Gandhi in South Africa: A Racist or A Liberator?
**Publications**

Gandhi in South Africa:
A Racist or A Liberator?

Siby K. Joseph

INSTITUTE OF GANDHIAN STUDIES, WARDHA
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At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question; but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth; I have saved my memory an undue strain; and what is more, whenever I have been obliged to compare my writing even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency will do well to take the meaning that my latest writing may yield unless, of course, they prefer the old. But before making the choice they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies.

M. K. Gandhi
Harijan, 30-9-1939
Foreword

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South Africa

History is about people’s perceptions and because it is written long after the subject is no longer able to clarify, correct or abrogate conclusions drawn by historians, the subject always remains at the mercy of writers. But I believe that a good historian should desist from making judgements.

Truth is important but truth can be distorted by the way in which it is presented or by giving a one-sided version, or by being simply untruthful. At issue is the question—“Am I writing that which I believe to be the absolute truth or am I choosing to report selectively to convey a message that I wish to convey?” These questions will help to establish a more objective approach. The quest for the truth is not an easy task. What appears to be the truth to one maybe something else to another.

Over the ages we have seen how history is presented from differing perspectives and unless one reads extensively one can be left with a distorted picture.

In this book Dr Joseph has done extensive research to contextualize and to counter some of the conclusions drawn in one South African book written by two academics. A book
which aroused the wrath of many African people against Gandhiji and has been the sole reference point for the raising of objections to Gandhiji’s statue being installed in Ghana and Malawi. He has been labeled a racist who despised African people.

In the early 20th century Gandhiji cautioned young readers in India,

“Literature, full of the virus of self-indulgence, and served out in attractive forms, is flooding our country from the West and there is the greatest need for our youth to be on their guard. The present is for them an age of transition of ideals and ordeals; the one thing needful for the world, its youth and particularly the youth of India in this crisis, is Tolstoy’s progressive self-restraint, for it alone can lead to true freedom for themselves, the country and the world.”

It is always good to be exposed to many perspectives before one can make any conclusions. We are all human and as such are not infallible. Gandhiji too was human and never claimed to be infallible. In fact he claimed all his frailties but strangely he never claimed to be a racist, a casteist or being Gay. Those are tags given him by some scholars, if one can refer to them as such. But certainly drawing from the myriad writings of Gandhiji I believe that a person who advocated love of all life cannot be racist.

This book helps to clarify one point very clearly and that is that one cannot make conclusions based on quotes, stated out of context. It is also essential to verify whether the
statement was actually written or stated by the person or whether it is imputed to that person. So perhaps reading this book one maybe in a better position to contextualize that which was written by his critics. However whether a reader would be convinced one way or another will be in the end dependent on the reader.

Gandhiji said

*I have taken to journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and precept under severe restraint the use of matchless weapon of “Satyagraha” which is a direct corollary of nonviolence and truth. I am anxious, indeed I am impatient, to demonstrate that there is no remedy for the many ills of life save that of nonviolence. It is a solvent strong enough to melt the stoniest heart. To be true to my faith, therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write idly. I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics on my vocabulary. It is a training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds. The reader sees the pages of Young India fairly well dressed up and sometimes, with Romain Rolland, he is inclined to say “what a fine old man he must be”. Well, let the world understand that the fineness is carefully and prayerfully cultivated.*
Dr Joseph has painfully and carefully gathered information and presented it respectfully and without malice, in this book to illustrate that Gandhiji may have written some words which we today regard as highly insulting but were not actually uttered or written in malice.

This book gives another viewpoint but for the diligent reader it is important to gather his or her own information which is freely available on the internet and be discerning.

It is precisely for this reason that I do not wish to extol the veracity of this book in the foreword save to say that I appreciate the work done and the intention to remedy the perceptions created by the other books.

Dr Joseph has clearly shown that by researching further a completely different picture can emerge. I am an ardent follower of Gandhiji’s teachings. I try to closely follow his teachings, which are important and where there is any doubt I decide for myself what to accept and what to reject. But clearly those who follow Gandhian teachings the idea of him being racist does not resonate with his teachings. Gandhiji never propagated hate or prejudices of any kind. These are attributes he fought against.

He went against the wishes of his benefactors when he admitted a dalit family into his Ashram in Sabarmati. He advocated respect for all jobs no matter how menial, and never shirked from performing the most menial tasks.

While in South Africa when he initially chose to live there as a status conscious lawyer he decided to live where other lawyers lived and chose a house in Beach Grove. Later in
1904 when he decided to shed this life of luxury and vanity and live close to nature in a simple home, he chose to relocate to Inanda. He had family and friends living in Tongaat who offered him land and a place to stay. Instead he chose to live in Inanda as a neighbour to Inkosi Isaiah Shembe and hundreds of his people and Dr John Dube and his people. He did not erect any fences. Phoenix Settlement was freely accessible to all.

Preface

I have great pleasure in presenting the work *Gandhi in South Africa: A Racist or A Liberator?* before the readers. I think a brief background on how this work was born is in order. This book took shape in my mind due to a number of events and controversies in the last couple of years, centered on Gandhi’s approach to race and racial discrimination. The year 2015 marked the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi’s return to India from South Africa. A large number of programmes were organized by governmental and non-governmental organizations in India and South Africa on the occasion. However, what was lacking in these celebrations was an objective analysis of Gandhi’s life and work in South Africa. This was significant in the context of the literature produced during this period which portrayed Gandhi as an ardent casteist and racist who had disdain for the natives of South Africa. The United Nations declared theme of International Day of Peace - 2015 was “Partnerships for Peace-Dignity for All.” I was invited to speak on the theme from a Gandhian perspective by the Odisha Peace Builders Forum in a public meeting held at Bhubaneswar on 21st September 2015. On the same day, I had the opportunity to address a workshop held at the Action Aaid regional office, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The workshop was on the theme “Annihilation of Caste – The views of Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhi.” These programmes provided me a chance to study Gandhi’s approach to caste and race.

In June 2016 the then Hon. President of India, on the occasion of his visit to Ghana, unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at University of Ghana’s Legon campus. Subsequently, mainly a group of Professors started an online petition at
https://www.change.org/ -the world’s platform for change- in September 2016, for the removal of the statue of Gandhi on the ground that he was a racist. They cited six quotes of Gandhi to substantiate their claim. In response to it, I was instrumental in preparing a note on Gandhi Jayanti day entitled “Truth about the demand for removal of the Gandhi Statue in Ghana University” and it was posted on the same online platform. This effort was appreciated by many including Rajmohan Gandhi, well known historian and biographer of Gandhi. It was subsequently published in the form of an article in Gandhi Marg, journal of Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. I was also invited by the Carolian Theological Forum of St. Charles Seminary, Nagpur to address at a symposium on “Caste-based Discrimination in the Indian Church” on October 2, 2017. My presentation was subsequently published in the form of a book “Caste-based Discrimination in the Indian Church: Lessons from Gandhi’s fight for human dignity” by Gandhi International, Carcassonne, France to remove worldwide misconceptions on this issue. As a part of 150th Birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, the Government of India started the work on a bust of Gandhi in August 2018 at Blantyre, Malawi's second largest city. In October 2018, an online petition was started against the proposed Gandhi bust on the same online platform and the work was stopped due to a High court injunction. As the petition of Malawi was on similar lines as of Ghana, some of the journalists approached me to find out the truth in the controversial statements of Gandhi cited by them. All these developments provided me an opportunity to study and reflect on Gandhi’s approach to caste
and race both in South Africa and India which convinced me that Gandhi was neither a casteist nor a racist.

To commemorate the sesquicentennial birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre, University of Mumbai, organized an interdisciplinary International Conference on “A Mahatma in Waiting: The Diasporic Gandhi Re-visited” in February 2019 at the Kalina Campus of the University of Mumbai. I had the opportunity to present Gandhi’s Approach to Race and Racial Discrimination and his fight for the dignity of people of Indian origin in South Africa before an international audience including people from African countries. This presentation was possible only by taking into account all major writings as well as actions of Gandhi on these issues which cropped up in the course of his long and eventful life in South Africa. The notes I prepared for this presentation and the earlier ones form the basis for the present work.

In the preparation of this work, I am indebted to many persons. First and foremost I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to late Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari, Chairman of the Institute of Gandhian Studies, nonagenarian freedom fighter, jurist, Gandhian scholar and activist who passed away on January 3, 2019, who was very eager about my participation in the International Conference at Mumbai. He was keen that I should undertake studies of this nature so that our Institute will be in the forefront of removing the misconceptions about Gandhi’s approach in matters relating to race and racism. He used to discuss with me in the wake of each and every controversy related to this matter. Our Director,
Bharat Mahodaya was highly supportive in this regard and took the responsibility of publishing this work by the Institute. My senior colleague and member of the teaching faculty of the Institute, Ramchandra Pradhan opened my vistas of knowledge through stimulating discussions and insights on these matters. He was always with me in my academic endeavours.

It was Nilufer E. Barucha, Professor, Director and Scientist-in-Charge, CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre, University of Mumbai, who not only extended an invitation for the International Conference but also showed confidence in my ability to deal with the question of Gandhi’s approach to race and racial discrimination in South Africa. She took such a decision in spite of the presence of scholars and activists even from South Africa in the International Conference. I am grateful to Nilufer for her constant encouragement and support. My special thanks are due to Sridhar Rajeswaran, Advisory Board Member, CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre and visiting Professor University of Mumbai for his insights on my presentation. I am thankful to Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre for her coordination and support throughout the International Conference. I am grateful to all delegates of the International Conference for critically analyzing my presentation. Among the delegates my special thanks are due to Kanya Padayachee, ECD Project Coordinator, Gandhi Development Trust, Durban, South Africa for discussing the issue at length and her encouragement.

Soon after the Conference, I had the opportunity to discuss the main arguments I presented before the Conference with Usha Thakkar, Chairperson, Manibhavan Gandhi
Sangrahalya, Mumbai. She suggested to me to present Gandhi’s approach to caste and race in the form of a book. But I limited my analysis to the question of race. She has always been supportive in my academic work by availing relevant material and constantly encouraging my projects. I don’t know how to thank her and her research team at Manibhavan Gandhi Sangrahalya for the unconditional support.

Each and every member of the staff of the Institute extended their support in the publication of this work. I am thankful to all of them. I am thankful to my elder brother Fr. Joseph K. J., who was kind enough to go through an earlier draft of this work and provide useful and critical comments.

I am highly beholden to Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and the founder of Gandhi Development Trust, Durban for contributing the foreword to this volume. It is befitting that this volume carries a foreword from a person who was born at Phoenix, and held very important positions as the member of South Africa’s Parliament from 1994 to 2004 and as the Chancellor of the Durban University of Technology.

Last but not least my special thanks are due to my wife Arunima Maitra and my only daughter Almitra K. Siby who have always encouraged and supported me in my all academic writings.

Though I got support from a host of eminent personalities, I alone would be responsible for any lapse or lacuna in the present work.
This volume is a humble tribute to Kasturba and Mahatma Gandhi which will be released both in South Africa and India on the occasion of their 150th birth anniversary. I am confident that like my earlier works this volume too would be welcomed by common readers, academics and scholars working in the field. I hope that this work would help in dispelling the doubts from readers minds about Gandhi being a racist and promote further research on this topic.

_Siby K. Joseph_
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Wardha
Chapter-1

Introduction

Gandhi’s South African days were widely discussed in 2015 during the centenary celebrations of Gandhi’s return to India from South Africa. It provided an opportunity to have a fresh look at Gandhi’s life and work in the South African soil. Gandhi’s approach to race and the problem of racial discrimination especially in the South African phase were matters of discussion and debate. His approach to race and racial discrimination were criticized by a section of scholars, intellectuals and activists. It gathered momentum in recent times and was widely discussed in print and electronic media with the publication of some literature relating to it and the issues related to the installation of Gandhi statue in some African countries by the Indian government. It is interesting to note that the issues related to Gandhi’s approach to caste and race have been raised by Booker prize-winning author, Arundhati Roy, in her introduction titled ‘The Doctor and The Saint’ to the annotated edition of Annihilation of Caste originally written by B. R. Ambedkar. She again raised some of these issues while delivering a lecture at the University of Kerala in memory of Mahatma Ayyankali, a renowned dalit leader of the State. In the course of her speech, she castigated Gandhi for his racist and casteist approach. She even demanded that it was high time that all institutions named after Gandhi be rechristened.
In the same vein, a book viz. *The South African Gandhi Stretcher Bearer of Empire* was published simultaneously both in India and the United States. This book was written by Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, scholars of Indian origin associated with South African universities. They argue that Gandhi during his two decade long stay in South Africa “remained true to Empire while expressing disdain for Africans. For Gandhi, whites and Indians were bound by an Aryan bloodline that had no place for the African. His racism was matched by his class (and caste) prejudice towards the Indian indentured.”

The controversies and misconceptions about Gandhi’s approach to race and racial discrimination was further fuelled with the unveiling of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the recreational quadrangle of the University of Ghana’s Legon campus by the then Hon. President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, on the occasion of his visit to Ghana, on June 14, 2016. Following the installation of the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Legon campus, which is situated about 12 kilometers northeast of the centre of Accra, the capital city, a group of four university teachers of African Studies, history and law disciplines of Ghana University and one of the founders of Accra (dot) Alt, which promotes alternative African music, video and art, on September 12, 2016, filed a petition for the removal of the statue of Gandhi before the honourable members of the University of Ghana Council and the Chairman, Kwamena Ahwoi for consideration. Subsequently, it was posted in the form of an online petition at https://www.change.org/ – the world’s platform for change.
The main argument for the removal of the Gandhi statue raised in the petition was his alleged ‘racist identity’.

