

# Indian Opinion

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## INDIANS AS TOWN GUARD

It is not generally known that Indian residents of South Africa were allowed to take an active part as defenders during the recent rebellion. When the rebellion was in full swing, the town of Ventersdorp found itself without sufficient men of the Defence Force and, as the town was in a district infested by rebels, the Indian storekeepers of the town were called upon to act as town guard. One night, an officer in uniform

would be obeyed. Quite a score of men turned up, eager to place their services at the disposal of the town and the Government. Eventually the following eleven men were selected:—Messrs. A. Rahman (Hon. Sergeant-Major), Noorodeen, Rahim Noorbhai, Mahomed Rasool, Ahmad, Samjoo, Balim, Ismail, Moosa Bhikoo, Suliman Amodjee and Valabh Hira. Rifles and ammunition were served out and instructions were given to



MR. V. HIRA.



MR. A. RAHMAN.



MR. S. AMODJEE.

called at the house of Mr. Abdul Rahman and informed him that he was wanted at the office of the Commandant at eight o'clock. Asked what might be the cause of this demand, he was informed that the Town Commandant had, with the sanction of the Mayor, instructed him (the officer) to commandeer the services of Mr. Abdul Rahman and about ten other capable Indians. Without hesitation, the reply was given that the order

challenge all persons going from or entering the town. They were ordered to patrol a certain area from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. The next night they were again called out at the same hour, and they did their duty as before. After about a week they were relieved on arrival of a loyal commando and, soon after, the rebellion collapsed. The men who formed the guard have expressed their willingness to join a rifle association if allowed to do

so. We understand that no pay was given them for their services nor would they accept any if offered. They gladly gave their help in such a cause, which, by the way, was not without an element of danger, not to speak of the discomfort of being out in all weathers in the dead of night.

### General Botha's Thanks

On arrival at Ventersdorp on the 23rd August last, amongst the addresses of welcome received was one from the Indian community. The address, which was read and presented by the Mayor on behalf of the British Indians, reads as follows:—

"Honoured Sir,—We, the undersigned British Indian residents of Ventersdorp beg to offer you a most hearty welcome to this town.

"We have always followed with the greatest interest all your movements during the South-west campaign, and, as loyal subjects of His Majesty the King, congratulate you and the men under your command on the able manner in which you brought a most difficult task to a successful conclusion.

"We remember how great the anxiety was during the recent upheaval, when we did our share by keeping guard at night.

"We have never lost faith in the present Government of this country and we thank God that with such men at the helm, justice and right will be done."

General Botha, in reply, said: "I am very glad to have received the address which the British Indians have presented to me. I thank them from my heart. I also thank them for the timely help which they have rendered by standing on duty during the rebellion, an act which was appreciated during that very trying time."

The audience, which consisted chiefly of Dutch and English residents, cheered this reference to the part taken by Indians during the rebellion.

### Our Experience with Officialdom

Readers will wonder why we are so late in reporting events that happened nearly a year ago. We could have reported the facts long ago but for the attitude taken up by the Censor, supported by the Defence Department. In June last we forwarded to the Censor a copy of a letter containing the account of the commandeering and giving some interesting details of the men's experience whilst on duty. We received a prompt reply that the letter could not be published. We referred the matter to the Minister for Defence and pointed out that, whilst we gave way on the point of publishing the letter, the apparent refusal to recognise the service rendered by these men was ungracious. The Minister endorsed the action of the Censor and added that it was undesirable to allow such a communication to be published in any paper circulating in South Africa, where conditions are peculiar and racial prejudices strong. We again wrote to the Minister requesting that recognition should be made and a letter of thanks sent these men. We ventured to assert that the Government was morally bound to treat these men with respect even at the risk of arousing racial prejudices, adding that, if ill-feeling was engendered by the knowledge that Indians in South Africa helped to protect the homes and lives of European citizens, it did not say much for the loyalty of the latter to the Empire, not to mention gratitude for such protection. To this letter we received no reply. A month later the report of General Botha's visit to Ventersdorp reached us. This time we did not consult the Censor but made the request direct to the Defence Department that we might publish the reply of the General to the address presented by the Indian community. We received the reply that there was no objection to our publishing both the address and the reply. What we have done, therefore, is to publish the facts necessary to form a complete story.

