as stated by Lord Hardinge last March, are these:—

"On behalf of His Majesty's Government, he (the Secretary of State) has asked us, however, to make it clear that the existing system of recruiting must be maintained until new conditions, under which labour should be permitted to proceed to the Colonies, should have been worked out in conjunction with the Colonial Office and the Crown Colonies concerned; until pro-





per safeguards in the Colonies should have been provided; and until they should have had reasonable time to adjust themselves to the change, a period which must necessarily depend on circumstances and conditions imperfectly known at present."

Those of us who know anything of the system knew that it was well-nigh impossible to find new conditions which would be economically sound for the planters, and morally sound for us. We felt that the Government would soon find this out for themselves, and that, in view of Lord Hardinge's whole-hearted disapproval of the system, his view of the nearness of the end would coincide with our own. But now a different situation faces us. Nearly a year has gone by, and we discover that the planters of Fiji have been led to believe that they will have five years more of the system, and at the end of it new conditions may after all be a change in name but not in substance. Let Mr. Bonar Law's despatch speak for itself. Writing under date March 4, 1916, to the Acting Governor of Fiji, he says:—

"The Secretary of State for India is satisfied that it would not be possible for the Government of India to continue to defeat by a bare official majority resolutions in their Legislative Council, urging the abolition of indenture; that in his opinion, the strong and universal feeling in India on this subject makes it a question of urgency; and that he has accepted the conclusion that indentured emigration must be abolished."

He then proceeds:—

"Though, from the point of view of the Colonies concerned, the decision which the Indian Government and the Secretary of State for India have taken is to be regretted, I recognise that the final decision upon this question must rest with the Indian Government."

Thus the humanities of the question are tacitly supposed to be no concern of the Colonies.

Now mark this significant paragraph, culled from the same illuminating despatch:—

"I have, therefore, agreed to the appointment of an inter-departmental committee to consider what system should be sub-





stituted for the system of indenture should be allowed for a further period of five years, and should cease at the end of that period. . . . The Secretary of State for India is anxious that the change of system should be brought about with as little disturbance as possible to the economic interests of the Colonies, and that he has made it clear that the existing system must be maintained until a properly safeguarded system has been devised."

Mr. Andrews has been twitted for having referred to the five years' extension. Let his critics explain away Mr. Bonar Law's emphatic pronouncement published in the Fiji newspapers. What with this official statement and the Secretary of State for India's solicitude for the economic interests of the planters, our cause may easily be lost, if we are found unwatchful.

In the light of the Viceregal speech and Mr. Bonar Law's despatch, our duty seems to be clear. We must strengthen the Government's hands where necessary, and even stimulate their activity, so that this inter-departmental committee is not allowed to frustrate our hopes. It is a body wherein the influence of the Crown Colonies and the Colonial office will be preponderant. It is a body which has to find a substitute which would be acceptable to us. As I hold, it will be a vain search, if the more well-being of the labourer is to be the primary consideration. But, if the planters can have their own way, we know that they will urge an impossible substitute, and, in the event of its rejection by us, they will, in accordance with Mr. Bonar Law's despatch, claim continuance of recruiting under indenture. It must, therefore, be clearly understood that the onus of producing an acceptable substitute rests with them and not with us. They have had more than a year already. Lord Hardinge's despatch, urging total abolition, is dated the 15th October, 1915. The committee is to sit in May next. This period for finding a substitute is long enough, in all conscience. Either





Mr. Andrews' harrowing picture of the conditions of life in Fiji is true or it is untrue. We believe it to be true, and it has never been seriously attacked. And in waiting for over a year, we shall have waited almost beyond the point of endurance. Substitute or no substitute, we are entitled, for the sake of our motherland, for the sake of our own honour and reputation, and, indeed, that of the Empire, to the unconditional abolition of this last remnant of slavery. Natal stopped the system without the provision of a substitute. Mauritius has done likewise. The Johannesburg mines survived not only the shock of an abrupt termination of Chinese labour, but the withdrawal of every Chinese labourer from the country as fast as transport could be got ready.

Capital is both bold and timid. If only we shall do our duty, if only the Government of India will steel their hearts against the blandishments of the Fijian and West Indian planters, there is, no doubt, that these people will know how to save millions, without India's having to go to their rescue.

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## INDIAN COLONIAL EMIGRATION

*The following is the full text of an article published in the "Indian Review" for September, 1917 :—*

I have carefully read the resolution issued at Simla by the Government of India on the 1st instant, embodying the report of the Inter-Departmental Conference recently held in London. It will be remembered that this was the conference referred to in the Viceregal speech of last year at the opening of the sessions of the Viceregal Legislative Council. It will be remembered, too, that





this was the Conference which Sir James Meston and Sir S.P. Sinha were to have attended but were unable to attend owing to their having returned to India before the date of the meeting of the Conference. It is stated in the report under discussion that these gentlemen were to discuss the question of emigration to certain English Colonies informally with the two Secretaries of State, i.e., the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Lord Islington, Sir A. Steel Maitland, and Messrs. Seton, Grindle, Green and Mac-naughton constituted the Conference. To take the wording of the Resolution, this Conference sat "to consider the proposals for a new assisted system of emigration to British Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica and Fiji." The public should, therefore, note that this assisted emigration is to be confined only to the four Crown Colonies mentioned and not to the Self-Governing Colonies of South Africa, Canada or Australia, or the Crown Colony of Mauritius. What follows will show the importance of this distinction. It is something to be thankful for that "the Government of India have not yet considered the report and reserved judgment on all the points raised in it." This is as it should be on a matter so serious as this and one which only last year fairly convulsed the whole of India and which has in one shape or another agitated the country since 1895.

The declaration too that "His Majesty's Government in agreement with the Government of India have decided that indentured emigration shall not be re-opened" is welcome as is also the one that "no free emigrants can be introduced into any Colony until all Indian emigrants already there have been released from existing indentures."