In order to support their argument the petitioners had cited six quotes from the online edition of *the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* maintained by Gandhi Serve Foundation, Berlin. The sensational news about it spread throughout the world in no time. The Republic of Ghana wanted to end the acrimony after the unveiling of the statue and finally decided to relocate the Gandhi statue at the University to a safer place. In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the Republic of Ghana on October 5, 2016 said “While acknowledging that human as he was, Mahatma Gandhi may have had his flaws, we must remember that people evolve. He inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world…… The government would, therefore want to relocate the statue from the University of Ghana to ensure its safety and to avoid the controversy on the Legon Campus being a distraction of our strong ties of friendship that has existed over the years.” Finally on 12th of December 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration removed the statue from the University of Ghana. The Republic of Ghana had assured the Government of India that the statue will be inaugurated by a Minister in the local government. On 27th of February, 2019 the statue of Mahatma Gandhi was relocated at India-Ghana Kofi Annan Centre for Excellence in ICT, Accra by Hon’ble Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic Ghana in the presence of the High Commissioner of India to Ghana and the Hon’ble Minister for Communication of Ghana. The High
Commissioner of India to Ghana, Birender Singh Yadav, speaking to journalists stated that, “the relocation of the statue to a prestigious location in Ghana will bring an end to what was a misguided campaign about certain writings of Mahatma Gandhi.”

As a part of 150th Birth anniversary celebrations of Gandhi, Indian government started ‘India for Humanity’ initiative and decided to take the message of Mahatma Gandhi to all parts of the world including Africa where Gandhi lived for more than two decades. The construction of a Gandhi bust was started in August 2018 in a street named after Mahatma Gandhi in Blantyre, Malawi’s second largest city. On 5th October 2018, to mobilize citizens against the proposed Gandhi bust in Blantyre an online petition was started by Kambewa Mpambira, a Malawian activist along with others on the same website as in the case of Ghana Gandhi statue issue. The petition states that a recent book researched by Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, professors at the University of Johannesburg and the University of KwaZulu Natal, uncovered in detail that Gandhi was an ardent racist who thought Africans were “Kaffirs”. They quoted five statements of Gandhi to prove his contempt for the black African race. Despite these developments the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India in a press release issued on October 30, 2018, just before the visit of Hon. Vice President of India, Venkaiah Naidu to Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi from October 31-November 5, 2018 stated that in Malawi, Vice President is expected to inaugurate Business Incubation Center and India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development and unveil a
Gandhi Bust. However a court in Malawi halted the work on the bust of Mahatma Gandhi. Judge Michael Tembo granted an injunction temporarily suspending work on the statue. The high court said work on the statue should be paused until a further hearing or a new court order.\(^{10}\)

However, Malawi’s civil society umbrella organization Human Rights Consultative Committee (HRCC) and the Forum for National Development (FND) endorsed the construction of the Mahatma Gandhi statue and the construction of the International Conference centre in Blantyre saying the project cements the bilateral relation between Malawi and India.\(^{11}\) They strongly felt that the present developments are not in tune with the image of Malawi as ‘a peaceful country with a warm heart.’ Further, they held a consultative meeting on 15th November 2018 in Blantyre which brought together a cross section of the society such as academics, civil society organization (CSO) representatives, trade unionists, artists, faith leaders and members of the business community amongst others. A statement signed by HRCC Board Chairperson and FND Board Chairperson Robert Mkwezalamba and Bright Kampaundi Chodzi respectively emphasized that “Gandhi’s racist remarks should be reflected in the context of the time and circumstances they were made and should be weighed against his positive contribution to the world, namely that of ‘non-violent civil disobedience.’ We should recognize that Gandhian philosophy of peace and strategy of non-violence continues to inspire many in Malawi, Africa and across the globe.”\(^{12}\)

On December 18, 2018, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, grandson and distinguished professor of history and politics at Ashoka
University wrote an article viz. “Gandhi did not want and does not need statues” in the *Hindustan Times*. He quoted what Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* on February 11, 1939. “It will be a waste of good money to spend Rs 25,000 on erecting a clay or metallic statue of the figure of a man who is himself made of clay…” He is of the opinion that India should see the removal of Gandhi’s statue in Ghana as the decision of a sovereign people having a say in the design of their political architecture and their public spaces. He states that “Truth demands, Gandhi’s truth demands, that India should recognise that his use of term ‘Kaffir’ for Africans jars and is, today, unacceptable. But ‘the whole truth’ requires us to turn to President Mandela’s comment on Gandhi’s 125th birthday, “Gandhi must be judged in the context of the time and the circumstances.”

On December 23, 2018, historian Ramachandra Guha wrote an essay in *the Wire* viz. “Setting the Record Straight on Gandhi and Race” He argued that “In his 20s, Gandhi was unquestionably a racist. He believed in a hierarchy of civilisations, with Europeans at the top, Indians just below them and Africans absolutely at the bottom. He spoke of the native inhabitants of Africa in patronising and even pejorative language. However, by the time he was in his mid 30s, Gandhi no longer spoke of Africans as inferior to Indians.” According to him, Gandhi overcame his racist approach comprehensively in the course of time and that is the reason why he became an exemplar for many African leaders in their struggles against racial discrimination.
On January 5, 2019, in response to Ramachandra Guha’s article, ‘Setting the Record Straight on Gandhi and Race’ Ashwin Desai wrote a piece in the Wire “Guha’s Story of Gandhi in South Africa Does Not Square with the Record.” He argues that “Ramachandra Guha’s Gandhi Before India published in 2013 was received with much consternation in South Africa. This was because in Guha’s quest to portray the South African Gandhi as a cosmopolitan anti-colonial fighter and apostle of non-racialism, he wrote out of history the brutal subjugation of Africans and the myriad resistances against the Imperial army. He turned a blind eye to Gandhi’s ‘anti-African’ racism and support for the right of the white minority to hold political power.” According to Desai much after 1906 Gandhi continued to castigate and belittle Africans.

On January 27, 2019, Obadele Kambon, Research Coordinator, Language, Literature and Drama Section, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana who was also a part of the Gandhi Must Fall protest wrote an article in The Print viz. “Ram Guha is wrong. Gandhi went from a racist young man to a racist middle-aged man.” He argues that there is enough textual evidence to back the claim that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is a racist. Therefore the argument of Guha that “By the time he was in his mid-30s, Gandhi no longer spoke of Africans as inferior to Indians” is not valid. He quoted Gandhi’s writings from 1906 till the end of his departure for India to substantiate his claim.

On January 24, 2019 Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson and noted biographer of Gandhi wrote a piece in the Indian Express viz. “Why attacks on Mahatma Gandhi are good”. In this write
up, he basically addresses two allegations that Gandhi disdained black people and supported British imperialism. Regarding the question whether Gandhi was in favour of imperialism, Rajmohan Gandhi says that the answer is some time yes, and Gandhi openly favoured it. He points out the fact that this is not a new “discovery” and Gandhi himself stated in his *Autobiography* that the British Empire was one of his two passions at the start of the 20th century. He further states that Queen Victoria and other eminent Britons declared that in their empire, all the races would be equal and everyone would enjoy the freedoms of belief and expression and the rule of law. Only when Gandhi realised that the imperial claim was false, he became a strong critique of the empire. On the question of disdain for black people, he admits that the younger Gandhi at times was ignorant and undoubtedly prejudiced about South Africa’s blacks, especially when provoked by the conduct of black convicts who were among his fellow inmates in South Africa’s prisons. This is also a known fact and many scholars including Rajmohan Gandhi have referred to it in their earlier writings.

All these developments created unease about Gandhi’s approach to these issues among general readers who have not studied Gandhi systematically and in detail. In this context, it is necessary to revisit Gandhi’s approach to race and racial discrimination and his fight for dignity of people of Indian origin in South Africa. This study attempts to take into account all major writings as well as actions of Gandhi on these issues which cropped up in the course of his long and eventful life in South Africa. This will give us an opportunity to clarify and
understand Gandhi’s mind and his actual practice with regard to race and racial discrimination and the main issues involved in it. It is true that his views on race and racial discrimination are likely to produce confusion and controversy, if they are analysed out of context and time. Therefore, this study deals with Gandhi’s thinking and actions in regard to race and racial discrimination especially in South Africa and their evolution, if any, in the course of his life.

Notes and References


2. For details see
   http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Mahatma-Gandhi-was-a-casteist-Arundhati-Roy-says/articleshow/38580172.cms

   See also


12. Ibid.
14. https://thewire.in/history/setting-the-record-straight-on-gandhi-and-race A shorter version of this article has appeared in The Telegraph
15. https://thewire.in/history/ramachandra-guha-gandhi-south-africa
16. https://theprint.in/opinion/ramachandra-guha-is-wrong-a-middle-aged-gandhi-was-racist-and-no-mahatma/168222/
Chapter-2

Gandhi and Racial Discrimination in South Africa

The controversies and confusion about Gandhi’s views on race and racial discrimination were mainly centered on his life and work in South Africa. However, it is to be noted that young Mohandas had to deal with the question of caste and race even at a young age. He protested against the practice of untouchability at a tender age of twelve at his home in the case of a scavenger named Uka, an 'untouchable', who used to come to his house for cleaning latrines. As a young boy, he reminded his mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with an untouchable as a sinful act and quite often touched untouchables at his school. He always went much beyond caste and religious barriers.

Gandhi was made an outcaste for his decision to go to England for law studies by his caste men. Despite that he remained adamant and totally indifferent to the feelings of his caste men. It is true that after coming from England he did perform some acts of atonement. But it is quite evident from his writings in the Autobiography that he was not much bothered about his excommunication from his caste. He had hardly any ill feeling against his people who had excommunicated him. Further he was not much keen to get back to the fold of his caste. From Gandhi’s firmness and persistence in his decision to go to England, it is clear that he
Gandhi did not suffer from any racist feelings. He was aware that he was going to the land of the Whites who were highly prejudiced against the non-European races. Those considerations never came into his mind when he decided to go to England to study law. In fact he broke the caste and racial barriers by sticking to his decision.

Gandhi’s three years stay in England and his interactions with people of different religions and ideological orientations not only broadened his vision but also transformed his ideas about religion, caste and race. During his stay in England, he was introduced to different religious and spiritual traditions and their scriptures including *The Holy Bible, The Bhagavad Gita* and some Buddhist and Islamic literature like *The Light of Asia* and Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. All these readings and acquaintances inspired him to unify the basic teachings of different religions.\(^2\) Later recalling his days in London, he wrote in his *Autobiography* “That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.” Renunciation in every tradition including Hinduism brings a man to a point where he becomes free from narrow limitations and helps him to develop a universal outlook which involves crossing all social barriers such as race and caste. One could easily infer from his early life that young Mohandas to a great extent, transcended caste and racial prejudices.

Gandhi went to South Africa in 1893 in search of a better prospect as a lawyer. He came face to face with racial discrimination even during the initial stages of his stay in South Africa. For instance, when he visited the Durban Court, the magistrate ordered him to take off his turban (headgear) which Gandhi refused and walked out of the Court. But more
Siby K. Joseph

humiliations were yet to be heaped upon him. While travelling to Pretoria with a first class train ticket, he was literally thrown out of the compartment at the Pietermaritzburg railway station. He faced further insults in the subsequent coach journey. In the course of the journey, he was even refused accommodation in Grand National Hotel in Johannesburg. These incidents are so well known to be discussed here in detail. All these had happened to him despite the fact that he was a representative of British Indians, all of whom in the technical sense were British subjects. According to Queen Victoria’s proclamation of 1858, all imperial subjects were entitled to equality. Some critics like Arundhati Roy argue that “Gandhi was not offended by racial discrimination.” But he was primarily concerned with indignities inflicted on elite section which according to Roy was constituted by ‘passenger Indians’ – Indian merchants who were predominantly Muslims but also privileged caste Hindus. She produces no evidence to substantiate her inference that Gandhi was not offended by racial discrimination.

Gandhi was all set to come back to India after a year of stay in 1894. Even he was given a farewell party on the eve of his return journey to India in April 1894. It was in the midst of the farewell party, Gandhi came across a news item that had appeared in Natal Mercury about the proposed Bill by the Natal Government to disenfranchise Indians. It was on the request of the people of Indian origin gathered in the farewell party that Gandhi decided to stay back and take up such a blatant case of racial discrimination. It was within four months of his extended stay that he with the cooperation of other Indians in South Africa took the initiative to form Natal Indian Congress in August 1894. Its membership was open to all sections of Indians living in South Africa. The Congress was committed to
work for the welfare of indentured labourers too. Roy’s reference to Natal Indian Congress (NIC) being an elitist organization\textsuperscript{5} is presented in such a way as if it is a new discovery by her. The fact is that Gandhi himself had admitted in his \textit{Autobiography} that “Although the members of the Natal Indian Congress included the colonial-born Indians and the clerical class, the unskilled wage-earners, the indentured labourers were still outside its pale. The Congress was not yet theirs. They could not afford to belong to it by paying the subscription and becoming its members.”\textsuperscript{6} Roy even forgets that even Indian National Congress which was constituted as early as 1885 had remained an elitist club as late as 1920. Even the stalwart leaders of Indian National Congress could not make the Indian National Congress as a mass organisation even after 35 years of their leadership. It was only when Gandhi took over the leadership he opened its gates for the common masses of India. It is too much to expect that young Gandhi could have done this in 1894 when Natal Indian Congress was formed. What is more, Roy again indulges in pick and choose even in respect of the membership fee of Natal Indian Congress. To make it appear more elitist, she underlines the fact that its membership was three pounds without mentioning whether it was monthly or yearly membership. She also fails to mention the fact that it had a monthly membership of 5 shillings. The fact underlined by Roy that NIC was an elitist club can be easily controverted by perusal of the report of NIC prepared and presented by Gandhi as its General Secretary in August 1894.\textsuperscript{7} That report gives a brief summary of things NIC has done for the indentured labourers. Ignoring all these documentary evidences, Roy sticks to her unsubstantiated position that Gandhi and NIC always distanced themselves from indentured labourers.
He was very much concerned about the question of colour discrimination inflicted upon people whether it is on Indians or natives of Africa. It is true that Gandhi was basically taking up issues of people of Indian origin. It doesn’t mean that he was not concerned about racial discrimination imposed on the natives of Africa. He was very much unhappy about the British policy of denying rights on basis of the colour of the skin whether it was for Indian or Black population. While fighting for the rights of franchise of Indians Gandhi wrote in a letter to the Editor, *The Times of Natal*, dated October 25, 1894  “The Indians do not regret that capable Natives can exercise the franchise. They would regret if it were otherwise. They, however, assert that they too, if capable, should have the right. You, in your wisdom, would not allow the Indian or the Native the precious privilege under any circumstances, because they have a dark skin. You would look to the exterior only. So long as the skin is white it would not matter to you whether it conceals beneath it poison or nectar. To you the lip-prayer of the Pharisee, because he is one, is more acceptable than the sincere repentance of the publican, and this, I presume, you would call Christianity. You may; it is not Christ's.”

