

# Indian Opinion

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## NOTES AND NEWS

ACCORDING to a telegram dated 18th April, Reuter's correspondent at Bombay understands that Mr. Srinivasa Sastri has accepted the appointment of the Government of India as its Agent in South Africa in connection with the operation of the Indo-Union Agreement on the Asiatic question.

A message from London says that a campaign to raise £50,000 for the Indian Colleges Fund has been launched at a meeting in London by Sir Frederick Whyte. He warmly advocated the cause of women's education, deploring the fact that education and social progress lagged behind political reforms in India. Mr. Arthur Mathew declared that India must alter her matrimonial and social customs before women's education could definitely progress. He urged that the best means of assuring good feeling between East and West lay in ardent co-operation in such admirable objects as women's education. Lord Meston approved of the scheme.

According to a message from London dated March 2, despite the adverse decision of the meeting of the Council of the Conservative and Unionist Party against votes for women at the age of 21, it is understood that the Government is likely to give early attention to women's franchise. A conference of all parties is to be called to discuss the complicated problems associated with the extension of the franchise. It is generally considered in political circles that votes for women at 25 are more probable. Not the least difficulty is the proportion of women to men voters. At present women voters outnumber men in four Parliamentary Divisions and the figures are very close in three others. It is estimated that the extension of the franchise to women at the age of 25 would give a majority to women in almost every constituency.

The *Tribune*, Lahore, writes:—The Excise Minister in Burma recently stated in the local Council that the policy of the Government in the matter of excise regulation was one of supply and demand. So long as there was a demand on the part of the drinking population for a certain quantity and quality of liquor, Government should supply it and no curtailment would be possible. This frankly and outrageously commercial policy on the part of the Government in a matter vitally affecting the moral and material well-being of the people is entirely unacceptable to, and will be strongly condemned by, Indian opinion. In view of the fact that the Punjab and Bombay have also been pursuing a similar policy, we are inclined to think that most or all the Provincial Governments have been acting in concert in this matter and it cannot but forebode evil for the moral and material regeneration of India—unless this policy is set aside under the influence of a strong public opinion.

The All-India Trade Union Congress held its sessions this year at Delhi under the presidentship of Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasada. The major part of the presidential address was devoted, as might have been expected from the President's great experience in the subject, to the grievances of railway employees which have been prominently brought into relief by the recent Bengal Nagpur Railway strike, which happily has now been called off. Wrongful dismissals, insecurity of employment, ill-treat-

ment, racial discrimination, low wages, insufficient house accommodation, these were some of the causes that goaded the men to strike. The rough handling of the strikers, before enquiring into their grievances, created much public resentment. Not more sympathetic is the attitude of the Government of India towards the lot of the poor railway employees. The Assembly has for the third time carried by a majority Mr. Acharya's motion for an enquiry into the grievances of railway employees in India generally, but there is no near prospect of the Government of India taking any action on it. We are glad that the Trade Union Congress called upon Government to amend the Indian Railways Act by setting up a central wages board for the settling of disputes concerning wages and conditions of service on Railways and making it obligatory on the Railways to establish joint industrial councils on the lines of the English Railways Act. The B. N. R. strike has fully demonstrated the need for such bodies. The Congress also urged upon Government the need for taking immediate steps to reach the goal of prohibition at an early date as the liquor traffic has considerably affected the general welfare of the working classes in India. Further the Congress demanded adult franchise, an eight-hour day, machinery for fixing minimum wages, sickness and unemployment insurance, old age pensions for widows and orphans, maternity benefits, and the prohibition of the employment of women in underground work.—*Indian Social Reformer*.

## SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS RIGHTED

II

(BY C. F. ANDREWS)

A SECOND misunderstanding, which has often been mentioned in India, by way of criticism of the Agreement, is this. It is said, that the Deputation from India has accepted the dangerous precedent of allowing the Indian Question to be left in the control of the Provinces rather than under the Union.

This is an extraordinary mistake. As a matter of fact, the Union Government, all the way through, endeavours in the Agreement, to take things as far as possible, into its own hands, and out of the control of the Provinces. The Agreement, indeed, states quite correctly that in certain matters the Union Constitution is such, that it is impossible for the central authority to interfere. But the Union Government promises to go as far as it can: beyond that point it cannot promise.