In spite, however, of so much in the report that fills one with gladness, the substantive part of it which sets forth the scheme which is to replace indentured emigration is, so far as one can judge, to say the least of it, disappointing. Stripped of all the phraseology under which the scheme has been veiled, it is nothing less than a system of indentured emigration, no doubt on a more humane basis and safeguarded with some conditions beneficial to the emigrants taking advantage of it.

The main point that should be borne in mind is that Conference sat designedly to consider a scheme of emigration not in the interests of the Indian labourer, but in those of the Colonial employer. The new system, therefore, is devised to help the Colonies concerned. India needs no outlet, at any rate for the present moment, for emigration outside the country. It is debateable whether, in any event, the four Colonies will be the most suitable for Indian colonisation. The best thing, therefore, that can happen from an Indian standpoint is that there should be no assisted emigration from India of any type whatsoever. In the absence of any such assistance, emigration will have to be entirely free and at the risk and expense of the emigrant himself. Past experience shows that, in that event, there will be very little voluntary emigration to distant Colonies. In the report assisted emigration means, to use a mild expression, stimulated emigration; and surely with the industries of India crying out for labour and with her legitimate resources yet undeveloped, it is madness to think of providing a stimulus for the stay-at-home Indian to go out of India. Neither the Government nor any voluntary agency has been found capable of protecting from ill-usage the Indian who emigrates either to





Burma or Ceylon, much less can any such protection avail in far-off Fiji or the three other Colonies. I hope that leaders of public opinion in India will, therefore, take their stand on the one impregnable rock of not wanting any emigration whatsoever to the Colonies. It might be argued that we, as a component part of the Empire, are bound to consider the wants of our partners, but this would not be a fair plea to advance so long as India stands in need of all the labour she can produce. If, therefore, India does not assist the Colonies, it is not because of want of will but it is due to want of ability. An additional reason a politician would be justified in using is that, so long as India does not in reality occupy the position of an equal partner with the Colonies, and so long as her sons continue to be regarded by Englishmen in the Colonies and English employers even nearer home to be fit only as hewers of wood and drawers of water, no scheme of emigration to the Colonies can be morally advantageous to Indian emigrants. If the badge of inferiority is always to be worn by them, they can never rise to their full status and any material advantage they will gain by emigrating can, therefore, be of no consideration.

But let us for the moment consider the new system. "The system," it is stated, "to be followed in future will be one of aided emigration and its object will be to encourage the settlement of Indians in certain Colonies after a probationary period of employment in those Colonies, to train and fit them for life and work there and at the same time, to acquire a supply of the labour essential to the well-being of the colonists themselves." So the resettlement is to be conditional on previous employment under contract and it will be seen in the course of our examina-





tion that this contract is to be just as binding as the contracts used to be under indenture. The report has the following humorous passage in it: "He will be, in no way, restricted to service under any particular employer except that for his own protection, a selected employer will be chosen for him for the first six months." This has a flavour of the old indentured system. One of the evils complained of about that system was that the labourer was assigned to an employer. He was not free to choose one himself. Under the new system, the employer is to be selected for the protection of the labourer. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that the would-be labourer will never be able to feel the protection devised for him. The labourer is further "to be encouraged to work for his first three years in agricultural industries, by the offer, should he do so, of numerous and important benefits subsequently as a colonist." This is another inducement to indenture, and I know enough of such schemes to be able to assure both the Government and public that these so-called inducements in the hands of clever manipulators become nothing short of methods of compulsion in respect of innocent and ignorant Indian labourers. It is due to the framers of the scheme that I should draw attention to the fact that they have avoided all criminal penalties for breach of contract. In India itself if the scheme is adopted, we are promised a revival of the much-dreaded depots and emigration agents, all no doubt, on a more respectable basis but still of the same type and capable of untold mischief.

The rest of the report is not likely to interest the public, but those who wish to study it will, I doubt not, come to the conclusion to which I have been driven, that the framers have done their best to strip the old





system of many of the abuses which had crept into it, but they have not succeeded in placing before the Indian public an acceptable scheme. I hold that it was an impossible task. The system of indenture was one of temporary slavery; it was incapable of being amended, it should only be ended and it is to be hoped that India will never consent to its revival in any shape or form.

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### THE INIQUITIES OF THE INDENTURE SYSTEM

*Under the auspices of the District Congress Committee in Bombay Mr. M. K. Gandhi delivered a lecture on Indentured Indian Labour before a large gathering on 30th October, 1917, at the Empire Theatre, Sir Ebrahim Rahimtullah presiding.*

*Mr. Gandhi said :—*

The question of indentured labour was just now a topical question, because those true and real friends of India, Messrs. Andrews and Pearson, were conducting an enquiry in Fiji. The Fiji Islands absorbed the largest number of indentured Indians at the present moment. Messrs. Andrews and Pearson were not the first to interest the Indians in this question, but it was the deceased statesman Mr. Gokhale, who first impressed Indians with the importance of their duties in connection with this question. The resolution which Mr. Gokhale brought before the Council for the abolition of the indenture system was defeated by a majority though all the non-official members of the Council voted for the abolition. However much a benign and sympathetic Viceroy wished to remove this abominable system of indenture from the Indian Statute Book there was a





very serious difficulty in his way and that was the report by the two Commissioners, who were sent by Lord Hardinge, namely, Messrs. MacNeill and Chimanlal which are contained in two bulky volumes. All might not care to wade through the rather dull pages of those volumes but to him who knew what real indentured labour was, they were of great interest. They might, however, take upon trust that the report recognised that indentured labour should continue just as it was, if certain conditions were fulfilled. Those conditions, Mr. Gandhi said, were impossible of fulfilment. And the recommendations which these two great Commissioners made, showed that they really could not seriously have meant that the system of indenture which existed to-day in Fiji, Jamaica, Guiana and other colonies should be continued a minute longer than was actually necessary. The speaker here referred to the previous Commission and said that the defects which Messrs. MacNeill and Chimanlal had pointed out were patent to all. Their report contained nothing new. But there was unofficial investigation on behalf of some philanthropic body in England some forty years ago, and in that book an unvarnished tale was given, which told in graphic language what were the hardships under that system.