## From the Editor's Chair

### THE INDIAN BEARER COMPANY

WE much regret that it has been impossible to induce the Imperial Government to authorise the Imperial rate of pay for the men whom they desire to recruit for the South African Indian Bearer Company. South African Indians offered their services for any useful purpose many months ago to the Union Government, and through them to the Imperial Government, but they certainly did not offer these services on any conditions. It was an implied condition of the offer that no racial distinctions were to be made. Unfortunately, in effect, the Imperial Government has departed from that principle so far as the conditions of service laid down for the Indian Bearer Company are concerned. Europeans who are being recruited for services outside the Union, but in the African continent south of Egypt, are being granted the Union rate of pay. Europeans who are being recruited for services outside of the Union, elsewhere than the foregoing, are being given the Imperial rate of pay; but Indians who are to be recruited for most dangerous and arduous work, which certainly they are willing to perform, and whose risks they are equally willing to accept, are being offered the pay of the Indian Army. The Imperial Government fail to realize two things, first, that after all that has happened to the South African Indian community during the last ten years, no racial distinction may be made between recruits drawn from the sub-continent for service wheresoever it may be, at least certainly not in the disfavour of Indians, and certainly that the conditions of life amongst Indians in South Africa, and especially amongst those classes which would most readily respond to the invitation for services, differ radically from those obtaining in India, where the cost of living is enormously less than in this country. This is not the first time that the principle of non-racialism has been raised in similar matters. When the Stretcher-bearer Corps was raised under Mr. Gandhi at the time of the Natal Native Rebellion, the members were offered pay of 3/- a day as against the considerably higher pay of Europeans who would be recruited to do the same class of work. As a result the members declined to accept any pay from the Natal Government. When, a little later, a request was made for the organisation of a second company, the Indian community made it a condition that the rate of pay should be exactly the same as that of Europeans. Had the rebellion proceeded there is no doubt that the Natal Government would have granted this. As it came to an end, the matter went no further. We are sure that in their strong desire to serve their fellow-men and the Empire to-day, rather than accept the rate of pay offered, Indian volunteers would prefer to give their services gratis, could they afford it. But there is a great difference between what happened in 1906 and the present circumstances. Then the period of service could necessarily be of only a short duration. To-day the period of service is indeterminate, and nobody can expect Indians to volunteer their services for an indefinite period without pay. Moreover, to do that or to accept Indian Army rates of pay is impossible for many of those who are anxious to give their services. They have in most cases others dependent upon them, and very many of them at least live in this country according to the European standard with the consequent obligations thereof. Even the Imperial rate of pay would have been unsatisfactory enough from a financial point of view, but obviously Indians could not ask more than was granted to Europeans; but it is certainly a matter of principle that the Indian population of South Africa in Imperial matters should be placed in a position no whit inferior to that of Europeans similarly affected, and the result of the attitude

adopted by the Imperial Government—we believe that the Union authorities appreciate the position, but are powerless to effect redress—will be that the various Indian organisations and the leaders of the community cannot officially identify themselves with the recruiting of the necessary numbers, and we understand that this fact has been communicated to the recruiting authorities. In spite however, of this, there will doubtless be a certain number of persons who wish, quite apart from these things, to give their services, and we trust that it will be found possible unofficially to co-operate with the authorities so that the quota required may be made up, though the personnel of the body to be recruited will necessarily be inferior to what it would otherwise have been. Recruiting, however, will have to be undertaken independently of the official Indian organisations and through private enterprise, if at all. It is unfortunate that the Indian community, as such, is precluded from undertaking a duty which otherwise it would have been only too glad to perform.