Further he asserts that racial or colour discrimination is against the principles of Jesus Christ or Christianity. “Suffer little children to come unto me,” said the Master. His disciples (?) in the Colony would improve upon the saying by inserting “white” after “little”. During the children's fete, organized by the Mayor of Durban, I am told there was not a single coloured child to be seen in the procession. Was this a punishment for the sin of being born of coloured parents? Is this an incident of
the qualified citizenship you would accord to the hated “Rammysammy.’” If He came among us, will he not say to many of us, “I know you not”? Sir, may I venture to offer a suggestion? Will you reread your New Testament? Will you ponder over your attitude towards the coloured population of the Colony? Will you then say you can reconcile it with the Bible teaching or the best British traditions? If you have washed your hands clean of both Christ and British traditions, I can have nothing to say; I gladly withdraw what I have written. Only it will then be a sad day for Britain and for India if you have many followers.”

Again in his “Open Letter” which Gandhi wrote in December, 1894 to the Hon. Members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly he drew their attention to the question of racial discrimination “I suppose there can be no doubt that the Indian is a despised being in the Colony, and that every opposition to him proceeds directly from that hatred. If that hatred is simply based upon his colour, then, of course, he has no hope. The sooner he leaves the Colony the better. No matter what he does, he will never have the white skin.”

The case of Balasundaram, a Tamil indentured labour, employed by a White settler conclusively proves Gandhi’s concern for the poor and downtrodden section of Indian people living in South Africa even in the initial stages. Balasundaram certainly did not belong to the high caste or class or the elitist section of the society. Yet Gandhi instantaneously took up his case. He had been badly beaten by his employer. He came to Gandhi with tattered clothes, broken teeth and a bleeding mouth. There was an obnoxious practice were by an indentured
labourer was supposed to take off his headgear before his European master. The system of indentured labour was in no way less than slavery. He had appeared before Gandhi, with a very humiliating and demeaning demeanour. He had even taken off his headgear in front of Gandhi. Gandhi not only was saddened but even felt a kind of personal humiliation being a member of the Indian community. Gandhi was very much concerned about protecting his dignity and asked him to put back his headgear. Gandhi not only got him medically treated but also got a legal case filed against his employer. The case of Balasundaram was ultimately settled. His case and the kind treatment which Gandhi had given to him reached out to large sections of indentured labour. They could see that here was a man who was not only sympathetic to them but also ever willing to take up cudgels on their behalf. Thus a stream of indentured labourers started visiting Gandhi’s office with their own tales of woe and misery. This case has touched Gandhi to the core of his being so much so that later reflecting on the case he wrote “It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings.” That shows his deep concern for the dignity of all men whatever may be their race, colour or creed.

Ignoring such deep concern and commitment of Gandhi for all, Roy quotes a passage from Gandhi’s Open Letter addressed to the members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly in December 1894. She goes to the extent of accusing Gandhi of making differentiation between ‘passenger Indians and indentured Indians’. The passage quoted by Roy out of context is as follows: “Whether they are Hindus or Mahommedans, they are absolutely without any moral or religious instruction worthy of the name. They have not learned
enough to educate themselves without any outside help. Placed thus, they are apt to yield to the slightest temptation to tell a lie. After some time, lying with them becomes a habit and a disease. They would lie without any reason, without any prospect of bettering themselves materially, indeed, without knowing what they are doing. They reach a stage in life when their moral faculties have completely collapsed owing to neglect.\textsuperscript{11}

She deliberately ignores both preceding and the following passages from the same letter of Gandhi which could have given the actual context of Gandhi’s observations quoted by her. The preceding passage provides the context of Gandhi’s comment. That comment was given by Gandhi in anticipation of objections by the administration towards Gandhi’s demand for better treatment of Indians at the hands of authorities as they are ‘subjects’ of the British Empire. Gandhi had advanced two arguments in favour of his demands. His first argument was that some of the weaknesses from which the Indians suffer could be attributed to the circumstances they are brought and lodged in South Africa. What is more, even the records of people of other races were no better in this respect. His second argument was that after being brought from India, they are deprived of moral education and are left to fend for themselves in a hostile and uncongenial atmosphere. Roy hardly pays any attention to these explanations of Gandhi and quotes the above passage as if that is the real assessment of Indians and their character by Gandhi. She also ignores a very pertinent observation of Gandhi in the same letter in respect of indentured labourers. He wrote “They come to Natal on a starvation wages (I mean here the indentured Indians). They
find themselves placed in a strange position and amid uncongenial surroundings.”

The passage following the preceding one is really soul-stirring and involves the real empathy of Gandhi for indentured labourers which reads as follows “There is also a very sad form of lying. They cannot dare tell the truth, even for their wantonly ill-treated brother, for fear of receiving ill-treatment from their master. They are not philosophic enough to look with equanimity on the threatened reduction in their miserable rations and serve corporal punishment, did they dare to give evidence against their master. Are these men, then, more to be despised than pitied? Are they to be treated as scoundrels, deserving no mercy, or are they to be treated as helpless creatures, badly in need of sympathy? Is there any class of people who would not do as they are doing under similar circumstances?”

Gandhi had gone to India in June 1896 and published the Green Pamphlet listing the grievances of the British Indians in South Africa in the month of August. He went around different parts of India and addressed several meetings to explain the grievances of Indians in South Africa and tried to mobilize public opinion in favour of the same. On his return to Durban he was interviewed on the deck of the ship by the correspondent of Natal Advertiser in January 1897. Roy again skillfully culled out a passage taking it out of context from that interview to prove that Gandhi was once again at his game of distancing himself from the ‘coolies.’ That passage reads as follows: “I have said most emphatically, in the pamphlets and elsewhere, that the treatment of the indentured Indians is no worse or better in Natal than they receive in other parts of the
world. I have never endeavoured to show that the indentured Indians have been receiving cruel treatment."\(^{14}\) Actually Gandhi was responding to the question asked by the correspondent “In your Indian campaign what attitude did you adopt towards the indentured Indian question?” The above passage quoted by Roy clearly takes out only a few lines from the detailed answer given by Gandhi in which he clears his position. Even in the earlier part of the same interview Gandhi had clearly stated that while being in India, he never tried “to blacken the character of the Natal Colonists.”\(^{15}\) Explaining his position further he said:

“I have even said in the pamphlet that instances I have quoted show that the treatment that the Indians receive was owing to the prejudice against them, and what I have endeavoured to show is the connection between the prejudice and the laws passed by the Colony to restrict the freedom of the Indian. … I have said that Indians are the most hated beings in South Africa and that they are being ill-treated; but, for all that we do not ask the Government for redress with regard to these things, but with regard to the legal disabilities that are placed upon the Indians. We protest against the legislation passed by prejudice, and redress has been asked for against them. This, then, is simply a question of toleration on the part of the Indian.”\(^{16}\)

How much Gandhi had gone beyond caste and race prejudices could be further illustrated by his firm decision to forsake his wife who refused to clean chamber pots used by one of his clerks who was a Christian, born of Panchama parents. It would be quite appropriate to relate the story in Gandhi’s own words. “I was far from being satisfied by her merely carrying
the pot. I would have her do it cheerfully. So I said, raising my voice: 'I will not stand this nonsense in my house.' The words pierced her like an arrow. She shouted back: 'Keep your house to yourself and let me go.' I forgot myself, and the spring of compassion dried up in me. I caught her by the hand, dragged the helpless woman to the gate, which was just opposite the ladder, and proceeded to open it with the intention of pushing her out.\footnote{17} These words echo his total commitment against caste and racial prejudices and total rejection of untouchability.

In the Boer\footnote{18} War of 1899, Gandhi had raised 1,100 strong Ambulance Corps out of which three or four hundred were free Indians, and the majority was indentured labourers.\footnote{19} The Ambulance Corps was primarily meant to nurse and serve the wounded soldiers in the war. The important point is that contrary to the general perception of his critics that he was keeping a distance from the indentured labourers, actually he was so much in close contact with them that more than two thirds of his corps comprised of them. One could easily infer that he had already transcended the caste / class barriers as he was closely working with the indentured labourers.

Before Gandhi’s return to India in 1901, a big farewell party was arranged in his honour and lot of gifts comprising of even gold and diamond were given to him for the services rendered by him to the community. Kasturba wanted to keep some of them. Gandhi ultimately prevailed on her and out of these gifts a Trust was created for the service of the Indian community. In December 1901, he attended the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress and moved a resolution on problems of Indians in South Africa. One finds Gandhi deeply anguished by seeing the prevalence of ‘untouchability in
a fair measure even among Congress delegates. What shocked him more was insanitary conditions in and around the premises where the Congress session was being held, particularly in the lavatories. He tried to impress upon Congress volunteers to undertake the cleaning work. They flatly refused by saying that ‘that is not our work, it is the scavenger's work.’ Finding the entire cleaning beyond him, he satisfied himself by cleaning the lavatory used by him.

Gandhi again returned to South Africa in December 1902 and started serving the community along with his professional work. This is the period he established himself both professionally and politically. In 1903, Indian Opinion was established to consolidate the Indian community and to serve as a platform for raising their issues. In this phase, we can see some happenings which changed the course of his life. He got an opportunity to read Ruskin’s Unto This Last in a train journey. Reading of this book brought instantaneous and practical transformation in his life. Gandhi found resonance of some of his deepest convictions in this great book of Ruskin. He reduced the essential teachings of Unto This Last into three basic principles. They were:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.
The third principle was a new discovery for Gandhi. He decided to reorient his life according to the above principles which led to the establishment of Phoenix Settlement in 1904. He not only shifted the press of *Indian Opinion* to the settlement but also took a number of steps to lead a life of simplicity and put into practice the principles of dignity of labour and self reliance. It also provided him an opportunity to experiment in the field of education in a school environment. Gandhi made it clear that in his Phoenix School “Indians of any caste or community will be admitted. No distinctions will be made in such matters as food, etc.”

It was in 1906 that Zulus rebelled against the British. Once again he raised an Ambulance Corps to serve the wounded involved in the war. It provided an opportunity to get in close contact with Zulus in the course of work. He was very sympathetic and sensitive to the sufferings of the Zulus particularly of their women folk. One has to bear in mind that his decision to adopt *Brahmacharya* in 1906 and to formulate his principle of *Satyagraha* in the same year had a lot to do with his experiences as stretcher bearer during the Zulu rebellion. Out of this work in the ambulance corps, he drew two major conclusions for his own life and work. One, anyone doing social work would have to lead a life of purity and self restraint. That brought him to a firm decision on *Brahmacharya*. Two, being a witness to the suffering of Zulu rebels, he came to the conclusion that if the weak and powerless in physical terms engaged in armed struggle that would boomerang on them causing them greater suffering. That further strengthened his already held opinion that non-violent resistance was the best way to struggle against the acts of
injustice. Thus two of the momentous decisions of Gandhi’s life, Brahmacharya and Satyagraha were taken out of his deep empathy with the sufferings of Zulu people. These were also two major steps on the road to his Mahatmahood. His intense personal transformation is reflected in his life and actions of coming days.

It was at that critical moment the draft Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance was published in Transvaal Government Gazette. It sought to make it compulsory for every Indian above the age of eight living in Transvaal to register himself/herself, failing which they would be facing all types of consequences including deportation. There was a great stir among Indian community against the Ordinance and Gandhi termed it a ‘Black Act.’ A meeting was held at the Empire theatre building of Johannesburg on 11th September 1906. It was unanimously decided to resist this highly discriminatory Act irrespective of its costs and consequences. They decided to struggle against it ‘in the name of God’ or with ‘God as witness.’ That decision is taken to be the birth of Satyagraha. It was just the beginning of a number of satyaragaha struggles which Gandhi led later in South Africa.

During this period; Gandhi was introduced to John Finot’s classic work Race Prejudice. This work helped Gandhi to understand the intricacies of race and broadened his vision on the issue of racism. Anil Nauriya in a paper presented at the Centre for French and Francophone Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on March 19, 2008 emphasized this point. He wrote, “An important French influence dating from his South Africa years, which on matters of race was perhaps
more pointed and therefore efficacious than that of any of the other writers he had read till then, is, oddly enough, less widely known. This is that of Jean Finot (1858-1922) whose work “Race Prejudice” had been commended in Gandhi’s journal Indian Opinion on September 7, 1907. Earlier, on March 9, 1907, The New York Times had described Finot as a “French iconoclast on race prejudice”. Finot’s work against racial prejudice had a significant impact on Gandhi; it accelerated his transformation in South Africa from one who was seeking equality with Europeans to one who spoke in terms of equality for all. This is an element in the sources of his intellectual make-up that has not received adequate attention, even if Gandhi’s mind was already working in this direction.”