For example, in education, the Union Government cannot take Indian Education entirely out of Provincial control; but it can regulate its own grant to the Province of Natal, and give a bigger sum for Indian Education if Natal acts properly. It can also give to such a central Institution as Fort Hare,—which is in certain respects under Union direction,—a grant for higher Indian Education, and it has promised to do this.

The Union Government can also propose to the Province of Natal that a Provincial Commission shall be appointed, and the Province is bound to carry this out. If it did not do so, it would be in danger of forfeiting its grant.

In the same way, the Union Government cannot interfere with local municipal affairs, as far as the housing of Indians is concerned. But the Union has control over Health and Sanitation. It can, therefore, indirectly assist the Indians by instituting a Health Enquiry, and asking the Durban authorities to take action according to its findings. It can also invite Advisory Committees of Indians to help this Enquiry with their advice. This is surely a great step forward in Indian affairs in Natal, if only advantage is taken of it. Personally, I do not regard either this Education or this Housing Commission as merely so much 'political eyewash'. On the contrary, they are likely to prove the salvation of the Indians in Durban, as a growing and expanding community.

On one further point,—of the greatest importance, the Union Government are now taking such Union action as will definitely curtail provincial action. This is with regard to licences. The new Licensing Consolidation Act will make licences in every Province uniform. The new licensing laws are not likely to conform to the lowest standard, but to the highest. In this case, the Transvaal and Natal licensing laws are likely to be improved, instead of made worse.

Therefore there is no fear that the Union Government will leave more in the hands of the Provinces under the new Agreement. Indeed, we may justly hope, that the reverse will happen and that the Union Government will control the Provinces still more in the future than in the past.

## The Way of the Patriot

(BY H. S. L. POLAK)

[I have discovered the following conclusion of Mr. Polak's speech in India on Self-Government, when he was there in the early days of the struggle. It is a great pleasure to save this from oblivion by publishing it in INDIAN OPINION.—C. F. A.]

The way of the patriot is perilous. Religion is not an easy thing. The true patriot, the truly religious man is a pioneer seeking the light by which to lead his countrymen to their duty, to their attainment of their national ideal. He has to break a new path; he has to blaze a new trail; he has to dwell in the lonely wastes; he has to scale unclimbed peaks, from which to view the steep ascent from the past and yet the steeper ascent to the future. And in the accomplishment of his task, he will have many bitter failures and unnumbered disappointments; for that is the lot of the pioneer.

In South Africa, you have had Indian passive resistance martyrs as well as those who oppressed them. But South Africa has also given a great woman thinker to the world. She may perhaps be known to some of you. I refer to Olive Schreiner, the sister of the High Commissioner of the Union of South Africa in London. I look forward to the day, when India too will have her High Commissioner in London. Olive Schreiner is regarded as one of the greatest women in the western world, and in her younger years she wrote a wonderful book called 'Dreams,' in which she interwove a prose poem called 'The Story of the Hunter.'

A hunter was resting his weary limbs by a stream one day after following his strenuous pursuit, and as he stooped to drink, he saw reflected in the water a lovely vision of a white bird. He was entranced, and sought far and wide to learn its name and where it had its abode. Wise men told him that it was the Bird of Truth, but that none knew where it dwelt. The Hunter, however, was determined to die, if necessary, in his quest, and went to distant lands, catching many beautiful birds which satisfied his need for the time, but at length, the promptings of his vision compelled him to realise that none of these, beautiful though they were, was the Bird of Truth, but only a bird of Desire, and he liberated them one by one. For this men called him a mad man and drove him into the wilderness, where he spent many weary days, always seeking but never finding, until he became dispirited and dejected, and temptations thronged around him in alluring shapes urging him to return to his fellows and enjoy with them life which he was wasting by his mad pursuit after the unattainable.