#### A FATUOUS STATEMENT

We would have wished that it were possible to refrain from offering any comment upon the manner of Mr. Chamney's laying down his duties as a Government official, and his departure from South Africa, and would have been glad, had we been allowed to, to leave the matter where we did in a recent article in these columns. Unfortunately, however, certain irresponsible busybodies in the community have given Mr. Chamney an opportunity of making in public certain unfortunate remarks on the Asiatic legislation of the Transvaal. In his moments of post-prandial expansion Mr. Chamney is neither happy nor consistent, and we hardly imagine that, had any really representative members of the Indian community been present on the occasion concerned, and certainly not in the presence of Mr. Gandhi or any of those prominently associated with him, he would have "reaffirmed his belief in the wisdom of the legislation which led to the passive resistance movement, and as a result of that legislation claimed that substantial benefits for the Asiatic community had been established. For instance, the Transvaal was the only Province in the Union in which an Asiatic could live, which he could leave, and to which he could return at any period of his life. That was due to the issue of the registration certificate. Then, again, a trading preserve, as it were, had been established, which prevented too many of their countrymen coming in to compete with them." Anything more utterly false or stupid than these remarks could be hardly imagined. In the first place, it is not too much to say that, but for Mr. Chamney, the Transvaal Indian community, and indirectly Indians throughout South Africa, would have been spared much of the long and bitter struggle of Passive Resistance. Whether willing or unwilling, he was the instrument that the Government of the day chose for the harassment of Indians, with a view at one time certainly—we have it from the lips of no less a person than the present Prime Minister of the Union—to drive Indians altogether out of the Transvaal. This was the real purpose of the anti-Indian legislation of the Transvaal, as originally framed, and, but for the energy of the Passive Resistance, in all probability to-day there would have been no Indian population in the Transvaal at all, except a small one of cowards and slaves. Certainly it is utterly untrue to say that the Transvaal is the only Province in the Union to which an Indian can return at any time of his life, owing to the possession of his Registration Certificate. The legal holder of a Certificate of Domicile in Natal bearing marks of identification and purporting to be a certificate that he has satisfied the Immigration Officer that he has acquired a statutory domicile in that Province, is entitled to return to Natal at any time of his life, and he does not owe this advantage, or whatever it may be called, to the Transvaal Legislature. Perhaps, however, the most affronting

insult to the intelligence of Mr. Chamney's hearers and readers was to allege that the Asiatic legislation in the Transvaal had in effect made the Province a close preserve for those Indians who were already lawfully resident there. Assuming, for the purposes of argument, the desirability of the creation of a close preserve for Indians, we are utterly at a loss to know in what way Transvaal Indians occupy in that respect a superior position to Indians resident in Natal or the Cape. Mr. Chamney's argument is that no Indians from elsewhere can come to the Transvaal in order to compete with Transvaal Indians. Who can come to Natal or the Cape to compete with Indians in those Provinces? The mere fact that a Transvaal Indian can get a licence to trade for the asking upon production of his Registration Certificate has nothing whatever to do with the matter. He could always get a licence for the asking before—at least, since the famous decision of the Transvaal Supreme Court in 1904. In point of fact, the registration certificate actually stands as a bar to the issue of a trading licence to Indians in some cases, for though there are quite a number of Indians lawfully resident in that Province under the Immigration Law, but who for technical reasons are not entitled to receive a registration certificate, they are thereby debarred—at least in theory—from receiving a licence to trade. We can only suppose—for these extraordinary dicta are otherwise unaccountable—that the exhilaration of the surroundings, and the absence by design of all those directly or indirectly connected with the Passive Resistance movement, combined to lend wings to the flights of an enthusiastic Irish imagination, stizzed by the contemplation of an early release from the responsibilities of office.

### Indian Bearer Company

Pretoria, Oct. 2 (Reuter)—The following has been officially communicated to the Press from the Defence Headquarters:—

In regard to the Indian Bearer Company to be recruited in the Union, it should be observed that it is not the intention to confine its membership to Indians professing the Hindu or Mahomedan religions.

The Indian Native Army rates of pay on active service are as follow:—Lancehavildar, 21 rupees per month; naik, 18 rupees per month; bearer, 13½ rupees per month.

It is proposed to arrange for the payment in the Union of an allotment of the whole or a portion of the pay of any individual who wishes to provide for dependents.

Wounds, injury, and family pensions are admissible at slightly lower rates than those granted to combatants. Particulars of these rates are being obtained from the Government of India.

Indians recruited and passed medically fit will be provided with a third-class rail warrant to proceed to Durban by the District Staff Officer at the following recruiting centres, namely: Johannesburg, Capetown, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, and Maritaburg.