In this connection Mr. Gandhi quoted a statement made by the Prime Minister of Natal in which he said that the system of indenture was a most unadvisable thing and that the sooner it was terminated the better for the indentured labourer and the employer. Lord Selborne said the same thing when he was the High Commissioner in South Africa: he said that it was worse for the employer than the employed, because it was a system perilously near to slavery. Sir William Hunter





wrote a beautiful series of letters in 1895 when he first brought himself to study the system personally and compared the system of indenture, after a due investigation, to a state bordering on slavery. On one occasion he used the expression semi-slavery. Mr. Gandhi said if he erred in making these statements, he erred in Lord Selborne's company. And it was in connection with this system that these two worthy gentlemen, the Commissioners, had seen fit to report and advise the fulfilment of certain conditions which, in the very nature of the contract, were impossible of fulfilment. The conditions were that unsuitable emigrants be excluded; the proportion of females to males to be raised from 40 to 50 per cent. The speaker could not understand what they meant by unsuitable emigrants being excluded. The Commissioners themselves told them that it was not easy to find labour in India. India was not pining to send her children out as semi-slaves. Lord Sanderson stated that it was the surplus population from India that went out from dissatisfaction with the economic conditions in India. But they must remember that there were 500 recruiting licences issued in the year 1907. Could they conceive the significance of the extraordinary state of things which required one recruiter to 17 labourers? The Colonial Governments had their sub-agents in India for this indentured labour to be collected. They were paid a sum of Rs. 25 for each cooly recruited, and this sum of Rs. 25 was divided between the recruiter and the sub-agent. Mr. Gandhi thought the mental state of those recruiters must be miserable, who could send so many of their countrymen as semi-slaves. After having seen what the recruiting agents did and after having read the many gross





mis-statements they made, he was not surprised that thousands and thousands of their countrymen were becoming indentured labourers. The Commissioners devoted several pages to the immorality prevailing on the estates. It was not forty women for sixty men; but the statement was made that these men did not marry these women, but kept them, and that many of these women were prostitutes. Mr. Gandhi said he would decline to send his children under such an indenture, if he was worthy of his salt, out of the country. But thousands of men and women had gone. What did they think of that in India?

The conditions were that rigorous provisions should be either expunged from the Ordinances or that the Protector should control employers. As for the regulations made to protect these labourers they could take it from him, Mr. Gandhi said, that there were a great many flaws in them and a coach and four could be easily driven through these. The aim of the rules was to make the employer supreme. Here was capital ranged against labour with artificial props for capital and not labour.

Mr. Gandhi condemned the "protector" of emigrants. They were men belonging to that very class to which employers belonged; they moved among them and was it not only natural that they should have their sympathies on the side of the employer? How was it then possible that they could do justice to the labourer against the employer? He knew many instances when magistrates had meted out justice to the indentured labourer, but it was impossible to expect such a thing from the Protectors of emigrants. The labourer was bound hand and foot to the employer. If he committed an offence against his employer he first of all had to undergo a course of im-





prisonment; then the days that the labourer had spent in the jail were added to his indenture and he was taken back to his master to serve again. The Commissioners had to say nothing against these rules. There was nobody to judge the Protector of Emigrants if he gave a wrong judgment, but in the case of the magistrate he could be criticised. Again the Commissioners add that these prisoners should be put into separate jails. But the Colonial Government would be bankrupt if they built jails for hundreds of prisoners that were imprisoned. They were not able to build jails for the passive resisters. Then the Commissioners said that the labourer should be allowed to redeem his indenture by payment of a graduated redemption fee. They made a mistake in thinking him to be an independent man. He was not his own master. Mr. Gandhi said he had known of English girls well educated who were decoyed, and who were not indentured, unable to free themselves. How was it then possible for an indentured labourer to do this? Mr. Balfour compared the labourer under an indenture to a soldier. But the soldier was a responsible man and he could rise to a high position. But an indentured labourer remained a labourer. He had no privileges. His wife was also included under his disabilities, so also his son. In Natal the finger of scorn was pointed at these people. Never could an indentured Indian rise to a higher post than that of labourer. And what did the labourer bring when he returned to India? He returned a broken vessel, with some of the artificial and superficial signs of civilisation, but he left more valuable things behind him. He may bring some sovereigns also with him. They should decline to perpetuate this hateful system of indenture because it robbed them of their national self-respect.





If they could consider well over what he had said, they would try and abolish the system in a year's time and this one taint upon the nation would have gone and indentured labour would be a thing of the past. He wanted to remove the cause of the ill-treatment of the Indians in the Colonies. However protected that system may be, it still remained a state bordering upon slavery. "It would remain," said Mr. Gandhi, "a state based upon full-fledged slavery and it was a hindrance to national growth and national dignity."

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## IMPERIAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

*In the course of an article criticising the Imperial Conference Resolution on Indian emigration, Mr. Gandhi wrote as follows in the Indian Review for August, 1918:—*

The Imperial Conference Resolution \* on the status of our countrymen emigrating to the Colonies, reads well on the surface, but it is highly deceptive. We need not

\* A summary of the proceedings of the Conference was cabled by the Secretary of State to the Viceroy. The following is an extract:—

The fifteenth meeting of the Conference was held on July 25th. The first subject discussed was reciprocity of treatment between India and the Dominions. This discussion followed on the resolution passed by the Conference last year, accepting the principle of reciprocity and a further resolution passed to that effect should now be given to the last year's resolution in pursuance of which the Conference agreed as follows:—(1) It is the inherent function of the Governments of several communities of British Commonwealth including India that each should enjoy complete control in the composition of its own population by means of restriction on immigration from any other communities. (2) British citizens domiciled in any British country including India should be admitted into any other British country for visits for the purposes of pleasure or commerce including temporary resi-





consider it a great achievement that we can pass the same laws against the colonials that they may pass against us. It is like a giant telling a dwarf that the latter is free to give blow for blow. Who is to refuse permission and passports to the colonials desiring to enter India? But Indians, no matter what their attainments are, are constantly being refused permission to enter the colonies even for temporary periods. South African legislation of emigration was purged of the racial taint, by the passive resistance movement. But the administrative principles still continue and will do so, so long as India remains both in name and substance a dependency.