Almost he succumbed, but the memory of the Bird of Truth flashed upon his mind and uplifted him and he put the temptations from him and fled still further into the desolate spaces, still seeking. Presently he came to a mountainous country where the paths were few and dangerous, and, alone, he came to where no longer a path was to be found. He climbed a peak and then a higher range, only to find still higher obstacles before him. Sternly and doggedly he climbed upwards hewing his way hardly through the living rock. He grew old and bent and feeble, so that he could carve no more than an inch a day, until the day came when he could go no further, and he sank down upon the rocky mountain side, with despair around him and the hand of death upon his heart,

and he wept that he had given all his life to the pursuit of an elusive shadow, he had denied himself the delights and companionship of men and now he was dying, alone, broken, a failure.

His eyes were closing in the sleep of death when he felt an almost imperceptible weight fall gently upon his breast.

It was a white feather. And his dying ears heard a voice say: "You are not alone or unfriended. You have not been useless or a failure. You have sought the Bird of Truth bravely and steadfastly, and you have achieved according to your efforts. For you have carved a road for others to tread and by it those who follow after you may climb to yet higher and nobler things, up the steps that you have made.

You will not now find the Bird of Truth, but later and with more striving. To-day you have gained a feather from its wing. To-morrow you will clasp the Bird itself to your breast." And so he sank peacefully to sleep.

That, it seems to me, must be the spirit in which the life of a country must be built up. Only in the spirit of the pioneer, amidst suffering and tribulation, is Self-Government, in its fullest meaning, in overflowing measure, to be attained. How many of India's public men will become pioneers? How many will hold aloft for their countrymen the torch of Truth?

I have heard an enormous amount of patriotic talk on various platforms in this country. I could wish that many of the speakers would adopt a self-denying ordinance and vow to study deeply, earnestly and thoroughly, so that their work might be better done. One of the most striking conditions of apprenticeship in the Servants of India Society, founded by that great-souled patriot, Mr. Gokhale, is that for five years the workers are bound to silence and study of the problems to be faced by them. Even the present President, the Hon. Mr. Sastri, had to undergo this discipline at the feet of his Master. If that ideal of silent and persistent work in the country's cause be accepted we shall soon have a chain of pioneer-workers for Self-Government from one end of India to the other.

## Mahatma Gandhi's Visit to China

[The following interview has appeared in the Indian Press concerning Mahatmajī's proposed visit to China.—O.F.A.]

"My visit to India was worth while for the day that I spent with Mr. Gandhi, if for nothing else," said Dr. Rufus M. Jones, Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College, Pennsylvania, on his arrival in London from the East in mail week.

My way round the world since I left Philadelphia last June has been via Japan and China, where at the request of the Chinese Y.M.C.A., I lectured to Christian and non-Christian students alike 115 times in the chief centres. I was able to take from them, personally, an invitation to Mr. Gandhi to pay China a similar visit next year, which he has gladly accepted, and I hope that no passport difficulties will interfere with the proposed visit, for I believe Mr. Gandhi can make a unique contribution to the solution of Chinese difficulties at the present time.

### PROFOUND BELIEF IN LOVE

I asked him if, after his recent experience, he still felt that the law of love was the strongest power. He answered deliberately that he held the belief as strongly as ever he had done and that there was not one of his opponents towards whom

he harboured any feeling of antagonism. After the first minute or two we found we were talking as if we had known one another all our lives. Although I believe he weighs only about 90 lb, Mr. Gandhi seemed in excellent health. I found that while there may be criticism of Gandhi in India, you have only to scratch a little below the surface to find the intensely deeply seated devotion there is to him everywhere.

Dr. Rufus Jones was much impressed with the gathering of Gandhi with his students in Ahmedabad and of the life in the Ashrams that have been established by him in various parts for testing out the most suitable cotton crops for India and the construction of the simple machinery for home spinning. "It was beautiful to see Mr. Gandhi at the early morning gathering of his students at which he reads some sacred writings. He sits surrounded by children to whom he talks smilingly as he explains any difficult passage. On Saturdays he is interpreting the New Testament to his students; and I was told that nearly all of them read the New Testament every day. The Brother who took me over the Asram near Ahmedabad, was a man who might have been St. Francis of Assisi. If Gandhi is producing men and a brotherhood like this he is doing a great work, even if he may not be able to combat the evil effects of modern civilisation by his home-spinning scheme."—*Manchester Guardian*.

## The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[BY M. K. GANDHI]

PART II.