Gandhi in one of his letters addressed to L. W. Ritch dated April 12, 1911 made a reference to Finot’s book. Gandhi asked him to get the same from Henry Polak’s collection to present it to Canon Almett, who was supposed to leave for England shortly. It is clear that Gandhi wanted to popularise the ideas of Finot. Reference to Finot can be seen in his Indian days too. He wrote in Young India in 1924 about blacks in general, while acknowledging a cable he received from Marius Garney, the Chairman of Fourth Annual International Convention of Negro Peoples of the World expressing their sympathy for India’s struggle for freedom. “Finot has shown by his scientific researches that there is in them no inherent inferiority as is commonly supposed to be the case. All they need is opportunity. I know that if they have caught the spirit of the Indian movement, their progress must be rapid.”
Gandhi’s changing vision was very much revealed in one of his speeches in the Y.M.C.A., Johannesburg, on the question, “Are Asiatics and the Coloured races a menace to the Empire?” He said “We hear nowadays a great deal of the segregation policy, as if it were possible to put people in watertight compartments….I have said that the African races have undoubtedly served the Empire, and I believe so have the Asiatic races or, rather, British Indians. Have not the British Indians fought on many a battle-field? A people, moreover, who have religion as the basis of life, cannot be a menace. And how can the African races be a menace? They are still in the history of the world’s learners. Able-bodied and intelligent men as they are, they cannot but be an asset to the Empire. I believe with Mr. Creswell that they ought not to be protected. We do not want protection for them in any shape or form, but I do believe this—that they are entitled to justice, a fair field and no favour. Immediately you give that to them, you will find no difficulty. Whilst, therefore, Asiatics and other Coloured people cannot be a menace, Asiatics at least have been made a menace in some Colonies.” In the concluding part of his speech he said “If we look into the future, is it not a heritage we have to leave to posterity, that all the different races commingle and produce a civilization that perhaps the world has not yet seen? There are difficulties and misunderstandings, but I do believe, in the words of the sacred hymn, “We shall know each other better when the mists have rolled away.” The idea of commingling of all races was perhaps never thought of by any Indian in 1908.

The Universal Races Congress of 1911 was a watershed in understanding the concept of race. Gandhi could not participate in the event. However, his close associate, H.S.L.
Polak spoke at Universal Races Congress in London. The Universal Races Congress, which *Indian Opinion* described as a “Parliament of Man”, discussed the racial question in its various aspects. The Congress was attended by representatives of the world’s religions and philosophies, and many papers were read. Annie Besant and Gokhale also attended. Gandhi, Olive Schreiner, the Coloured Peoples’ leader Dr A Abdurahanman and the African lawyer Alfred Mangena (who would be one of the founders of the future African National Congress), among others, were among those from South Africa who were on the Honorary General Committee of the Universal Races Congress. In a letter addressed to Dr. Pranjivan Mehta on August 25, 1911, Gandhi wrote that he believes India can have no direct benefit from the Races Congress. He further mentions that there is an indirect benefit. But the relevant page is not available even in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*.

The Union of South Africa came into being in the year 1910. Gandhi described it as a “combination of hostile forces”. The coming of South African Union even accentuated some of the problems faced by the Indian community in South Africa. However, the visit of Gokhale to South Africa in 1912 and his meeting with General Smuts had aroused great hope for the solution of the problems arising out of Asiatic Registration Act and the much hated £3 tax on the ex-indentured labourers. But soon such hopes were belied. On top of it, on 14th March 1913, Cape Supreme Court, in a judgment pronounced that marriages not celebrated according to Christian rites and/or not registered by the Registrar of Marriages were invalid. Thus all Muslim and Hindu marriages performed according to traditional rites were declared invalid. That greatly infuriated large sections of
the Indian community. All these finally led to resumption of Satyagraha. In the month of September a large number of Satyagrahis including Kasturba were arrested and imprisoned. Gandhi reiterated his earlier demands for new law validating the Indian marriages and abolition of £3 tax. Subsequently in November, several circumstances forced Gandhi to take out a Great March consisting of 2,037 men, 127 women and 57 children, from Charlestown to Transvaal. Gandhi was arrested in the course of the March and was imprisoned. But the march continued.

Finally on 11th December 1913, South African Government appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of Sir William Solomon, a Supreme Court judge, to look into the grievances of Indians. After going into the details of the issues, the commission recommended repeal of £3 tax and the legal validation of traditional marriages. Gandhi welcomed it which opened the road for new negotiations with the government. Ultimately a settlement was reached which led to the passage of Indian Relief Bill on 26th June, 1914 and termination of the struggle which had started in 1906. The major points covered by the bill included the following. 1. It validated all the marriages held legally in India except those who had more than one wife in India, one of them would be recognized as a wife in South Africa. 2. It abolished the annual license of three pounds from indentured Indian labourers who had failed to return to India and settled as freeman in South Africa after the completion of indenture. 3. It further provided that the domicile certificate issued by the Government to Indians in Natal bearing thumb impression of the holder of the permit would be recognized as conclusive evidence of his right to enter the South African Union as soon as his identity was
established. With final settlement Gandhi decided to return to India via London. Gandhi left South Africa for London on July 18, 1914. But his intimacy with South African soil remained throughout his life.

The brief survey of Gandhi’s life in South Africa shows that he has no disdain for the black natives of South Africa. On the contrary he questioned the British policy of discriminating people on the basis of the colour of the skin as early as 1894. He even went to the extent of discussing the idea of commingling of all races in 1908 which was revolutionary at that time. However, the focus of Gandhi’s activity was centered on Indians living in South Africa and he fought for the dignity of all people of Indian origin irrespective of their caste, religion, social and economic background.

Notes and References:

1. The storm in my caste over my foreign voyage was still brewing. It had divided the caste into two camps, one of which immediately re-admitted me, while the other was bent on keeping me out. To please the former my brother took me to Nasik before going to Rajkot, gave me a bath in the sacred river and, on reaching Rajkot, gave a caste dinner. I did not like all this. But my brother's love for me was boundless, and my devotion to him was in proportion to it, and so I mechanically acted as he wished, taking his will to be law. The trouble about re-admission to the caste was thus practically over.

I never tried to seek admission to the section that had refused it. Nor did I feel even mental resentment against any of the headmen of that section. Some of these regarded me with dislike, but I scrupulously avoided hurting their feelings. I fully respected the caste regulations about ex-communication. According to these, none of my relations, including my father-in-law and mother-in-law, and even my sister and brother-in-
law, could entertain me; and I would not so much as drink water at their houses. They were prepared secretly to evade the prohibition, but it went against the grain with me to do a thing in secret that I would not do in public.

The result of my scrupulous conduct was that I never had occasion to be troubled by the caste; nay, I have experienced nothing but affection and generosity from the general body of the section that still regards me as ex-communicated. They have even helped me in my work, without ever expecting me to do anything for the caste. It is my conviction that all these good things are due to my non-resistance. Had I agitated for being admitted to the caste, had I attempted to divide it into more camps, had I provoked the castemen, they would surely have retaliated, and instead of steering clear of the storm, I should on arrival from England, have found myself in a whirlpool of agitation, and perhaps a party to dissimulation.

2. But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the Gita. The verses, 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloke too,' delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal' etc. My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, the Light of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount.


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

   https://www.gandhiheritageportal.org/cwmg_volume_thumbview/MQ==#page/292/mode/2up
18. Boers were the descendants of the original Dutch settlers of Southern Africa.
25. Ibid. p.97.
27. M. K. Gandhi, Young India, 21-8- 1924.
31. Ibid. p. 280.
Chapter-3

Criticisms against Gandhi in South Africa: An Analysis

In the last chapter, an attempt has been made to give an overview of Gandhi’s life and struggle in South Africa with special reference to his approach to caste and racial discrimination. Incidentally, it also answers some of the criticisms raised against Gandhi. However, understanding Gandhi’s life in South Africa in a particular historical context and the probable reasons why he acted in a particular manner demand separate analysis of the major issues raised by his critics like Lelyveld, Roy, Desai and Vahed.

For the sake of analysis, the major points of criticism against Gandhi’s two decade long stay and work in South Africa have been classified into four broad categories. 1. Gandhi used the Aryan bloodline racist theory which binds the whites and Indians together and it had no place for the Africans. 2. That he held the African Blacks in very low esteem and even went to the extent of using a derogatory term like ‘kaffirs’ for them. He insisted on differentiation of Indians from the African Blacks at all points. Not only that, he hardly paid any attention to their sufferings, let alone take up any of their issues for a struggle. 3. The ultimate result of the struggle in South Africa failed to solve the real problems of Indian community in general and particularly those of its lower strata. 4. A bird’s eye view of his entire work in South Africa clearly showed that he was an out and out loyalist to the British. He not only supported the British both in Boer and Zulu rebellion but
went out of his way to display his loyalty and closeness to the British establishment again and again.

Let us examine the issues one by one. As stated in the beginning, one of the main arguments of Desai and Vahed was that “For Gandhi, whites and Indians were bonded by an Aryan bloodline that had no place for the African.” They devoted the second Chapter of the book viz. “Brown over the Black” mainly to substantiate this argument. The Chapter starts with a quote from Gandhi. “History says that the Aryans’ home was not India but they came from Central Asia, and one family migrated to India and colonized it, the others to Europe. The government of that day was, so history says, a civilized government in the truest sense of the term. The whole Aryan literature grew up then….. When other nations were hardly formed, India was at its zenith, and the Indians of this age are descendants of that race.” This quote is culled out from “An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa on the question of the Indian Franchise” dated December 16, 1895. This appeal was an attempt on the part of Gandhi to place before every Briton in South Africa, an Indian view of the Indian Franchise. The whole text of the quote is given in order to give an idea about the context. “Mr. Maydon made a speech at Bellair and a curious resolution was passed at the meeting. With the greatest deference to the honourable gentleman, I venture to take exception to his statement that the Indians have ever remained in a state of servitude and are, therefore, unfit for self-government. Although he invoked the aid of history in support of his statement, I venture to say that history fails to bear out the statement. In the first place Indian history does not date
from the invasion of Alexander the Great. But I take the liberty to say that India of that date will compare very favourably with Europe of today. In support of that statement I beg to refer him to the Greek description of India at pp. 169-70 of Hunter’s Indian Empire, partly quoted in my “Open Letter”. What, however, of India of a period previous to that date? History says that the Aryans’ home was not India but they came from Central Asia, and one family migrated to India and colonized it, the others to Europe. The government of that day was, so history says, a civilized government in the truest sense of the term. The whole Aryan literature grew up then. The India of Alexander’s time was India on the decline. When other nations were hardly formed, India was at its zenith, and the Indians of this age are descendants of that race. To say, therefore, that the Indians have been ever under servitude is hardly correct.”

From a cursory look at the quote it is clear that he brought in reference to the Aryan bloodline in the course of his argument to refute the contention that Indians have ever remained in a state of servitude. In no way the Aryan bloodline is glorified. On the contrary they are described as colonizers.

The authors also quote from the “Open Letter” which Gandhi wrote in December, 1894 to the Hon. Members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. The quote starts with an incomplete sentence of Gandhi, that is, “I venture to point out that both the English and the Indians spring from a common stock, called the Indo-Aryan.” The year is mentioned as 1893 by the authors which is incorrect. Here also the full sentence of the quote is given which makes the context very clear. “In spite of the Premier's opinion to the contrary, as
expressed in his speech at the second reading of the Franchise Bill, with the utmost deference to His Honour, I venture to point out that both the English and the Indians spring from a common stock, called the Indo-Aryan.” Gandhi’s reference to Aryan connection was in the context of defending his argument that Britishers cannot claim any superiority as a colonizer. Therefore, his attempt was to put the Indians on the same footing and not out of any disdain for the African blacks. He wanted to remind them that Indians were in no way inferior to Anglo Saxon brethren.

Further, he wrote in the Indian Opinion, on April 22, 1905 about certain restrictions on Indians in East London with regard to walking on foot-paths and residing in the town. The Town Council took legal proceedings against those Indians who disobeyed the racial law. Reflecting on it, Gandhi wrote “The Indians preferred an appeal against the decision on the plea that they were not ‘Asiatics’ but Aryans who had subsequently settled in India. We are constrained to say that our brethren have wasted their money on the litigation, and brought ridicule on themselves to boot.” From this reply it is clear that Gandhi was not in favour of claiming any sort of benefit on racial grounds or Aryan lineage. He advised them to submit quietly to the law and take out the passes. Further, they should continue the struggle in the parliament because they have the power and the right to vote. He was quite sure that it would yield good results if they exercised them judiciously. Thus it is clear that Gandhi neither used the Aryan theory to get undue benefits from Britishers nor was it used as Brown over the Black.
It is true that in today’s world particularly in Africa the word ‘kaffir’ is taken to be extremely derogatory and highly offensive. But one has to go into the actual context of the then South African situation to fully understand and assess it. It was a term generally used by one and all during those days without any feeling of racial prejudice or with derogatory implications. It can be substantiated by its widespread use in different kinds of literature from literary to sociological writings. The classic work Kaffir folk-lore: A selection from the traditional tales, which is a collection of stories prevalent among the people living on the eastern border of the Cape colony with copious explanatory notes by Geo. Mc Call Theal published way back in 1886 by S. Sonnenschein, Le Bas and Lowrey, London has an introductory chapter regarding the ‘kaffirs’. It gives explanation about the term ‘kaffir’. It is worth quoting to understand the very meaning of the term those days. “In South Africa the word Kaffir is often used in a general way to signify any black native who is not the descendant of an imported slave, but on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony the term is usually restricted to a member of the Amaxosa tribe.” It was used officially without any sort of derogatory connotations during the colonial period until the early twentieth century. Encyclopædia Britannica made frequent use of the term and eleventh edition of it published in 1911 had an article on the title. It describes Kaffirs as follows: “Today it is used to describe that large family of Bantu Negroes inhabiting the greater part of the Cape, the whole of Natal and Zululand, and the Portuguese dominions on the east coast south of the Zambezi. The name is also loosely applied to any negro inhabitant of South Africa.” Thus it is evident that when
Gandhi was using this term he did not mean any ill will to them.