The agreement arrived at regarding those who are already domiciled practically re-states the terms of the settlement of 1914. If it extends to Canada and Australia it is a decided gain, for in Canada till recently there was a big agitation owing to the refusal of its Government to admit the wives and children of its Sikh settlers. I may perhaps add that the South African settlement provides

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dency for the purpose of education. The conditions of such visits should be regulated on the principle of reciprocity as follows:— (a) The right of the Government of India recognised to enact laws which shall have the effect of subjecting British citizens domiciled in any other British country to the same conditions in visiting India as those imposed on Indians desiring to visit such country. (b) Such right of visit or temporary residence shall, in each individual case, be embodied in the passport or written permit issued by the country of domicile and subject to visit there by an officer appointed by and acting on behalf of the country to be visited. If such a country so desires such right shall not extend to the visit or temporary residents for labour purpose or to permanent settlement. (3) Indians already permanently domiciled in other British countries should be allowed to bring in their wives and minor children on condition (a) that no more than one wife and her children shall be admitted for each such Indian and (b) that each individual so admitted shall be certified by the Government of India as being the lawful wife or child of such Indian. The Conference recommends other questions covered by the memoranda presented to the Conference by the representatives of India.





for the protection of those who had plural wives before the settlement, especially if the latter had at any time entered South Africa. It may be the proper thing in a predominantly Christian country to confine the legality to only one wife. But it is necessary even for that country, in the interests of humanity and for the sake of friendship for members of the same Imperial Federation to which they belong administratively, to allow the admission of plural wives and their progeny.

The above agreement still evades the question of inequality of status in other matters :—Thus the difficulty of obtaining licenses throughout South Africa, the prohibition to hold landed property in the Transvaal and the Free State and virtual prohibition within the Union itself of the entry of Indians into the Free State, the prohibition of Indian children to enter the ordinary Government schools, deprivation of Municipal franchise in the Transvaal and the Free State and practical deprivation of the Union franchise throughout South Africa, barring perhaps the Cape. The resolutions of the Imperial Conference therefore are decidedly an eye-wash. There is no change of heart in the colonies and certainly no recognition of Imperial obligations regarding India. The Fijian atrocities to which Mr. Andrews has drawn pointed attention show what is possible even in the Crown Colonies which are under direct Imperial control.

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## Jail Experiences

*These prison experiences were originally written by Mr. Gandhi in Gujarati and we are indebted to the Modern Review for the following English version :—*

### I

#### INSPECTION

When the different inspectors come to inspect, all the prisoners have to post themselves in a row, and take off their caps to salute them. As all of us had English caps, there was no difficulty in observing this rule. It was both legal and proper that we should take off our caps. The words of direction used were "fall in." These words had, so to speak, become our food, as we had to "fall in" four or five times a day. One of these officers, an assistant to the Chief Warder, was a little stiff-necked, and so the Indians had nicknamed him "General Smuts." Generally he was the first to come in the mornings, and again in the evenings. At half past nine the Doctor came. He was very good and kind, and unfailing in his inquiries. Each prisoner had, according to jail rules, to show all parts of his body, on the first day to the Doctor, stripping himself bare of all clothes, but he was kind enough not to enforce the same in our case. When many more Indians had come, he simply told us to report to him if any one had got itches, etc., so that he might examine him *in camera*. At half past ten or eleven, the Governor and Chief Warder came. The





former was a firm, just and quiet-natured officer. His invariable inquiries were whether we were all right, whether we wanted anything, whether we had any complaints to make. Whenever we had any such, he heard them attentively, and gave us relief, if he could. Some of these complaints and grievances I shall refer to later on. His deputy came also at times. He was kind-hearted too. But the best of them all was our Chief Warder. Himself deeply religious, he was not only kind and courteous towards us, but every prisoner sang his praises in no measured terms. He was attentive in preserving to the prisoners all their rights, he overlooked their trivial faults, and knowing in our case that we were all innocent he was particularly kind to us, and to show his kindness he often came and talked to us.

#### INCREASE IN OUR NUMBERS

I have said before that there were only five of us passive resisters, at first. On 14th January, Tuesday, came in Mr. Thambi Naidu, the Chief Picket, and Mr. Koin, the President of the Chinese Association. We all were pleased to receive them. On the 18th, fourteen others joined us, including Samundar Khan. He was in for two months. The rest were Madrasis, Kunamias and Gujarati Hindus. They were arrested for hawking without licences, and sentenced to pay a fine of £2, and, in default, to 14 days' imprisonment. They had bravely elected to go to jail. On the 21st, 76 others came. In this batch only Nawab Khan had two months, the rest were with a fine of £2, or, in default, 14 days' imprisonment. Most of them were Gujarati Hindus, some Kunamias and some Madrasis. On the 22nd, 35, on the 23rd, 3, on the 24th, 1, on the 25th, 2, on the 28th, 6, and in the





evening 4 more, and on the 29th, 4 Kunamias added to our numbers. So that by the 29th, there were 155 passive resisters incarcerated. On the 30th, I was removed to Pretoria, but I knew that on that day 5 or 6 others had come in.