Chapter XXI

THE £3 TAX

Balasundaram's case brought me into touch with the indentured Indians: What impelled me, however, to make a deep study of their condition was the campaign for bringing them under special heavy taxation.

In that year, 1894, the Natal Government sought to impose an annual tax of £25 on the indentured Indians. The proposal astonished me. I put the matter before the Congress for discussion and it was immediately resolved to organise the necessary opposition.

At the outset, I must explain briefly the genesis of the tax:

### GENESIS OF THE TAX

About the year 1860 the Europeans in Natal, finding that there was considerable scope for sugarcane cultivation, felt themselves in need of labour. Without extra labour the cultivation of cane and the manufacture of sugar were impossible, and the Natal Zulus were not suited to this form of work. The Natal Government therefore corresponded with the Indian Government and secured their permission to recruit Indian labour. These recruits were to sign an indenture to labour in Natal for five years and at the end of the term they were to be at liberty to settle there and to have full rights of ownership of land. Those were the inducements held out to them, for the Whites then had looked forward to improving their agriculture by the industry of the Indian labourers after the term of their indentures had expired.

But the Indians gave more than had been expected of them. They grew large quantities of vegetables. They introduced a number of Indian varieties and made it possible to grow the local varieties cheaper. They also introduced the mango. Nor did their enterprise stop at agriculture. They entered trade,

They purchased land for building and many raised themselves from the status of labourers to that of owners of land and houses. Merchants from India followed them and settled there for trade. The late Seth Abubaker Amod was the first among them. He soon built up an extensive business.

The white traders were alarmed. When they first welcomed the Indian labourers they had not reckoned with their business skill. They might be tolerated as independent agriculturists, but their competition in trade could not be brooked.

This sowed the seed of antagonism to Indians. Many other factors contributed to its growth. Our different ways of living, our simplicity, our contentment with small gains, our indifference to the laws of hygiene and sanitation, our slowness in keeping our surroundings clean and tidy, and our stinginess in keeping our houses in good repair,—all these combined with the difference in religion, contributed to the fan the flame of antagonism. Through legislation this antagonism found its expression in the Disfranchising Bill and the Bill to impose a tax on the indentured Indians. Independent of legislation a number of pin-pricks had already been started.

#### PIN-PRICKS

The first suggestion was that the Indian labourers should be forcibly repatriated, so that the term of their indentures might expire in India. The Government of India was not likely to accept the suggestion. Another proposal was therefore made to the effect that:

1. The indentured labourer should return to India on the expiry of his indenture;
2. He should sign a fresh indenture every two years, an increment being given at each renewal;
3. In the case of his refusal to return to India or renew the indenture he should pay an annual tax of £25.

A Deputation composed of Sir Henry Binns and Mr. Mason was sent to India to get the proposal approved by the Government there. The Viceroy at that time was Lord Elgin. He disapproved of the £25 tax, but agreed to a poll tax of £3. I thought then, as I do even now, that this was a serious neglect of duty on the part of the Viceroy. In giving his approval he had in no way thought of the interests of India. It was no part of his duty thus to accommodate the Natal Europeans. In the course of three or four years an indentured labourer with his wife and each male child over 16, and female child over 13 came under the impost. To levy a yearly tax of £12 from a family of four—husband, wife and two children—when the average income of the husband was never more than 14 shillings a month was atrocious and unknown anywhere else in the world.

#### RESULT OF STRUGGLE

We organised a fierce campaign against this tax. If the Natal Indian Congress had remained silent on the subject, the Viceroy might have approved of even the £25 tax. The reduction from £25 to £3 was very likely due solely to the Congress agitation. But I may be mistaken in thinking so. It may be possible that the Indian Government had disapproved of the £25 tax from the beginning and reduced it to £3 irrespective of the opposition from the Congress. In any case it was a breach of trust on the part of the Indian Government. As trustee of the welfare of India the Viceroy ought never to have approved of this inhuman tax.

The Congress could not regard it as any great achievement to have succeeded in getting the tax reduced from £25 to £3. The regret was still there that it had not completely safeguarded the interests of the indentured Indians. It ever remained its determination to get the tax remitted, but it was twenty years before the determination was realised. And when it was realised, it came as a result of the

labours of not only the Natal Indians but of all the Indians in South Africa. The breach of faith with the late Mr. Gokhale became the occasion of the final campaign, in which the indentured Indians took their full share, some of them losing their lives as a result of the firing that was resorted to, and over ten thousand suffering imprisonment.