It is an undeniable fact that the Indians had not only suffered at the hands of the Whites of South Africa but also in their dealings with the Blacks purely in physical terms. Even Gandhi had greatly suffered at the hands of some of the African Blacks particularly during his prison days. Here one is reminded of the incident in which Gandhi was thrown out of the lavatory and narrowly escaped with his life and limb. Critics have rightly pointed out that Gandhi had demanded separate lavatories, food and even separate entrance for Indians at Durban Post and Telegraph Office. Natal Indian Congress was also in the forefront of making such demands. What the critics actually forget is the immediate context and real intentions behind these demands. If one takes into account the fact that Indians were being continuously harassed and insulted at the hands of clerks and other authorities in the Post Office, then their demand for separate entrance could be really appreciated. But the critics totally ignore the context of the demands. Similarly the demand for separate lavatory should be viewed in the context of Gandhi’s own experiences in the prison. So far as the demand for separate food in jail is concerned, one could hardly have any objection to such a reasonable demand. Food habits are always governed by physical, regional, cultural and even personal considerations. That is the reason why even inside the country and community different kinds of foods are sought and consumed by different people.
It is true that Gandhi failed to take up cudgels on behalf of African blacks despite his high idealism and concern for the downtrodden and the deprived. One may get a clue to why Gandhi has not started a joint campaign with Blacks in South Africa from a reply to the question raised by Rev. Tema, a black African freedom fighter from Johannesburg associated with the African National Congress who came to India in 1939 and sought Gandhi’s guidance on the formation of an Indo-African united Non-white Front in South Africa. Gandhi in his reply said: “It will be a mistake….. You will be pooling together not strength but weakness. You will best help one another by each standing on his own legs. The two cases are different. The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a ‘menace’ to the white population. You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance. You are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indians. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races. The Indians can co-operate with you in a number of ways. They can help you by always acting on the square towards you. They may not put themselves in opposition to your legitimate aspirations, or run you down as ‘savages’ while exalting themselves as ‘cultured’ people, in order to secure concessions for themselves at your expense.” It is also worth quoting the answer given by Gandhi on the question “What sort of relations would you favour between these two races?” In his reply Gandhi said: “The closest possible. But while I have abolished all distinction between an African and an Indian that does not mean that I do not recognize the difference between them. The different races of mankind are
like different branches of a tree — once we recognize the common parent stock from which we are sprung, we realize the basic unity of the human family, and there is no room left for enmities and unhealthy competition.”

According to Nishikant Kolge Gandhi’s concern for the British Indians being classed with South African blacks was not because he considers them as an inferior race. He does so to record his opposition to the classification of British Indians as natives of South Africa in order to impose civil disabilities on them. However, Kolge admits that one cannot ignore the fact that there are a few occasions when Gandhi categorically stated that British Indians are undoubtedly infinitely superior to the Blacks. He analyses the reasons for such statements of Gandhi from a historical perspective. “In the 1890s, South Africa comprised four areas. The two British ones were the Cape Colony, which was self-governing under the crown; and Natal which was a crown colony. The two Boer republics were the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. There was severe racial discrimination in all these places. The whites considered themselves superior. However, it is to be noted that the white government was willing to grant civil rights and exempt the “educated” and “civilised” Asians and blacks of South Africa from racial discrimination. It was in this context that Gandhi tried to project the British Indians as being superior to the South African blacks. Thus Gandhi was not claiming that the British Indians are superior to African blacks, the educated and civilised ones. All that he was claiming was that unlike the African “savages” and “raw kaffirs” British Indians are eligible
for certain kind of civil rights which were given to the “educated and civilised” African blacks.”

Besides, one has to bear in mind the limitations of Gandhi and his struggles. He was living in an alien country with a limited support base, was a young man, quite a novice and inexperienced in the ways of politics. Another point which critics have hardly taken into consideration is that all his demands arose more from his deep commitment to find solutions for the problems faced by Indians in South Africa and not so much from disdain or contempt for the African Blacks. This also illustrated by the fact that he differentiated between Africans and Indians only when he was putting forward the demands on behalf of the Indian communities. But in all other occasions he was quite cordial and respectful to African Blacks.

Kolge who analysed the general writings of Gandhi on native Africans of South Africa came to the conclusion that he was very ‘cordial, respectful and supportive.’ He cited a number of quotations to substantiate his argument. Kolge wrote: “In 1895, he described the natives of the Trappist Mission as “patterns of simplicity, virtue and gentleness” (Gandhi 1895, in CWMG 1: 226). In 1896, he writes that Indian traders in South Africa “found a very valuable customer in the native of South Africa, called Zulu or Kaffir” (Gandhi 1896, in CWMG 2: 32). In1903, … Gandhi wrote “they [Native Passengers] had paid their fares was no question for him [anonymous writer] to consider.” He added “…Native passengers had paid first-class fares, they were as much entitled as the correspondent himself to travel by that train in a first-class carriage” (Gandhi 1903, in CWMG 4: 31). And in 1904 Gandhi criticised Loveday because” ‘to him [Loveday], evidently, the kaffir is an abomination’ and no matter how
much advanced he may be in education, he is not fit even to walk on the foot-paths” (Gandhi 1904, in CWMG 4: 105).

In 1905… Gandhi remarked that passing such a drastic byelaw was “a matter of painful surprise,” he further added “we should be failing in our duty if we did not, in the interests of community of South Africa, raise our humble protest against them” (Gandhi 1905, in CWMG 4: 347).

In the same year Gandhi wrote an article on Abraham Lincoln in Indian Opinion wherein he wanted the Indians of South Africa to recognise the hardships of America’s black slaves (Gandhi 1905, in CWMG 5: 50–52). At the end of the same year, Gandhi expressed his concern for the blacks of South Africa when the Johannesburg Town Council resolved that the kaffirs living near the Malay location would be shifted to Klipspruit. He wrote: “we wonder how the Kaffirs will manage to live at such distance” (Gandhi 1905, in CWMG 5: 135).

In 1906, in his weekly journal Indian Opinion he mentioned the efforts of an African black Tengo Jabavu, editor of Imvo, to create an interstate native college. Gandhi suggested that the British Indians of South Africa needed to learn from such an example . …

In 1907, Gandhi writes about Natal legislators passing a law which discriminated against both British Indians and Native Africans equally. … Subsequently in 1908 he wrote, “Asiatic prisoners are classed with Natives. I do not object to this…” (Gandhi 1908, in CWMG 91: 74). In 1910 …. Gandhi criticised Selborne and argued that “their [native of South Africa] sincere well wishers, however, should welcome the rise of such leaders—the more the better—and encourage them” (Gandhi 1910, in CWMG 10: 125). In the same year in a letter to M P Fancy, he sympathised with the blacks of South Africa when he wrote: “I shuddered to read the account of the hardships that the Kaffirs had to suffer in the third-class carriages in the Cape and
I wanted to experience the same hardships myself "(Gandhi 1910, in CWMG 10: 183)."

If we read columns of Indian Opinion, we can see such quotes. Let me cite what Gandhi wrote in 1905 as an example. It gives a fairly good idea of how he looked upon the natives of South Africa. “Some members of the British Association in England are at present visiting South Africa. They are all scientists, and possess great knowledge. This is the first event of its kind in South Africa. A few days ago, when they were in Natal, the Hon’ble Mr. Marshall Campbell took them to his residence at Mount Edgecombe. Here these people were shown two things. Firstly, they were shown what the savage Negroes were like, and also their dances, etc. They were thereafter introduced to educated Kaffirs. Addressing them Mr. Dubey, their leader, made a very impressive speech. This Mr. Dubey is a Negro of whom one should know. He has acquired through his own labours over 300 acres of land near Phoenix. There he imparts education to his brethren, teaching them various trades and crafts and preparing them for the battle of life. In the course of his eloquent speech Mr. Dubey said that the contempt with which the Kaffirs were regarded was unjustified. The educated among them were better than the uneducated ones, for they worked more, and since they had higher standards of life, they offered more custom to the merchants. It was unfair to burden the Negroes with taxes; also it was like cutting down the very branch one was sitting on. The Kaffirs understood and performed their duties better than the whites. They worked hard and without them the whites could not carry on for a moment. They made loyal subjects, and Natal was the land of their birth. For them there was no country other than South Africa; and to
deprive them of their rights over lands, etc., was like banishing them from their home. Mr. Dubey’s speech produced a very good impression on the whites, and he suggested to them that, if they sympathised with the Negroes, they might help him to start a smithy on his farm. The members of the British Association subscribed £60 on the spot and presented the sum to him. The Hon’ble Mr. Marshall Campbell also made a speech on the occasion praising the Kaffirs in Natal and pointed out that they were good and useful and that the ill-will shown to them was due to misunderstanding and was wrong.”8 The critics of Gandhi totally ignore these statements of Gandhi and his deep concern for South African natives.

After his return from South Africa, even while fighting for the freedom of India, Gandhi was concerned about the problems of Blacks in Africa and America. It is evident from Gandhi’s letter addressed to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on July 1, 1942. He wrote: “I venture to think that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow so long as India and, for that matter, Africa are exploited by Great Britain and America has the Negro problem in her own home. But in order to avoid all complications, in my proposal I have confined myself only to India. If India becomes free, the rest must follow, if it does not happen simultaneously.”9 Thus his fight in the ultimate analysis was not merely for the freedom of India but also of Africa, and America. At this point one is tempted to quote Gandhi’s own words “I have not conceived my mission to be that of a knight-errant wandering everywhere to deliver people from difficult situations. My
Siby K. Joseph  

humble occupation has been to show people how they can solve their own difficulties.”10 The subsequent historical developments in general and struggle against racial discrimination both in South Africa and United States of America led by Nelson Mandela and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., go a long way to prove how prophetic were the words of Gandhi. All these people successfully fought their own battles for human dignity taking Gandhi and his idea of Satyagraha as the main source of inspiration for their struggles. This was what Gandhi had meant when he said that if his life and work could inspire people to struggle for solutions to their problems his mission would have been achieved.

Nelson Mandela despite his being a leader of the Blacks greatly appreciated the wider significance and limitations of Gandhi’s stay and struggle in South Africa while comparing his prison experiences with those of Gandhi in South African prison. He said “Gandhi had been initially shocked that Indians were classified with Natives in prison; his prejudices were quite obvious, but he was reacting not to "Natives", but criminalised Natives. He believed that Indians should have been kept separately. However, there was an ambivalence in his attitude for he stated, ‘It was, however, as well that we were classed with the Natives. It was a welcome opportunity to see the treatment meted out to Natives, their conditions (of life in gaol), and their habits.’ All in all, Gandhi must be forgiven those prejudices and judged in the context of the time and the circumstances. We are looking here at the young Gandhi, still to become Mahatma, when he was without any human prejudice, save that in favour of truth and justice.”11
The criticism that at the end of Gandhi’s struggle, the kind of compromise which came out of it did not help much the Indian community particularly its lower strata is not at all valid. Such an assessment of Gandhi’s struggle and work in South Africa comes more out of prejudices and deliberate distortions on the part of the critics. They also forget that a Satyagrahi never indulges in a fight to the finish. His primary attempt is to draw out the humane qualities of other party and make it to go on a joint mission of search for truth and reasonableness. The last settlement entered and accepted by Gandhi should be viewed in the light of the general principle of Satyagraha. Besides, there is no denying the fact that in some way or other every section of Indian community including the poor and the deprived derived some benefits from the final settlement.

Let us consider the point that Gandhi was a British loyalist. It is true that, he himself underlines this fact on several occasions and tried to help them both in Boer War and Zulu rebellion. But one should not forget that he was never inspired by Pax Britannica. Rather he was more inspired by other thinkers of the West who were themselves very critical of industrial civilization, the main stay of the British Empire. Besides, it was while resisting racial discrimination and White supremacy that a metamorphosis of his personality took place and he emerged as a man with great moral and ethical values. He also derived great inspiration from the sufferings of the Zulus, which also helped him to formulate the principles of Satyagraha and Bramacharya as mentioned earlier. His occasional support to the British was a result of his deep sense
of responsibility as their subject and the democratic tradition which govern the British society back home. In his statement in the course of his trial in 1922 he fully explained and underlined the point how he turned out to be a rebel from being a loyalist.\textsuperscript{12} (See Appendix-I) The moment he realized that the so-called democratic values are not meant for the weaker races of the world, he raised his powerful voice against it and fought vigorously till the end.

This analysis helps one to understand the truth behind the major criticisms raised against him to prove that he was a racist, he used Aryan blood line theory to get benefits from the British administration and so on. The critics also use the present standards to evaluate a historical person like Gandhi, who was the product of a particular time and circumstances. The uniqueness of his personality lies in the fact that he went far beyond his time in his approach to issues related to race, caste, colour and creed in comparison to his contemporaries.

Notes and References

3. The net version of the book is available on the site: http://www.dankalia.com/literature/frc200.htm
    http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/speechnm1.htm
12. See the Statement made by Gandhi before C. N. Broomfield, District and Sessions Judge, Ahmedabad on March 18, 1922.
Chapter-4

The Racist Identity of Gandhi: An Assessment

In order to remove misconceptions about Gandhi’s approach to race and racial discrimination it would be quite expedient to analyse some of the citations which were widely discussed and quoted in the print and electronic media in the wake of installation of Gandhi statue in Ghana and the effort of Indian government to install a Gandhi bust in Malawi.

a. Opposition to the installation of Gandhi statue in Ghana

As stated earlier, the main argument raised for the removal of Gandhi statue in Ghana was his ‘racist identity.’ It would be interesting to analyse the six quotes the petitioners had cited to substantiate their claim for the removal of Gandhi statue in Ghana. They culled out these quotes from the online edition of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG).

The first citation they highlighted is a part of an “Open Letter” Gandhi wrote in December, 1894 to the Hon. Members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. The citation is as follows: “A general belief seems to prevail in the Colony that the Indians are little better, if at all, than savages or the Natives of Africa. Even the children are taught to believe in that manner, with the result that the Indian is being dragged down to the position of a raw *Kaffir.*” -CWMG, Vol. I, p. 193.
In the very beginning of the Open letter, Gandhi explains the very purpose of the letter. He wrote: “The one and only object is to serve India, which is by accident of birth called my native country, and to bring about better understanding between the European section of the community and the Indian in this Colony.” When Gandhi wrote about “a general belief” as cited by the petitioners for the removal of Gandhi statue, it is clear that Gandhi was not giving his personal opinion, as the petitioners seem to believe; rather he was referring to the general belief prevailing among the people in South Africa. A close perusal of Gandhi’s “Open Letter” would reveal that the basic attempt of Gandhi was not to denigrate the natives of Africa, but he was trying to build up a case for better treatment of people of Indian origin in South Africa as they are as good as any group of Anglo Saxons anywhere in the world. He makes various references to authoritative scholars and philosophers like Sir W.W. Hunter, Max Muller, Schopenhauer, Sir H. S. Maine and others to substantiate his assertion.