The number of recruits it is desired to obtain in the respective Provinces is: 10 from the Transvaal, 30 from the Cape Province, and 74 from Natal.

General inquiries in regard to this company should be addressed to Capt. Dunning, Indian Bearer Company, Mobilisation Camp, Stamford Hill, Durban.

It has been announced in London that the Imperial Government has accepted the services of an ambulance contingent of South African Indians. The anxiety of the community to give its services has been well known from the South African papers, says the London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*. At Durban, the offer was made some time ago to raise a medical contingent at the expense of the local Indians, but various "practical difficulties" were said to stand in the way

of acceptance. As a matter of fact, another correspondent points out, such difficulties as have existed have not been political. The Indians, led by Mr. Gandhi, performed with quiet heroism the work of stretcher-bearing in the South African War "Their offering similar service now, despite the hardships imposed upon them during the last few years by South African laws (now happily modified), is a fine tribute to them."

### Indentured Labour

When the Report of Messrs. MacNeill and Chimman Lal, on the condition of indentured Indian labourers in certain British Colonies, was published in this country (says the *Indian Social Reformer*) we commented on it and reproduced large excerpts from it dealing with certain phases of the subject, especially the excessive prevalence of immorality and suicide in some of the Colonies visited. Our comments brought us a letter from one Totaram, care of an address in Central India. We did not see our way to publish the letter at the time as it contained statements which were calculated to introduce an element of bitterness into the discussion of the merits of the system of indentured labour which, we have repeatedly declared, must go. But, in view of the probability of the question being brought up for final settlement at an early date—it is most desirable that it should be during Lord Hardinge's Viceroyalty—we think some passages from the letter may be found useful. Totaram said that he had lived 21 years in Fiji, was there when Messrs. MacNeill and Chimman Lal visited it and had brought with great difficulty much information and material to disprove the conclusions of the two Commissioners. He sent us a copy of a book he had written in Hindi entitled "Twenty one years in Fiji." In his letter, he said: "It makes my heart burn with indignation when I read the remark (of the Commissioners), 'We are convinced . . . that its advantages (of the indenture system) have far outweighed its disadvantages.' I was indeed very glad when I read your opinion that 'these observations would be equally appropriate of slavery in its worst forms.' Yes! The indenture system is slavery pure and simple. Mr. J. W. Burton, a Missionary of Fiji, rightly observes in his book "Fiji of to-day": "The difference is small between the state he (the coolie) now finds himself in, and absolute slavery. The coolies themselves for the most part frankly call it *Narak* (hell)! The system is a barbarous one, and the best supervision cannot eliminate cruelty and injustice. There is something dehumanising and degrading about the whole system"

### News in Brief

By invitation of His Worship the Mayor of Durban, a meeting of Indians was held at the Town Hall, on Wednesday morning, to discuss the question of subscribing funds to the Governor-General's Overseas Contingent Fund.

Both Messrs. Henwood and Kentridge, the Unionist and Labour candidates for the Durban Central Division respectively, have held meetings during this week, at which Indian voters have been specially invited in order to hear what these aspirants to Parliamentary honours have to say for themselves and their respective parties.

Dr. Abdurahman is of opinion that a strength of 13,000 could be raised for the Coloured contingent.

The United Provinces Congress Committee has recommended the election of Mrs. Annie Besant as president of the Congress.

### અહવારીક પંચાંગ

વાર	ખ્રીસ્તી ૧૯૧૫ અકટો.	હીંદુ ૧૯૭૧ આસો	મુસલમાન ૧૩૩૩ જલકાદ જલહજ	પારસી ૧૨૮૫	સુર્યોદય ક. મી.	સુવસ્ત ક. મી.
શુક્ર	૮	૧૬	૨૮	૨૭	૫-૩૦	૬-૭
શનિ	૯	સુદ ૧	૨૯	૨૮	૫-૨૯	૬-૭
રવિ	૧૦	" ૨	૩૦	૨૯	૫-૨૮	૬-૮
મોમ	૧૧	" ૩	૧	૩૦	૫-૨૭	૬-૮
મંગળ	૧૨	" ૪	૨	૧	૫-૨૬	૬-૯
બુધ	૧૩	" ૫	૩	૨	૫-૨૫	૬-૯
ગુરુ	૧૪	" ૬	૪	૩	૫-૨૪	૬-૧૦