### FOOD

The question of food is of great moment to many of us, in all circumstances, but to those in prison, it is of the greatest importance. They are greatly in need of good food. The rule is that a prisoner had to rest content with jail food, he cannot procure any from outside. The same is the case with a soldier who has to submit to his regulation rations, but the difference between the two is that his friends can send other food to the soldier and he can take it, while a prisoner is prohibited from doing so. So that this prohibition about food is one of the signs of being in prison. Even in general conversation, you will find the jail-officers, saying that there could be no exercise of taste about prison diet, and no such article could be allowed therein. In a talk with the prison medical officer, I told him that it was necessary for us to have some tea, or ghee or some such thing along with bread, and, he said, you want to eat with taste, and no palatable thing could be allowed in a prison.

According to the regulations, in the first week, an Indian gets, in the morning 12 oz. of "mealie pap" without sugar or ghee; at noon, 4 oz. of rice and one oz. of ghee; in the evening, from 5 days, 12 oz. of mealie pap, for 3 days, 12 oz. of boiled beans and salt. This scale has been modelled on the dietary of the Kaffirs—the only difference being that in the evening, the Kaffirs are given crushed maize corn and lard or fat, while the





Indians get rice. In the second week, and thenceforward, for two days, boiled potatoes and for two days, cabbages, or pumpkin or some such vegetable is given along with maize flour. Those who take meat are given meat with vegetables on Sundays.

The first batch of prisoners had resolved to solicit for no favours at the hands of Government, and to take whatever food was served out, if not religiously objectionable. Really speaking, the above was not a proper kind of diet for Indians, though medically, of course, it contained sufficient nutrition. Maize is the daily food of the Kaffirs, so this diet suits them, nay, they thrive on it in jail. But Indians rarely use maize-flour, rice only suits them. We are not used to eat beans alone, nor could we like vegetables as cooked by or for Kaffirs. They never clean the vegetable nor season them with any spices. Again the vegetable cooked for the Kaffirs mostly consist of the peelings left after the same have been prepared for the European convicts. For spices, nothing else besides salt is given. Sugar is never dreamt of. Thus the food question was a very difficult one for us all. Still, as we had determined that the passive resisters were neither to solicit nor ask for favours from the jail authorities, we tried to rest content with this kind of food.

In reply to his inquiries we had told the Governor that the food did not suit us, but we were determined not to ask for any favours from Government. If Government of its own accord wanted to make a change, it would be welcome, else we would go on taking the regulation diet.

But this determination could not last long. When others joined us, we thought it would be improper to





make them share this trouble with us also. Was it not sufficient that they had shared the prison with us? So we began to talk to the Governor on their behalf. We told him, we were prepared to take any kind of food, but the later batches could not do so. He thought over the matter, and said that he would allow them to cook separately, if they put it on the ground of religion, but the articles of food would be the same, it did not rest with him to make any changes in them.

In the meantime, fourteen others had joined us, and some of them elected to starve rather than take mealie pap. So I read the jail rules and found out that applications in such matters should be made to the Director of Prisons. I asked, therefore, the Governor to be permitted to apply to him, and sent a petition accordingly.

We, the undersigned prisoners, beg to state that we are all Asiatics, 18 Indians and 3 Chinese.

The 18 Indians get for their breakfast mealie pap, and the others, rice and ghee; they get beans thrice and "pap" four times. We were given potatoes on Saturdays and greens on Sundays. On religious grounds, we cannot eat meat; some are entirely prohibited from taking it, and others cannot do so because of its not being religiously slaughtered.

The Chinese get maize-corn instead of rice. All the prisoners are mostly used to European food, and they also eat bread and other flour preparations. None of us is used to mealie pap, and some of us suffer from indigestion.

Seven of us have eaten no breakfast at all; only at times, when the Chinese prisoners who got bread, out of mercy, gave them a piece or two out of their rations, have we eaten the same. When this was mentioned to the Governor, he said we were guilty of a jail offence in thus accepting bread.

In our opinion this kind of food is entirely unsuitable to us. So we have to apply that we should be given food according to the rules for European prisoners and mealie pap be left out entirely; or, in the alternative, such food should be given as would support us, and be in consonance with our habits and customs.

This is an urgent matter and a reply be sent by wire.





Twenty-one of us had signed the petition and while it was being despatched seventy-six more came in. They also had a dislike for the "pap," and so we added a paragraph stating that the new arrivals also objected to the diet. I requested the Governor to send it by wire. He asked his superior's permission by telephone, and allowed at once 4 oz. of bread in place of "pap." We were all very pleased, and from the 22nd, 4 oz. of bread was substituted in place of pap, morning and evening. In the evening we got 8 oz., i.e., half a loaf. But this was merely a temporary arrangement. A committee was sitting on the question and we heard that they had recommended an allowance of flour, ghee and pulse; but before it could take effect, we had been released, and so nothing more happened.

In the beginning when there was only eight of us we did not cook ourselves, so we used to get uncooked rice and ill-cooked vegetables whenever the same were given, so we obtained permission to cook of ourselves. On the first day, Mr. Kadva cooked. After that Mr. Thambi Naidu and Mr. Jivan both took up the function, and in our last days they had to cook for about 150 men. They had to cook once only, excepting on vegetable days which were two in a week—when they had to do so twice. Mr. Naidu took great trouble over this. I used to distribute.

From the style of the petition the reader must have noted the fact that it was presented on behalf of all Indian prisoners and not us (eight) alone. We talked with the Governor also on the same lines and he had promised to look into it for all the Asiatic prisoners. We still hope that the jail diet of the Indians would be improved.



Again the three Chinese used to get other articles instead of rice, and hence annoyance was felt, as there was an appearance of their being considered separate from and inferior to us. For this reason, I applied, on their behalf, to the Governor and to Mr. Playford, and it was ordered that they should be placed on the same level as Indians.