The second quote is also a part of the “Open Letter” of Gandhi, in which he cites from an article from the Cape Times of April 13, 1889. “In the face, too, of financial operations, the success of which many of their detractors would envy, one fails to understand the agitation which would place the operators in the same category as the half-heathen Native and confine him to Locations, and subject him to the harsher laws by which the Transvaal Kaffir is governed.” -CWMG, Vol. I, pp. 224-225. The petitioners took the citations from the Cape Times which Gandhi had referred and presented it as a part of Gandhi’s own
writing which is equivalent to putting words into Gandhi’s mouth.

The third quotation cited by the petitioners “So far as the feeling has been expressed, it is to degrade the Indian to the position of the Kaffir” is a part of the petition of British Indians residing in the South African Republic addressed to Lord Ripon in May 1895 and not of Gandhi. In the very beginning of the petition, it describes who the petitioners are. They consist of traders, shopkeepers’ assistants, hawkers, cooks, waiters, or labourers, scattered over the whole of the Transvaal, though the greatest number is settled in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The petitioners argue that in the Transvaal colony, there was a concerted and deliberate attempt to malign and discriminate against the Indians. It was quite in contrast to the kind of respectable treatment which Indians were being given in other parts of South Africa. To support the contention they refer to the more dignified opinion about the Indians even among a section of European people. The particular reference, that is, “to degrade the Indian to the position of the Kaffir” was just an attempt to ask for a better treatment for them in Transvaal colony.

The fourth quotation given by the petitioners of Ghana was from a speech delivered by Gandhi at a public meeting held at Bombay under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association at the Framji Cowasji Institute on September 26, 1896. The citation is as follows: “Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is
to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness.”- CWMG, Vol. I, pp. 409-410. As the text of the speech is not available, what we have today in the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi is collated from the reports of the speech published in The Times of India and Bombay Gazette. One could not vouchsafe the authenticity of a newspaper report. For the sake of argument, even if it is granted that he had made such comments he was referring to the raw kaffirs and not the general natives of South Africa. In every society, there are people who are somewhat outside the social system and any comment about them should not be taken in a generalized form.

The fifth quote “Your Petitioner has seen the Location intended to be used by the Indians. It would place them, who are undoubtedly infinitely superior to the Kaffirs, in close proximity to the latter.” – CWMG, Vol. II, p. 270, is from a petition addressed to Joseph Chamberlain-Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies by John Frazer Parker of Pretoria in 1899. This has nothing to do with Gandhi except that there is a reference to it in his “Open Letter” referred to earlier. One may wonder why the petitioners of Ghana demanding the removal of Gandhi statue would even refer to it.

The last quote “The Boer Government insulted the Indians by classing them with the Kaffirs.”- CWMG, Vol. V, p. 59” is from Indian Opinion of January 6, 1906. It refers to Indians in the Orange River Colony ordinances in the Government Gazette which carried a definition of “coloured people” to include Indians. The British Indian Association
protested against the definition of the term “coloured person” in certain draft ordinances. In response to representation from the British Indian Association, Lord Selborne justified the definition of “coloured person” on the ground that it was a legacy from the old Government. In response to it Gandhi wrote in *Indian Opinion*: “But British Indians object to the definition for that very reason. Their position is this. The ordinances will not in practice apply to them. The Boer Government insulted the Indians by classing them with the *Kaffirs*. Now there is no occasion to perpetuate a needless insult. The argument seems to be unanswerable. It is a pity that His Excellency, in spite of his wish not to offend, has not seen his way to grant the very reasonable request of the Association.” By including Indians in the definition of coloured persons along with the natives of South Africa, Indians will lose the privileges they have as British subjects. Hence the statement that the Boer government insulted the Indians by classing them with the *kaffirs*.

b. Opposition to the installation of Gandhi bust in Malawi

In the case of Malawi Gandhi bust installation also, the petitioners have cited some statements of Gandhi in order to show that he had contempt for the black African race. The petition argues that “when the British required Indians and Africans to carry passports in South Africa,” Gandhi commented: “Indians are hard working people, they should not be required to carry these things. But, black people are *kaffirs*, losers and they are lazy, yes, they can carry their passport but why should we do that?”
In spite of an intensive search, a valid source of this citation from Gandhiana could not be identified. It seems that this quote was taken from the speech of Indian American writer Sujatha Gidla and author of *Ant Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and The Making of Modern India* on January 29, 2018 at the Jaipur Literature Festival.¹

Their second argument is that Gandhi did not approve of Indian men having relations with African women. To substantiate their claim they cite the following “Some Indians do have contacts with *Kaffir* women. I think such contacts are fraught with grave danger. Indians would do well to avoid them altogether.” Without reading the preceding paragraph one may feel Gandhi is talking the language of a racist. Therefore, the whole paragraph is given below in order to have a clear idea of Gandhi’s position. “The whites have been giving strange evidence before the Commission that is going into this subject. They say that the presence of Indians in the Location is a source of annoyance to them, that Indians are immoral, that they harass girls, making unseemly gestures at them, and that they corrupt the morals of the *Kaffirs*. Many such offensive things were said in the course of the evidence. It is imperative for the Indian settlers to offer evidence to counter this. The Krugersdorp Indians must get ready to meet the situation. If, moreover, there is substance in any of these charges, such habits must be corrected. Some Indians do have contacts with *Kaffir* women. I think such contacts are fraught with grave danger. Indians would do well to avoid them altogether.”² It is clear that statement of Gandhi was against the complaint that Indians are immoral and they corrupt morals of Kafirs.
Gandhi’s whole struggle was based on morality and he was not in a position to support when some people engaged in immoral acts.

The third argument is that Gandhi “did not like the idea that Africans and Indians were given the same entrance at work. He actually fought for Indians to have their separate entrance away from Africans: We felt the indignity too much and … petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction, and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics and Europeans.” This passage is culled out from a pamphlet⁵ viz. “The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa : An Appeal to The Indian Public” dated August 14, 1896. The case of separate entrance was not at any work place. Here also the references to the humiliation or insults heaped on Indians have been removed so as to give an impression that the demand of the Natal Indian Congress for separate entrance was on racial grounds. From the report of the NIC in August 1895, it is clear that “a correspondence was carried on by the late President with the Government in connection with the separate entrances for the Europeans and Natives and Asiatics at the Post Office.” The original petition of NIC in this regard is not available for cross verification to have a clear idea about the matter. The full citation in the Green pamphlet is as follows: “In the Durban Post and Telegraph Offices, there were separate entrances for natives and Asiatics and Europeans. We felt the indignity too much and many respectable Indians were insulted and called all sorts of names by the clerks at the counter. We petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they
have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics and Europeans.”

One can accept for argument sake that some of the comments made by Gandhi about the blacks of South Africa may not be in tune with our times. But any text should be related to the historical context and circumstances in which it was formulated. The best way to misinterpret any comment or text is to take it out of context and judge it by applying reductionist approach from the present standards. This is exactly what is done by these groups. Moreover it should not be forgotten that most of these comments refer to the early phase of Gandhi’s life in South Africa when he along with the Indian people were the worst victims of racial discrimination. He not only had to mobilise the Indian people but also the enlightened section of British public opinion to fight the menace of racial discrimination. So it was a part of his tactical line to move closer to a section of supporters to intensify the struggle. Thus his final gaze was on the struggle and not making wily comments on the natives.

Notes and References

3. This pamphlet which later became known as the Green Pamphlet on account of the colour of its cover.
Citations of Gandhi by Obadele Kambon with Relevant Text

In the last chapter, we have seen some of the citations of Gandhi raised by the opponents in the course of their arguments for the removal of Gandhi statue in Ghana and in opposition to the installation of Gandhi bust in Malawi. In this series, Obadele Kambon wrote an article in The Print viz. “Ram Guha is wrong. Gandhi went from a racist young man to a racist middle-aged man.” with a number of citations of Gandhi to back the claim that he was a racist.

In this chapter, the quotations of Gandhi which Obadele Kambon used for his article in the Print to show that Gandhi was a thorough going racist is presented in italics and within brackets. This is followed by the relevant texts from The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG), from which the quotations were taken. This will help the reader to understand the context of Gandhi’s statements and know better the meaning of citations which appear offensive at the first sight. It is to be noted that many of the quotations are from Gandhi’s writings on his experiences at jails. As in the case of petitioners for the removal of Gandhi statue in Ghana here also some of the statements of L. W. Ritch and Mahomed Khan are presented as Gandhi’s own. Besides, certain parts of some of the citations were deleted or slightly changed to bolster the argument that Gandhi was a racist.
[22 May, 1906
“It was a gross injustice to seek to place Indians in the same class as the Kaffirs.”]

The Indian Deputation before the Constitution Committee
On the Chairman’s wanting to know more about the problem, Mr. Gandhi gave a full account of the difficulties relating to the use of trams and added that there was another difficulty which caused greater harassment to the Indians: they were not only denied the right to purchase land, but they could not hold it in their own names even for religious purposes. Constant difficulties were experienced in the matter of transferring such lands in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Heidelberg and other places. It was a gross injustice to seek to place Indians in the same class as the Kaffirs. There were a number of laws in the Transvaal in which the term “Native” did not cover the Indian.

[26 May, 1906
Thanks to the Court’s decision, only clean Indians or Coloured people other than Kaffirs can now travel by the trams.”]

The Tram Case
The discussion on the matter is still going on. The Town Council has not yet answered the question put to it by Mr. Lane. Mr. Gandhi has addressed a letter on the subject to the Leader to the following effect. You say that the Magistrate’s decision is unsatisfactory, because it would enable a person, however unclean, to travel by a tram and that even the Kaffirs would be able to do so. But the Magistrate’s decision is quite different. The Court has declared that the Kaffirs have no legal right to travel by the trams. And, according to tram regulations, those in an unclean dress or in a drunken state are prohibited from boarding a tram. Thanks to the Court’s decision, only clean Indians or Coloured people other than Kaffirs can now
travel by the trams. But even this victory that we have achieved has been snatched away from us by the Council in an indecent manner. For, while the Magistrate gave his decision on Friday, on Saturday appeared the news in the Government Gazette that the Town Council had withdrawn the tram regulations. This means that an Indian will no more be able to file a suit under the bye-laws; and the Council may perhaps be under the impression that the Smallpox Act of 1897 will now apply to Indians. It has been a common belief that the British people never stab anyone in the back. But I feel—and other tax-payers must also feel the same—that the Town Council has stabbed the Indian community in the back.

You express sorrow at the decision in the case; but, even apart from the instances mentioned by me, there is nothing to be sorry for, at least for the present. But do you approve of the crooked way in which the Council has brought about this result? Now commences the third stage of the tram case.

[6 November, 1906]

"Boer leaders [...] should not consider Indians as being on the same level as Kaffirs.”

Deputation Notes - II

Interviews with Leaders: Sympathy and Promise of Help

The last week has been very busy. We have had not a moment’s leisure. We saw Mr. Theodore Morison of Aligarh and the well-known Mr. Stead of the Review of Reviews. Mr. Stead has boldly come out to give us all the help he can. He was therefore requested to write to the Boer leaders that they should not consider Indians as being on the same level as Kaffirs.” [CWMG, Vol. VI, p. 112]
[16 November, 1906
"
"The Boer mind [...] refused to recognize the evident and sharp distinctions that undoubtedly exist between British Indians and the Kaffir races in South Africa.”
"
Letter to W. T. Stead
Dear Sir,
As you were good enough to show very great sympathy with the cause of British Indians in the Transvaal, may I suggest you’re using your influence with the Boer leaders in the Transvaal? I feel certain that they did not share the same prejudice against British Indians as against the Kaffir races but as the prejudice against Kaffir races in a strong form was in existence in the Transvaal at the time when the British Indians immigrated there, the latter were immediately lumped together with the Kaffir races and described under the generic term “Coloured people”. Gradually the Boer mind was habituated to this qualification and it refused to recognize the evident and sharp distinctions that undoubtedly exist between British Indians and the Kaffir races in South Africa. If you were to place this position before them in your own graphic style and show to them that British Indians have an ancient civilization behind them, that they do not aspire to any political power in the Transvaal, that they are a mere handful, i.e., 13,000, and that further immigration can easily be regulated without accentuating class difference, I have no doubt that some at least of the Boer leaders would listen to you and give effect to your suggestions. The Indian community in the Transvaal will feel deeply grateful to you if you could see your way to influence the Boer mind in the direction I have ventured to suggest to you. [CWMG, Vol. VI, pp.95-96]

[July 3, 1907
“Kaffirs are as a rule uncivilised – the convicts even more so.
They are troublesome, very dirty and live almost like animals. [...] The reader can easily imagine the plight of the poor Indian thrown into such company!"

**My Experience In Gaol [-I]**

It was, however, as well that we were classed with the Natives. It was a welcome opportunity to study the treatment meted out to Natives, their conditions [of life in gaol] and their habits. Looked at from another point of view, it did not seem right to feel bad about being bracketed with them. At the same time, it is indubitably right that Indians should have separate cells. The cells for Kaffirs were adjacent to ours. They used to make a frightful din in their cells as also in the adjoining yard. We were given a separate ward because we were sentenced to simple imprisonment; otherwise we would have been in the same ward [with the Kaffirs]. Indians sentenced to hard labour are in fact kept with the Kaffirs. Apart from whether or not this implies degradation, I must say it is rather dangerous. Kaffirs are as a rule uncivilised—the convicts even more so. They are troublesome, very dirty and live almost like animals. Each ward contains nearly 50 to 60 of them. They often started rows and fought among themselves. The reader can easily imagine the plight of the poor Indian thrown into such company!

[CWMG, Vol. VIII, pp.198-199]

[12 July, 1907

"If registration is made compulsory, there will be no difference between Indians and Kaffirs..."

**Ritch’s Services**

Not all Indians, perhaps, have a full idea of the tireless pains taken by Mr. Ritch in England for their benefit. Recently, he has placed the Indians under a further obligation by publishing a brief pamphlet which gives a vivid account of the hardships of Indians in the Transvaal. Every Indian knows that Mr.
Ritch’s services are invaluable. He has compressed the whole account into a pamphlet of twenty-three pages (octavo size); it is a succinct statement, covering the whole ground and giving the history as from 1885. It is not only through the efforts of Mr. Ritch that we stand to gain; his position also counts. That is to say, a veteran white colonist of eighteen years standing like Mr. Ritch taking up the struggle on behalf of the rights of Indians can have a more powerful effect on the white people. It is for this reason that he has referred to this fact in the preface to his pamphlet. The vast amount of information which he has compressed into such a small pamphlet shows the anxious labour bestowed on his work by Mr. Ritch.