### હીંદુસ્તાનના સમાચાર

સંયુક્ત પ્રાંતમાં હીંદી ભાષામાં 'અબ્યુદય' જાણી નીકળે છે. તેમાં 'હીંદીઅન ઓપીનીઅન'માંથી ઉતારેલા એક લેખ માટે તે પત્રના જાણીતા માલિક અને લોક સેવા માટે આખા હિંદમાં માન પામેલા તથા હિંદની વડી ધારા સભામાં ખીરાજતા પંડીતજી મદન મોહન માલવીઆ પાસેથી રૂ. ૨૫૦૦ ની જમીનગીરી માંગી છે. મજકુર વાંધાવાળો લેખ ગેલ્ડ કોર્ટ ના એક વરતમાન પત્રમાંથી અમે ઉતાર્યો હતો. જાણ અને જાણનાઓને લગતા કાયદા પ્રમાણે પહેલી જમીનગીરી રૂ. ૫૦૦ થી ૨,૦૦૦ સુધી માગવાનો નિયમ છે અને તેથી રૂ. ૨,૫૦૦ ની જમીનગીરીની માગણી જેર કાયદે સર છે. સરકારે મંગેલી જમીનગીરીની રકમ આપવાની પંડીતજીએ સ્પષ્ટ ના પાડી, અબ્યુદય પ્રેસ તે બંધ કરશે એમ જણાવ્યું છે.

પાછળથી મળેલી ટપાલમાં હિંદીથી આવેલા જાણનાઓ છે કે સરકારે આ હુકમ રદ કર્યો છે, અને પંડીતજીને આ જમીનગીરીમાંથી મુક્ત કર્યા છે.

અમદાવાદનો એક લખનાર મુબંધના એક જાણનાં જણાવે છે કે ઉત્તર ગુજરાત અને કાઠીયાવાડ તેમજ પાલન પુરના ભાગોમાં દુકાળ ધુરકે છે. વરસાદે પુસકળ રાહ જોવાડ્યા કરી છે આ ભાગોમાંના ઘણેકે ઠેકણે ઉભો પાક વરસાદની અછતને લીધે કરમાઈ જતો આવ્યો છે, ધાસચારા વગર ટોરોને ઘણી હાડમારી ભોગવવી પડે છે.

સપ્ટેમ્બર ૧૦ના અરસામાં વિલાયતમાં મળેલા તાર ઉપરથી જણાય છે કે હિંદમાં આ વખતે વરસાદ બહુ અનિયમીત પડેલો છે. ગુજરાતમાં દુકાળ જેવી સ્થિતિ છે, સારે કાનપુર અને લખનઉમાં ૬૦ કલાકમાં ૧૯ ઈંચ પાણી પડ્યું છે, આ વરસાદથી કેટલીક મીડોમાં જ જ રીટ પાણી થઈ ગયું હતું. સો જેટલાં ઘર પડી ગયાં અને એક દળરને તુકસાન થયું હતું.

હીંદુ યુનીવર્સિટી ખીલ ઉપર વિચાર ચલાવનારી કમીટી એ ખેતીવાડી સંબંધમાં જ્ઞાન આપવાની તુરતજ ગોઠવણ કરવાની ભલામણ કરી છે. તેના કારણમાં એમ ખતાવવમર્ક આવ્યું છે કે તેથી સરકારી નોકરી, વહીલાત, ડાકટરી તથા ઇજનેરના ધંધાઓ ઉપર જે તુટાતુટ પડે છે તેમાં ઘટાડો થશે.

### હીંદુસ્તાનની સ્ટીમરો અને ટપાલ

સ્ટી. સુરત-તા. ૧૦ અકટોબરના અરસામાં આવવા વધી છે. સ્ટીમર અમલોટી -તા. ૧૯ સપ્ટેમ્બરે કલકત્તાથી ઉપડી છે. સ્ટીમર ચક્રદીના -તા. ૧૪ અકટોબરના અરસામાં જમખાર રસ્તે મુબંધ જશે.