It is instructive to compare this dietary with that of the Europeans. They get for their morning breakfast "pap" and 8 oz. of bread; for the midday meal, bread and soup or bread and meat, or bread and meat and potatoes or vegetables; and in the evenings bread and "pap." Thus they got bread thrice in the day, and so they do not care whether they have the "pap" or not. Again they get meat or soup, in addition. Besides this they are often given tea or cocoa. This will show that both the Europeans and the native Kaffirs get food suitable to them, and it is the poor Indians alone who suffer. They had no special dietary of their own. If they were treated like Europeans in food, they the Europeans would have felt ashamed, and no one had the concern to find out what was the food of the Indian. They had thus to be ranked with the Kaffirs and silently starve. For this state of circumstances I find fault with our own people, the Passive Resisters. Some Indians got the requisite food by stealth, others put up with whatever they got, and were either ashamed to make public the story of their distress or had no thought for others. Hence the outside public remained in the dark. If we were to follow truth and agitate where we got injustice, there would be no room to undergo such inconveniences. If we were to leave self and apply ourselves to the good of others, grievances would get remedied soon. But just as it is





necessary to take steps for the redress of such complaints, so it is necessary to think of certain other things also. It is but meet for prisoners to undergo certain inconveniences. If there be no trouble, what is the good of being called a prisoner? Those who are the masters of their minds, take pleasure even in suffering, and live happily in jails. They do not lose sight of the existence of the suffering, and they should not do so, considering that there are others also suffering with them.

There is another evil habit of ours, and that is our tenacity in sticking to our manners and customs. We must do in Rome as the Romans do. We are living in South Africa and we must accustom ourselves to what is considered good food here. "Mealie pap" is a food, as good, simple and cheap as our wheat. We cannot say it is without taste, sometimes, it beats wheat even. It is my belief that out of respect for the country of our adoption, we must take food which grows in that country, if it be not unwholesome. Many "Whites" like this "pap" and eat it in the morning. It becomes palatable if milk or sugar or even ghee be taken with it. For these reasons and for the fact that we might have to go to jail again, in the future, it is advisable for every Indian to accustom himself to this preparation of maize. With this habit even when the time comes to take it merely with salt, we would not find it hard to do so. It is incumbent on us to leave off some of our habits for the good of our country. All those nations that have advanced have given up these things where there was nothing substantial to lose. The Salvation Army people attract the natives of the soil, by adopting their customs, dress, etc., if not particularly objectionable.





## SICKNESS

It would have been a miracle had no one out of 150 prisoners fallen ill. The first to be taken ill was Mr. Samundar Khan. He had been brought into jail ailing and was taken to Hospital the next day. Mr. Kadva was a victim to rheumatism, and for some days he did not mind being treated by the Doctor in the prison cell itself, but eventually he had to go to the Hospital too. Two others suffered from fainting fits and were taken there. The reason was that it was very hot then, and the convicts had to remain out in the sun the whole day, and so they fell down in fits. We nursed them as best we could. Later on Mr. Nawab Khan also succumbed, and on the day of our release he had to be led out by hand. He had improved a little after the Doctor had ordered milk, etc., to be given to him. On the whole, still, it may be safely said, that the Passive Resisters fared well.

## PAUCITY OF SPACE

I have stated already that our cell had space enough to accommodate only fifty-one prisoners, and the same holds good with regard to the area. Later on when instead of 51 there were 151 souls to be accommodated, great difficulty was felt. The Governor had to pitch tents outside, and many had to go there. During our last days, about a hundred had to be taken out to sleep, and back again the morning. The area space was too small for this number, and we could pass our time there with great difficulty. Added to this was our evil inborn habit of spitting everywhere, which rendered the place dirty, and there was the danger of disease breaking out. Fortunately our companions were amenable to advice,





and assisted us in keeping the compound clean. Scrupulous care was exercised in inspecting the area and privies, and this saved the inmates from disease. Every one will admit that the Government was at fault in incarcerating such a large number in so narrow a space. If the room was insufficient, it was incumbent on the Government not to send so many there, and if the struggle had been prolonged, it would not have been possible for the Government to commit any more to this prison.

#### READING

I have already mentioned that the Governor had allowed us the use of a table, with pen, ink, etc. We had the free run of the prison library also. I had taken from there the works of Carlyle and the Bible. From the Chinese Interpreter, who used to come there, I had borrowed the Kuran-e-Sharif translated into English, speeches of Huxley, Carlyle's Lives of Burns, Johnson, and Scott, and Bacon's Essays. Of my own I had taken the Bhagavad-Gita, with Manilal Nathubhai's Annotations, several Tamil works, an Urdu Book from the Moulvi Sahib the writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Socrates. Many of these I read or re-read in the jail. I used to study Tamil regularly. In the morning I used to read the Gita and at noon, mostly the Koran. In the evening I taught the Bible to Mr. Foretoon, who was a Chinese Christian. He wanted to learn English, and I taught it to him through the Bible.

If I had been permitted to spend out my full period I would have been able to complete my translations of a book each of Carlyle and Ruskin. I believe that as I was fully occupied in the study of the above works, I





would not have become tired even if I had got more than two months ; not only that but I would have added usefully to my knowledge and studies. I would have passed a happy life, believing as I do that whoever has a taste for reading good books is able to bear loneliness in any place with great ease.

### RELIGIOUS STUDY

In the West, we now see, that, as a matter of fact, the State looks after the religion of all its prisoners, and hence, we find a Church in the Johannesburg prison for its inmates, but it is provided to meet only the needs of the Whites, who alone are allowed access thereto. I asked for special permission for Mr. Foretoon and myself, but the Governor told me it was only for White Christian prisoners. Every Sunday they attend it, and preachers of different denominations give them religious lessons there.

Several missionaries come in to convert the Kaffirs also with special permission. There is no Church for them ; they sit in the open. Jews also have got their preachers to look after them. It is only the Hindus and Mahomedans who are spiritually left unprovided for. There are not many Indian prisoners, it is true, but the absence of any such provision for them is hardly creditable to them. The leaders of both communities should, therefore, lay their heads together, and arrange for the religious instruction of the members of their community in jail, even if there be only one convict. The preachers, whether Hindus or Moulvis, should be pure-hearted, and they should be careful not to become thorns in the sides of the convicts.