Mr. Ritch has done the right thing in recalling the promises given to the Indian community by Lord Milner in the year 1903. Lord Milner had said then:

> Once on the register, their position is established and no further registration is necessary, nor is a fresh permit required. That registration gives you a right to be here, and a right to come and go.

Mr. Ritch has compared compulsory and voluntary registration in order to point out the difference between the two. Voluntary registration would be devoid of the sting of compulsion, and would constitute an act of grace performed by the Asiatic community in deference to white sentiment. If registration is made compulsory, there will be no difference between Indians and Kaffirs, and the neighbouring Colony will be tempted to adopt it as a precedent. It may also turn out to be a prelude to compulsory segregation in Coloured Locations.

Mr. Ritch has not endeavoured to argue the question, but has relied upon facts, which he has marshalled so as to lead the reader to the irresistible conclusion that the Indian case is just. As has been pointed out by Mr. Ritch at the end of the pamphlet, the inconsistency between pre-war promises and
post-war performance exposes the Government’s perfidy. In Mr. Ritch’s own words:
Apart from the duty, of the Transvaal Government to protect the interests of a wholly unrepresented minority, there is the obligation of the Transvaal to subordinate merely local interests to the welfare of the Empire at large. Let the whites only consider to what extent the authority and prestige of the Imperial Government have been endangered by their heaping of indignity upon indignity upon representatives of the three hundred millions of Indians for the sake of a quarter of a million whites.
Mr. Ritch’s pamphlet will enable the whites in England and elsewhere to consider the Indian point of view on the Transvaal question. That will be a very important gain for the Indian community. We are thus putting up a strong fight, and it seems that even negotiations for a compromise have started; in view of this, it should hardly be necessary for us to add that we expect every Indian to remain firm and, guarding himself against any trap that the Government may lay, boldly to hold himself ready for imprisonment.[CWMG. Vol. VII, pp.394-95]

[12 December, 1907
“The Indian of the Transvaal […] is indiscriminately dubbed ‘coolie.’ One hears even in official circles such expressions as ‘coolie lawyer,’ ‘coolie doctor,’ ‘coolie merchant.’ His women are ‘coolie Marys. [...] He is even denied the not always obvious privilege of riding in the same municipal tramcars and Government railway carriages as his white fellow-colonists. His children are afforded no facilities for education except they attend the schools set apart for Kaffirs.”] 3
British Indians and The Transvaal
L. W. Ritch
As to the plea that the Indian will not blend with the rest of the community, what is this but a re-statement of the old fable of the boy who stoned the toad as a punishment for its being a toad? The Indian of the Transvaal a branded a pariah by statute; he is treated as such in practice; regardless of the obvious terminological inexactitude, he is indiscriminately dubbed “coolie”. One hears even in official circles such expressions as “coolie lawyer”, “coolie doctor”, “coolie merchant”. His women are “coolie Marys”. As has been already shown, he is accorded no place in the scheme of things, save on sufferance. He may not even own fixed property, although, curiously, he may be a mortgagee of such. He is even denied the not always obvious privilege of riding in the same municipal tramcars and Government railway carriages as his white fellow-colonists. His children are afforded no facilities for education except they attend the schools set apart for Kaffirs. Could there be less encouragement for the Indian “to blend” and to associate himself more closely with the larger life of the community? [CWMG. Vol. VII, pp. 445-446]

[12 December, 1907
“Compulsory registration is recognised as signifying nothing less than the reduction of British Indians to the status of the Kaffir.”] 4

British Indians and The Transvaal
L. W. Ritch
The difference between this suggested compromise and re-registration in terms of the Act cannot but be sufficiently obvious. Voluntary registration would be devoid of the sting of compulsion, and would constitute an act of grace, performed by the Asiatic community in deference to white sentiment, which
in course of time might undergo conversion. Compulsory registration is recognised as signifying nothing less than the reduction of British Indians to the status of the *Kaffir*; as being more than likely of adoption as a precedent for anti-Indian legislation by the neighbouring colonies; and as a probable prelude to compulsory segregation in coloured locations. [CWMG, Vol. VII, p. 447]

[2 February, 1908

“The British rulers take us to be so lowly and ignorant that they assume that, like the Kaffirs who can be pleased with toys and pins, we can also be fobbed off with trinkets.”]

**Blue Book**
The Blue book published by Lord Elgin in January is now available in South Africa. It is called a Blue book, though it should really be called a black book. Anyone who reads this Blue book and follows it will soon realize that the Indians’ success was in spite of the Imperial Government, which had ranged itself on the other side; it was won entirely on the strength of truth. It appears that, until January 10, the attitude of the Imperial Government was a feeble one. We have seen how it changed after that date. But we do not have to be grateful to the Imperial Government for that. For them it was a good deed done under the stress [of circumstances]. We see from the Blue book that, if the Immigrants’[Restriction] Act remains in its present form, sub- section 4 of section 2 of the Act2 , as interpreted by the Government, will preclude the entry of any Indian residing outside the Transvaal. If this interpretation of the Act is correct, it is all the more clear how valuable has been our success. At the same time we must realize that, if the Government’s interpretation of the immigration Act is correct, even Indians who pass the education test cannot enter. If the Indian community acquits itself well during the [next] three
months, this fear will very likely prove to have been without basis. For the present, however, the first comment we have to make on the Blue book is this: though the immigration Act admitted of this insidious interpretation, Lord Elgin acquiesced in it. Likewise, he also acquiesced in section 6, which provides for the deportation of Indians on the plea of the Asiatic [Registration] Act having received Royal assent. The Colonial Government should, therefore, be granted the powers required to enforce that Act and to deport the satyagrahis. Mr. Morley, too, acquiesced in this after some hesitation, being satisfied with Mr. Smuts’ assurance given him and Lord Elgin that [Indian] Princes and other [dignitaries] would be given the necessary permits for visits. The whole affair is as much a disgrace to the Indian community as it is to the British Empire. The British rulers take us to be so lowly and ignorant that they assume that, like the Kaffirs who can be pleased with toys and pins, we can also be fobbed off with trinkets. It is a tribute to the marvellous power of truth—be it noted by the Indians—that our rulers who thought us despicable were forced to change their opinion when they saw 200 Indians in gaol. We also learn from the same Blue book that the Chinese Consul, having raised the question of finger-impressions, found it necessary to withdraw it in view of the petition by the Chinese Association, and to tell Sir Edward Grey later that the [Chinese] objection was really to the Act itself [and not just to the finger-impressions]. We earnestly hope that the Indian community will not throw away, through a mistaken step or sheer thoughtlessness, the success that has been gained after such strenuous effort. When we have more time, we shall place before our readers the translations of relevant portions of this Blue book so that they may have the same picture of it as we have in our mind. Meanwhile, the only request we make is that they should remember that the movement has a long way to go yet and that these three months have been granted to us for
finalizing our preparations and sharpening our weapons. If we make the mistake of supposing that we cannot again put up the same kind of fight, we shall to our regret lose even that which we have gained. Those who wish India well must ponder over this. They ought not to allow their character patience, endurance, generosity, industriousness, etc.—to desert them. [CWMG, Vol. VIII, pp.166-167]

[7 March, 1908

“Many of the Native prisoners are only one degree removed from the animal and often created rows and fought among themselves in their cells.”]

My Gaol Experiences[-I]
The cell was situated in the Native quarters and we were housed in one that was labelled “For Coloured Debtors”. It was this experience for which we were perhaps all unprepared. We had fondly imagined that we would have suitable quarters apart from the Natives. As it was, perhaps, it was well that we were classed with the Natives. We would now be able to study the life of Native prisoners, their customs and manners. I felt, too, that passive resistance had not been undertaken too soon by the Indian community. Degradation underlay the classing of Indians with Natives. The Asiatic Act seemed to me to be the summit of our degradation. It did appear to me, as I think it would appear to any unprejudiced reader, that it would have been simple humanity if we were given special quarters. The fault did not lie with the gaol authorities. It was the fault of the law that has made no provision for the special treatment of Asiatic prisoners. Indeed, the Governor of the gaol tried to make us as comfortable as he could within the regulations. The chief warder, as also the head warder, who was in immediate charge of us, completely fell in with the spirit that actuated the Governor. But he was powerless to accommodate us beyond
the horrible din and the yells of the Native prisoners throughout the day and partly at night also. Many of the Native prisoners are only one degree removed from the animal and often created rows and fought among themselves in their cells. The Governor could not separate the very few Indian prisoners (It speaks volumes for Indians that among several hundred there were hardly half a dozen Indian prisoners.) from the cells occupied by the Native prisoners. And yet it is quite clear that separation is a physical necessity. So much was the classification of Indians and other Asiatics with the Natives insisted upon that our jumpers, which being new were not fully marked, had to be labelled “N”, meaning Natives. How this thoughtless classification has resulted in the Indians being partly starved will be clearer when we come to consider the question of food.

[CWMG, Vol. VIII, pp.182-83]

[3 July, 1908]

“We were then marched off to a prison intended for Kaffirs. There, our garments were stamped with the letter ‘N,’ which meant that we were being classed with the Natives. We were all prepared for hardships, but not quite for this experience. We could understand not being classed with the whites, but to be placed on the same level with the Natives seemed too much to put up with."

My Experience In Gaol[-I]

There, our garments were stamped with the letter “N”, which meant that we were being classed with the Natives. We were all prepared for hardships, but not quite for this experience. We could understand not being classed with the whites, but to be placed on the same level with the Natives seemed too much to put up with. I then felt that Indians had not launched on passive resistance too soon. Here was further proof that the obnoxious
law was intended to emasculate the Indians. It was, however, as well that we were classed with the Natives. It was a welcome opportunity to study the treatment meted out to Natives, their conditions [of life in gaol] and their habits. Looked at from another point of view, it did not seem right to feel bad about being bracketed with them. At the same time, it is indubitably right that Indians should have separate cells. The cells for Kaffirs were adjacent to ours. They used to make a frightful din in their cells as also in the adjoining yard. We were given a separate ward because we were sentenced to simple imprisonment; otherwise we would have been in the same ward [with the Kaffirs]. Indians sentenced to hard labour are in fact kept with the Kaffirs.[CWMG, Vol. VIII, p. 198]

[21 March, 1908
‘There is nothing for it but to let ourselves be classed with the Kaffirs and starve.”]

My Experience in Gaol [-III]
While on the subject of food, it will be instructive to compare [the Indian] with the European scale. For breakfast, they get porridge with eight ounces of bread. For dinner, again, bread, together with soup or meat with potatoes or green vegetables, and for supper, bread and porridge. That is, Europeans get bread thrice a day, so that it makes no difference whether or not they get porridge. Moreover, they are served either meat or soup as an additional item every day. Over and above these they are given tea or cocoa every afternoon. It is thus clear that both Kaffirs and Europeans get food suited to their tastes. The poor Indians—nobody bothers about them! They cannot get the food they want. If they are given European diet, the whites will feel insulted. In any case, why should the gaol authorities bother to find out the normal Indian fare? There is nothing for it but to let ourselves be classed with the Kaffirs and starve.
[CWMG, Vol. VIII, pp. 218-19]
[16 January, 1909

“I observed with regret that some Indians were happy to sleep in the same room as the Kaffirs [...] We may entertain no aversion to Kaffirs, but we cannot ignore the fact that there is no common ground between them and us in the daily affairs of life.”]

My Second Experience In Gaol [–III]

As soon as we rose the following day, I was taken to where the other prisoners were lodged, so that I had no chance to complain to the Governor about what had happened. I have, though, resolved in my mind on an agitation to ensure that Indian prisoners are not lodged with Kaffirs or others. When I arrived at the place, there were about 15 Indian prisoners. Except for three, all of them were satyagrahis. The three were charged with other offences. These prisoners were generally lodged with Kaffirs. When I reached there, the chief warder issued an order that all of us should be lodged in a separate room. I observed with regret that some Indians were happy to sleep in the same room as the Kaffirs, the reason being that they hoped there for a secret supply of tobacco, etc. This is a matter of shame to us. We may entertain no aversion to Kaffirs, but we cannot ignore the fact that there is no common ground between them and us in the daily affairs of life. Moreover, those who wish to sleep in the same room with them have ulterior motives for doing so. Obviously, we ought to abandon such notions if we want to make progress.

[CWMG, Vol. IX, p. 257]

[23 January, 1909

“[T]here was urgent need for separate lavatories for Indians. I also told him that Indian prisoners should never be lodged with Kaffirs. The Governor immediately issued an order for a lavatory for Indians to be sent on from the Central Gaol.”]
My Second Experience In Gaol [-IV]
I had one further unpleasant experience in the Johannesburg Gaol. In this gaol, there are two different kinds of wards. One ward is for *Kaffir* and Indian prisoners sentenced to hard labour. The other is for prisoners who are called as witnesses and those who have been sentenced to imprisonment in civil proceedings. Prisoners sentenced to hard labour have no right to go into this second ward. We slept in it, but we could not use its lavatory as of right. In the first ward, the number of prisoners wanting the use of the lavatory is so large that a visit to it is a great nuisance. Some Indians find this a source of great inconvenience. I was one of them. I was told by the warder that there would be no harm in my using a lavatory in the second ward. I therefore went to one of the lavatories in this ward. At these lavatories, too, there is usually a crowd. Moreover, the lavatories have open access. There are no doors. As soon as I had occupied one of them, there came along a strong, heavily-built, fearful-looking *Kaffir*. He asked me to get out and started abusing me. I said I would leave very soon. Instantly he lifted me up in his arms and threw me out. Fortunately, I caught hold of the door-frame, and saved myself from a fall. I was not in the least frightened by this. I smiled and walked away; but one or two Indian prisoners who saw what had happened started weeping. Since they could not offer any help in gaol, they felt helpless and miserable. I heard later that other Indians also had to go through similar tribulations. I acquainted the Governor with what had happened and told him there was urgent need for separate lavatories for Indians. I also told him that Indian prisoners should never be lodged with *Kaffirs*. The Governor immediately issued an order for a lavatory for Indians to be sent on from the Central Gaol. Thus, from the next day the difficulty about lavatories disappeared. As for myself, I had no motions for four days, and hence I suffered in health somewhat. [*CWMG*, Vol. IX, pp.269-70]
30 January, 1909

"First, why should we bear such hardships, submit ourselves, for instance, to the restrictions of gaol life, wear coarse and ungainly dress, eat food which is hardly food, starve ourselves, suffer being kicked by the warder, live among the Kaffirs [...] Better die than suffer this..."