But truth triumphed in the end. The sufferings of the Indians were the expression of that truth. But it would not have triumphed except for unflinching faith, great patience and incessant effort. Had the community given up the struggle, had the Congress abandoned the campaign and submitted to the tax as inevitable, the hated impost would have continued to be levied from the indentured Indians until this day, to the eternal shame of the Indians in South Africa and of the whole of India.

## “You are the keys to Freedom”

### Sarojini Naidu's Appeal to Students

To the students at Delhi, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu delivered an address. She said, though she had grown older in age, yet her spirit was as young as ever. She exhorted every young man to shake off lethargy and to be up and doing. Her message was “Let the dead past bury its dead.”

Concluding, Mrs. Naidu said:—“You, young men; you are keys to heaven; you are the keys to freedom. Come! Come, you young men! Unlock the door of slavery and break off the chains that bind Mother India to-day. Come! I will work with you untiringly! Let us throw off the yoke of slavery and release our Mother from the tyranny of those who are smarting under the yoke of Imperialism.”

## The Proposed Segregation In Mombasa

(A MEMORANDUM PREPARED BY THE YOUNG MEN'S UNION, MOMBASA)

It seems the Local Government with the consent of the Colonial Office is determined to revive segregation in Mombasa Township and the Indians of Kenya in general and of Mombasa in particular must fight against the introduction of segregation before it is too late. Every Indian must realise the importance of this question and must finally understand what harm the contemplated segregation will do to the Indian interests in this Colony. With a view to explaining the present position as regards the proposed sale of residential plots restricting the sale to Europeans only, the following facts are given.

It is contemplated by the Government to reserve the area bounded by Salim Road, South Railway Line, Tritton Road and Golf course measuring about 160 acres for the European residence only. Owing to the policy of segregation contemplated to be followed by the Government before 1923, a few plots were sold by the Government in the said area in 1918 allowing any person without distinction of race or colour to buy the plots, but with a condition that no Indian could reside or stay in the houses erected thereon except as domestic servants. Later, in 1916 and 1918, a few more plots were sold restricting the sales to Europeans only. The total area alienated thereby is approximately 30 acres.

It must be borne in mind, that, at the time of all the said sales, the Indian community strongly resented the unjust and arbitrary restrictions put on sales and carried on their fight against the invidious policy till July 1923, when the Imperial Government published the White Paper. While doing injustice to Indians on all the other points at issue it definitely abandoned segregation

in townships without any qualification. It was then considered by all competent persons, that non segregation in townships was the only point decided with equity and justice. The following is the text of non-segregation clause from the White Paper of July 1923:—

"The next matter for consideration is the segregation of European and Non-European races. Following upon Prof. Simpson's report the policy of segregation was adopted in principle and it was proposed by Lord Milner to retain this policy both on sanitary and social grounds. In so far as commercial segregation is concerned it has already been generally agreed that this should be discontinued but with regard to residential segregation matters have been in suspense for some time and all sales of township plots have been held up pending a final decision on the question of principle involved. It is now the view of competent medical authorities that as a sanitation measure the segregation of Europeans and Asiatics is not absolutely essential to the preservation of the health of the community; a rigid enforcement of sanitary, police and building regulations without any racial discrimination by Colonial and Municipal authorities will suffice. It may well prove in practice that different races will by natural affinity keep together in separate quarters but to affect such separation by legislative enactments except on strongest sanitary grounds would not in the opinion of His Majesty's Government be justifiable. They have therefore decided that the policy of segregation between Europeans and Asiatics in Townships must be abandoned."

The Indians of Mombasa were surprised and disillusioned for the first time in April 1926, when the Government expressed its intention that the sale of 21 residential plots in Cliffe Avenue recommended by the District Committee shall be restricted to Europeans only. It was generally felt then that the deliberate breach of non-segregation policy was initiated to satisfy the demands of the local European community.

At the suggestion of the Indian members on the District Committee, the Committee agreed not to proceed with the sales before three months in order to allow the community time to represent their case in proper quarters.