## THE END

All that was worth knowing has been stated above. Indians being placed on a level with the Kaffirs is a fact which calls for further consideration. While the White convicts get a bedstead to sleep on, a tooth-brush to clean their teeth, a towel to wipe their faces and hands, and also a handkerchief, Indians get nothing. Why this distinction?

We should never think that this is not a matter for our interference. It is these little things which either enhance our respect or degrade us. An Arabic book says that he who has no self-respect has no religion. Nations have become great by gradually enhancing their self-respect. Self-respect does not mean vanity or rashness, but a state of mind which is prepared not to let go its privileges simply out of fear or idleness. One who has really his trust in God attains to self-respect, and I firmly believe that one who has no trust in Him never knows what is right, nor does he know how to do right.

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II

Every prisoner in the jail on getting up in the morning is required to fold his own bedding, and to place it in its proper place. He must finish his toilet by 6 o'clock and be ready to start out at the stroke of the hour. The work begins at 7 o'clock. It is of various kinds. The ground to be dug was very hard. It was to be worked upon with spades, and hence the work proved too hard. Again, it was a very hot day. The place we were taken to was about a mile and a half from the jail. Each one of us started very well indeed. But as one of





us was used to this kind of work, it was not long before we were quite done up. As the day advanced, the work seemed harder still. The warder was very strict. He used to cry out every now and then, "go on, go on." This made the Indians quite nervous. I saw some of them weeping. One of them had a swollen foot. All this caused me a great deal of heart-burning, and yet on every occasion, I reminded them of the duty, and asked them to perform it as well as possible, with a good heart, and without minding the words of the warder, I felt myself done up also. My hands were covered with blisters and water was oozing out of them. I could hardly bend the spade and felt the weight of it as if it was quite a maund. I prayed to God to preserve my honour, to maintain my limbs intact, and to bestow on me sufficient strength to be able to perform my allotted task. I trusted to Him and went on with my work. The warder would sometimes remonstrate with me at an occasional break required to get over the fatigue. I told him that it was unnecessary for him to remind me of my duty, and that I was prepared to go through as much of it as was possible for me to do. Just then I saw Mr. Jhinabhai faint..... While I was pouring water on Jhinabhai's head, the following occurred to me. Most of the Indians trusted my word, and submitted themselves to imprisonment. If the advice that I happened to offer them were erroneous, how much sin I would be committing in the eyes of God in tendering it to them. They underwent all sorts of hardships on account of that advice. With this thought in my mind, I heaved a deep sigh. With God as my witness, I reflected on the subject once more, and was immediately reassured that it was all right. I felt that the advice





that I tendered to them was the only advice that I could under the circumstances. In anticipation of future happiness, it was absolutely necessary that we should undergo the hardest trials and sufferings in the first instance, and that there was no reason to be grieved at the latter. This was simply a fit of fainting, but even if it was a case of death, how could I offer any other advice than what I had already done? It at once occurred to me that it was more honourable for anybody to die suffering in that manner, than to continue living a life of perpetual enslavement.

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At one time one of the warders came to me, and asked me to provide him with two of his men to clean the water-closets. I thought that I could do nothing better than clean them myself and so I offered him my services. I have no particular dislike to that kind of work. On the contrary, I am of opinion that we ought to get ourselves accustomed to it.

I was given a bed in a ward, where there were principally Kaffir patients. Here I passed the whole night in great misery and terror. I did not know then that I was to be taken the next day to another cell that was occupied by Indian prisoners. Fretting that I would be kept incarcerated with such men, I got very nervous and terror-stricken. And yet I tried my best to reconcile myself to the idea that it was my duty to undergo the sufferings that may befall me. I read from the "Bhagawad-Gita," that I had with me, certain verses suited to the occasion, and, on pondering over them, was soon reconciled to the situation. The chief reason why I got nervous was that in the same room, there were a





number of wild, murderous looking, vicious Kaffir and Chinese prisoners. I did not know their language. One of the Kaffirs began to ply me with all sorts of questions. As far as I could gather, he seemed to be mocking me indecently. I did not understand what his questions were and I kept quiet. He then asked me in his broken English, "Why have they brought you here?" I gave him a very short reply and was again silent. He was followed by one of the Chinamen. He was worse than the other. He approached my bed, and looked at me intently. I kept on my silence. He then proceeded towards the above-mentioned Kaffir's bed. There they began to mock each other indecently, and expose their private parts. Both these prisoners were probably there for murder or highway robbery. How could I enjoy sleep after seeing these dreadful things?

(At one time) as soon as I got seated at the water closet there to answer the call of nature, a very wild and muscular looking Kaffir turned up. He asked me to get off from the seat, and began to abuse me. I told him I would not be long when he took hold of me, and threw me outside. Fortunately, I was able to catch hold of one of the doors, and to save myself from a nasty fall. This did not make me very nervous. I simply walked away with a smiling countenance. But one or two Indian prisoners who happened to see the situation in which I was placed, could not restrain themselves from shedding tears.





## III

When on the 25th February I got three months' hard labour, and once again embraced my brother Indians and my son in the Volksrust Jail, I little thought that I should have had to say much in connection with my third "pilgrimage" to the jail, but with many other human assumptions, this too proved to be false. My experience this time was unique, and what I learnt therefrom I could not have learnt after years of study. I consider these three months invaluable. I saw many vivid pictures of passive resistance, and I have become, therefore, a more confirmed resister than what I was three months ago. For all this, I have to thank the Government of this place (the Transvaal).

Several officers had betted this that I should not get less than six months. My friends—old and renowned Indians—my own son—had got six months and so I too was wishing that they might win their bets. Still I had my own misgivings, and they proved true. I got only three months, that being the maximum under the law.

After going there, I was glad to meet Messrs. Dawood Muhammad, Rustamji, Sorabiji, Pillay, Hajura Sing, Lal Bahadur Sing and other 'fighters.' Excepting for about ten all others were accommodated in tents, pitched in the jail compound for sleeping, and the scene resembled a camp more than a prison. Every one liked to sleep in the tents.

We were comfortable about our meals. We used to cook ourselves as before, and so could cook as we liked. We were about 77 passive resisters in all.

Those who were taken out for work had rather a hard time of it. The road near the Magistrate's Court





had to be built, so they had to dig up stones, etc., and carry them. After that was finished they were asked to dig up grass from the school compound. But mostly they did their work cheerfully. For three days I was also thus sent out with the "abans" (gangs) to work, but in the meanwhile a wire was received that I was not to be taken outside to work. I was disheartened at this as I liked to move out, because it improved my health and exercised my body. Generally I take two meals a day, but in the Volksrust Jail, on account of this exercise I felt hungry thrice. After this turn, I was given the work of a sweeper, but this was useless, and after a time even that was taken away.

#### WHY I WAS MADE TO LEAVE VOLKSRUST?

On the 2nd of March I heard that I was ordered to be sent to Pretoria. I was asked to be ready at once, and my warder and I had to go to the station in pelting rain, walking on hard roads, with my luggage on my head. We left by the evening train in a third class carriage.

My removal gave rise to various surmises. Some thought that peace was near, others, that after separating me from my companions, Government intended to oppress me more, and some others, that in order to stifle discussion in the House of Commons it might be intended to give me greater liberty and convenience.

I did not like to leave Volksrust, as we passed our days and nights pleasantly there talking to one another. Messrs. Hajura Sing and Joshi always put us questions, questions which were neither useless nor trivial, as they related to science and philosophy. How would one like to leave such company and such a camp?





But if everything happened as we wished, we should not be called human beings. So I left the place quietly. Saluting Mr. Kaji on the road, the warder and I got confined in a compartment. It was very cold, and raining too for the whole night. I had my overcoat with me which I was permitted to use. I was given bread and cheese for my meals on the way, but as I had eaten before I left, I gave them to my warder.

#### PRETORIA JAIL : THE BEGINNING

We reached Pretoria on the 3rd, and found everything new. The jail was newly built, and the men were new. I was asked to eat but I had no inclination to do so. Mealie meal porridge was placed before me. I tasted a spoonful only and then left it untouched. My warder was surprised at it, but I told him I was not hungry, and he smiled. Then I was handed over to another warder. He said, "Gandhi, take off your cap." I did so. Then he asked, "Are you the son of Gandhi?" I said, "No, my son is undergoing six months' imprisonment at Volksrust." He then confined me in a cell. I began to walk forwards and backwards in it. He saw it from the watch-hole in the door, and exclaimed, "Gandhi, don't walk about like that. It spoils my floor." I stopped, and stood in a corner, quietly. I had nothing to read even, as I had not yet got my books. I was confined at about eight, and at ten I was taken to the Doctor. He only asked me if I had any contagious disease, and then allowed me to go. I was then interned in a small room at eleven where I passed my whole time. It seemed to be a cell made for one prisoner only. Its dimensions were about 10x7 feet. The floor was of black pitch, which the warder tried to keep shining. There was only



one small glass window, barred with iron bars, for light and air. There was electric light kept to examine the inmates at night. It was not meant for the use of the prisoners, as it was not strong enough to enable one to read. When I went and stood very near it, I could read only a large-type book. It is put out at eight, but is again put on five or six times during the night, to enable the warders to look over the prisoners, through the watch-holes.

After eleven the Deputy-Governor came and I made these requests to him: for my books, for permission to write a letter to my wife who was ill, and for a small bench to sit on. For the first, he said, he would consider for the second, I might write, and for the third, no. Afterwards I wrote out my letter in Gujarati and gave it to be posted. He endorsed on it, that I should write it in English. I said, my wife did not know English, and my letters were a great source of a comfort to her, and that I had nothing special to write in them. Still I did not get the permission, and I declined to write in English. My books were given to me in the evening.

My mid-day meal I had to take standing in my cell with closed doors. At three, I asked leave for a bath. The warder said, "All right, but you had better go there after undressing yourself." (The place was 125 feet distant from my cell). I said, if there was no special object in my doing so, I would put my clothes on the curtain there and take my bath. He allowed it, but said, "Do not delay. Even before I had cleaned my body, he shouted out," "Gandhi, have you done?" I said, "I would do so in a minute." I could rarely see the face of an Indian. In the evening I got a blanket and a coir-mat to sleep on but neither pillow nor plank. Even





when answering a call of nature, I was being watched by a warder. If he did not happen to know me, he would cry out, "Sam, come out." But Sam had got the bad habit of taking his full times in such a condition, so how could he get up at once? If he were to do so, he would not be easy. Sometimes the warders and sometimes the Kaffirs would peep in, and at times would sing out, "get up." The labour given to me next day was to polish the floor and the doors. The latter were of varnished iron, and what polish could be brought on them by rubbing? I spent three hours on each door rubbing, but found them unchanged, the same as before.

#### FOOD

The food was in keeping with the above conditions.

I knew that no ghee was given with rice in the evening, and I had thought of remedying the defect. I spoke to the Chief Warder, but he said, ghee was to be given only on Wednesdays and Sunday noons in place of meat; and if its further supply were needed, I should see the Doctor. Next day I applied to see him and I was taken to him.

I requested him to order out for all Indians ghee in place of fat. The Chief Warder was present and he added that Gandhi's request was not proper. Till then many Indians had used both fat and meat, and that those who objected to fat, were given dry rice, which they ate without any objection; that the passive resisters had also done so, and when they were released, they left with added weight. The Doctor asked me what I had to say to that. I replied that I could not quite swallow the story, but speaking for myself, I should spoil my health, if I