On 15th May, 1926, a joint deputation of Indians and Arabs waited upon His Excellency Sir Edward Grigg who was then in Mombasa and submitted a memorandum representing to him how the proposed sale of plots was unjust, illegal and against the White Paper and requested His Excellency to do justice by abandoning the unjust restrictions upon sales. In reply to the deputation His Excellency expressed an opinion that the case of the signatories was strong, but refused to discuss the legal aspect of the subject. His Excellency was very sympathetic to the case of the signatories of the memorandum. To explain why the restrictions on the sales were imposed he read the following extract from the letter of the Commissioner of Lands, Nairobi, to the land Officer, Mombasa:—"The Secretary of State for the Colonies has now agreed that the sale of plots in the area bounded by Cliffe Avenue and Salim Road cannot legally be unrestricted, but must be confined to Europeans only," and stated that the proposed restrictions were due to the legal decision of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. His Excellency promised to supply gist of correspondence passed between the Government and the Colonial Office and extend time of sales in order to allow signatories to put their case before the Colonial Office and he also promised to represent the views of the signatories to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Not only the gist of this correspondence was never supplied, but the Colonial Secretary never gave information to the Secretary of the Indian Association in spite of various requests. In short, no definite ground, on which the restrictions were based, was ever disclosed by the Local Government to the Non-European Com-

munities failed to understand what grounds they should meet by putting forward a further Memorandum. But it could be safely presumed, from the extract of the letter of the Commissioner of Lands, and particularly the words "has now agreed," that the Secretary of State for the Colonies has sanctioned restrictions after more than once representations were made by the Local Government to the Colonial Office and sanction was asked for.

Though the Local Government has not disclosed the reasons why the unjust policy is proposed to be followed, it can be ascertained from the following extract from the reply of the Secretary of State for the Colonies given to Col. J. Wedgwood on the 10th June 1926, that the restrictive covenants entered into with previous landholders are the only grounds given on which the present policy is based. The following is the reply:—"I have been asked to reply. The information in possession of my Rt. Hon. friend the Secretary of State for the Colonies does not enable him to identify the particular plots referred to in the question but the facts are very probably as stated. It should be borne in mind that the transition from the policy of segregation to one of non-segregation involved some difficulty and it was pointed out by the Government concerned that in certain cases the land was legally subject to restrictive covenants entered into under the former system. After careful consideration it was decided that where it was not possible to waive such covenants without incurring legal proceeding entailing the probability of an injunction against the Government it would be necessary to retain the restrictions. The sales mentioned by the hon. member no doubt fall within this category."

But any one who would care to read the leases made between the Government and the previous landholders and registered in Mombasa registry will find that no restrictive covenants are incorporated as regards unsold adjoining plots. Those leases only contained covenants that the leased premises cannot be transferred to nor can be used by Non-Europeans but do not contain one word about adjoining unsold plots.

It is interesting to know that certain Japanese tenants were occupying one building in the said area, since 1924; and the Government has now given notice to the landlord asking him to eject his Japanese tenants from the premises otherwise proceedings for forfeiture of the lease will be taken by the Government against the landlord. It is also remarkable that the application by the Japan Cotton Trading Company Ltd., a well-known Japanese firm to purchase a house in that area has been refused by the Government on the grounds of racial discrimination only.

From the Minutes of the District Committee of February, 1927, it could be seen that the Government has now definitely decided to enforce the restrictive covenants in the old leases and also to restrict the future sales in that area to Europeans only. It should be noted that even now no ground for adoption of such policy has been disclosed and the Government even does not care to define the area within which such restrictions will be extended.

It must be borne in mind that the said area is the healthiest part of Mombasa Township. It should also be understood that under the proposed policy non-British Europeans including ex-enemy aliens and others will be given preference over British Indian subjects of His Majesty as regards the acquisition of property in a British Crown Colony.

The Indian community must oppose the sale with all its strength and must move the Government of India to take up its cause. It is not too late yet. The danger must be met in its inception otherwise it will be too strong to fight at a later date. It is hoped that this short memorandum of facts will awaken the community to the danger ahead and will move the supporters of the Indian community in India and in England and the Government of India to take immediate necessary action.