My Second Experience In Gaol [–V]

What I Read In Gaol

Though the entire day is taken up with work, one can find time for some reading in the mornings and evenings, as also on Sundays and, since there is nothing else to tax one’s attention in gaol, it is possible to read with a peaceful mind. Though I had limited time on my hand, I managed ot read two books by the great Ruskin, the essays of the great Thoreau, some portions of the Bible, life of Garibaldi (in I Gujarati), essays of Lord Bacon (in Gujarati), and two other books about India. We can find the doctrine of satyagraha in the writings of Ruskin and Thoreau. The Gujarati books were sent by Mr. Diwan for all of us to read. Apart from these works, I read the Bhagavad Gita almost every day. All this reading had the effect of confirming my belief in satyagraha, and I can say today that life in gaol is not in the least boring.

Two Attitudes

We can take two different attitudes to what I have written above. First, why should we bear such hardships, submit ourselves, for instance, to the restrictions of gaol life, wear coarse and ungainly dress, eat food which is hardly food, starve ourselves, suffer being kicked by the warder, live among the Kaffirs, do every kind of work, whether we like it or not, obey a warder who is only good enough to be our servant, be unable to receive any friends or write letters, go without things that we may need, and sleep in company with robbers and thieves? Better die than suffer this. Better pay the fine than go to gaol.
Let no one be punished with gaol. Such an attitude will make a man quite weak and afraid of imprisonment, and he will achieve nothing good by being in gaol. Alternatively, one may consider oneself fortunate to be in gaol in the cause of the motherland, in defence of one’s honour and one’s religion. Gaol life, one may think, involves no [real] suffering. Outside, one has to carry out the will of many, whereas one has only the warder to reckon with in gaol. One has no anxieties in gaol, no problem of earning one’s livelihood, no worry about getting one’s bread, for that is provided regularly by others. One’s person is protected by the Government. None of these things has to be paid for. By way of exercise, one gets ample work to do and, without any effort on one’s part, all of one’s bad habits fall away. The mind enjoys a sense of freedom. One has ready to hand the benefit of being absorbed in devotions to God. The body is held in bondage, but the soul grows more free. One is in full enjoyment of the use of one’s limbs. The body is looked after by those who hold it in bondage. Thus, from every point of view, one is free. One might, perhaps, be in difficulties, be manhandled by a wicked warder, but then one learns to be patient. One feels glad to have an opportunity of dissuading [him] from such behaviour. It is up to us to adopt such an attitude and think of gaol as a holy and happy place and to make it such. In short, happiness and misery are states of the mind. I hope that the reader, after reading this account of my second experience [in gaol], will resolve in his mind that his only happiness will be in going to gaol for the sake of the motherland or his religion, in submitting himself to the suffering involved in it, or bearing hardships in other ways.

[CWMG, Vol. IX, pp.291-93]

[19 July, 1909

“We were locked up with the Kaffirs. There was not a single
European officer who described us as Indians. We were called "sammies" or "coolies".} 5

Extract
Translation from a Letter received by Mr. Gandhi from Mr. Mahomed Khan at Johannesburg,
I was discharged on the 12th July last. The only regret I had was that I could not meet you in the gaol. The day I was admitted I asked the chief warder to let me see you, but he did not grant the permission. I was kept in the ‘reserve camp’ which has been established only lately. There was much suffering there. The water supply was not sufficient. There was no bathing facility. I had hardly a bath during the two months I was in the prison.
I complained to the officer. He said: “Are you blind? Do you not see that there is no bathroom here? ” I then said: “What are prisoners to do if there is no bathroom for a year? ” He then said: “They have to do without.”
The food supply was also not enough. Moreover, on Saturdays, when the prisoners have to wash their towels, socks, etc., there was only one tank among 200. I received no ghee (clarified butter). They mixed fat with rice, which I did not eat. I complained about it, but my complaint went unheeded. I drew the attention of the chief warder to the fact that you had complained about absence of ghee, and the chief warder said that, as you were not able to eat enough because of the want of ghee, you were told that other Indian prisoners also would be supplied with ghee, in order to induce you to take your food. You know the disposition of the Governor of the gaol and the chief warder. When we have to complain, they do not tarry long enough to listen to it. Later, I received food according to the new scale. The latter also is not sufficient. Four ounces of bread were allowed, but I never felt that I had more than two ounces. Gruel is only gruel in name because it is all water, and, then, it is too little. From the bread, rice, vegetables etc.,
supplied, the Native prisoners working in the yard steal a great deal. The quantity of rice allowed was six ounces, but hardly three ounces were received by me. I believe that about fifteen dishes full of food are stolen by the Kaffirs and the warders say nothing. Moreover, the warders are abusive. I put up with all this silently.

The work was not extra heavy. I was taken with a span consisting of 32 men to Lord Selborne’s bungalow. There we had to do grasscutting, roller-turning, digging, stone-breaking, cutting, trees, cleaning ground, and also watering trees. Of this work, digging alone was somewhat difficult, because it was all stony; the stone was, moreover, very hard. The garden was situated on a rise. We were locked up with the Kaffirs. There was not a single European officer who described us as Indians. We were called “sammies” or “coolies”. Most of the warders were Dutch; some of them were youngsters, who had no knowledge of the work.

At length came 74 Madras Indians. They were in very great distress; they are suffering much. Among them are five very old men, over perhaps sixty. They could not walk well. These also are sent out to work early in the morning in a shivering condition, and as the tramp is long, they, poor fellows, get tired, and yet they utter not a word of complaint. Therein lies their bravery.[CWMG, Vol. X, pp.33-4]

[8 October, 1909
“We do not get there the food that we are used to, and are classified with the Kaffirs.”]

Letter to “Gujarati Punch”
You have requested me to write something for the Special Diwali Number.
My life is taken up at present by one single thing—the life-and-death struggle for the fulfilment of the pledge taken by the
Indians living in the Transvaal in South Africa. The pledge was taken by thousands of poor Indians—Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Pubjabis, Bengalis, Madrasis, Gujaratis and others—to uphold India’s honour. A tiny country like the Transvaal refuses entry even to a person like the Dada (Dadabhai Naoroji) of India, a country as vast as the ocean. The few Indians here, illiterate traders, hawkers and labourers, cannot, will not, bear this insult. To obliterate it, to uphold their religion, be it Hinduism or Islam or Zoroastrianism (for every religion teaches us that failure to honour a pledge taken is a violation of one’s religion), 2,580 persons out of a total Indian population of 13,000 in the Transvaal have already suffered imprisonment. Even now many of them are in gaol, and many will go to gaol in future. I must say that the gaol here is a terrible place. We do not get there the food that we are used to, and are classified with the Kaffirs. Many strong-minded Indian women, the so-called weaker sex, bear separation from their husbands in order that the latter may carry on the fight. Some of them, along with their children, go starving. Many of those who suffer thus are Gujaratis, for Hindus and Muslims from Gujarat are in a majority [among the Indians] in this land.[CWMG, Vol.10, p.158]

[10 March, 1911
“If the Regulations provide for Kaffir Police, we can fight the Regulations.” ]

Letter to H. S. L. Polak
My dear Polak,
I do not think that there need be any worry about police officer. If the Regulations provide for Kaffir Police, we can fight the Regulations. Even in attacking the details of the Bill, I think we should be very careful not to trouble ourselves with what may be remedied by Regulation. Yes, your reading of the second Section is, in my opinion, correct, but Gregorowski thinks that
the seventh Section overrides that construction, and he may be right. You are quite right, the Transvaal right cannot be taken away because of registration, but the Natal right of domicile—a highly legal term—may be annulled by transference. But I quite agree with you that it is not a question to be raised just now. Your letter to the Natal Witness I consider magnificent. I do not think the Government of India ever gave thought to the many things you mention in your letter, but it is intrinsically so good and convincing that it should be reproduced in the columns of Indian Opinion. I, therefore, return it to you, in case you have not a copy.[CWMG. Vol. XI, p. 266]

[25 October, 1913
“I saw it reported that we might even ask the Kaffirs to strike. But such is not our intention at all.”]

Interview to “The Natal Mercury”
The idea behind this proposed movement from the mines was that it was not a proper thing to draw rations from the mine-owners, and yet not to work. I personally felt that the strike was weak so long as the men did not actually leave the mines. What will happen now will depend on the result of the conference, and that I am unable to foreshadow. The strike, however, will continue. According to my estimate there are nearly 3,000 on strike. The effect of this is not entirely to stop work as they have a certain amount of Kaffir labour, and with this Kaffir labour and the Europeans they are able to do some work, though the bulk of it is certainly at a standstill.

I saw it reported that we might even ask the Kaffirs to strike. But such is not our intention at all. We do not believe in such methods. We have nothing against the employers as such, but as the employers are supposed—at least some of them—to have opposed the repeal of this tax, this demonstration has become necessary. As soon as the Government make a promise to the
effect that the tax will be repealed during the next session of Parliament, the strikers will be advised to resume work.

It is not the intention to ask them to join the general struggle at all; because, apart from the £3 tax, there are other grievances also for which the passive resistance by the general body of the people will continue. The other grievances are the marriage question; the question of domiciliary rights; the harsh administration of existing laws, as the Gold Law in the Transvaal; the right of S[outh] A[frica] born Indians to enter the Cape by reason of their birth; and the theoretical question of the social bar. For these things, even if the promise to repeal the £3 tax is given, passive resistance, without the strike, will continue.

I may state also, that no intimidation of any sort was used against non-strikers, and the strike is absolutely a voluntary act, and in so far as I have been able to see, quite spontaneous. The men only needed the position to be placed before them to strike.\[ CWMG , Vol. XIII, p. 385\]

The citations presented in Obadele Kambon’s article may create doubts in the minds of ordinary readers who are not familiar with the life and work of Gandhi in South Africa. It is a fact that without the relevant text, the context is not at all clear to the first time readers of Gandhiana. Therefore, along with Obadele Kambon’s citations of Gandhi, entire quote of Gandhi with the relevant text is given in the above paragraphs to understand Gandhi’s mind properly.

The primary aim of giving the relevant text of his citations is not to tell that Gandhi was perfect, error-free or a Mahatma. As in the case of other citations discussed in an
earlier chapter, author would like to suggest that a historical person should be evaluated from the viewpoints and practices of his time, not those of our time. In addition, an ever evolving person like Gandhi should be assessed on the basis of the totality of his positions on race, caste, equality and liberty when they took firm shape.

Notes and References

1. https://theprint.in/opinion/ramachandra-guha-is-wrong-a-middle-aged-gandhi-was-racist-and-no-mahatma/168222/
2. The date mentioned by the author is incorrect. The correct date is 17 November, 1906.
3. This statement is made by L. W. Ritch and not of Gandhi.
4. This statement is made by L. W. Ritch and not of Gandhi.
5. The statement is from a letter received by Gandhi from Mahomed Khan at Johannesburg
Chapter-6

Conclusion

The centenary celebrations of Gandhi’s return from South Africa provided an opportunity to revisit Gandhi’s life and work in South Africa and shed more light on certain activities which were hitherto not analysed in detail. It also brought into surface the controversies or misconceptions about his very approach to race and the racial discrimination. In other words, it not only resulted in producing literature highlighting Gandhi’s contributions in South African soil but also brought into limelight the criticisms about his very handling of the issues of Indians there and his approach to natives of South Africa. It got further visibility with the installation of Gandhi statue in Ghana in 2016 and its removal and relocation in another place in the background of him being portrayed as a racist. It was further fuelled by the attempt of the Indian government to install a bust of Gandhi in connection with sesquicentennial birth anniversary celebrations of Gandhi in Malawi. The introductory part of this work provides a bird’s eye view of discussions and debates on this issue.

In the second chapter a brief review of Gandhi’s life and work in South Africa is attempted mainly to understand Gandhi’s mind and actual practice in respect of matters relating to caste, race and racial discrimination. Though the controversy relating to racial discrimination is mainly centered on his life in South Africa, his early life is also analysed briefly to see whether he was consistent in his approach towards these matters or drastically changed it in the course of his life. From
the analysis, it can be easily inferred from his early life in India and England that he was not affected by caste or racial prejudices and to a great extent transcended them.

In South Africa, Gandhi was a victim of racial discrimination both in personal as well as societal terms. Gandhi had to face a lot of challenges in his work in South Africa while fighting for the cause of people of Indian origin. He was living in an alien land unfamiliar with political strategies and had to work with severe legal limitations, limited resources and social support base. Those who accuse him of being soft on the African Whites in respect of their policy towards Blacks often forget some of his limitations and the inhospitable and hostile environment he had to work in. He was an inexperienced young lawyer when he just landed in South African soil.

It would not be fair to describe him as a racist even at the beginning of his work in South Africa. He came to South Africa in 1893 to assist in a legal suit of Dada Abdullah and Company. After completing a year of service he was forced to stay in South Africa because of the force of circumstances and established Natal Indian Congress in August 1894 to spearhead the cause of people of Indian origin there. But from his writings from as early as October 1894, it is clear that he was very much unhappy with the British policy of denying voting rights on the basis of the colour of the skin whether it was for the Indians or the natives. He has not minced the words when he said “You, in your wisdom, would not allow the Indian or the Native the precious privilege under any circumstances, because they have a dark skin.” He reminded them that racial
discrimination is very much against the Lord’s teachings in their holy scripture the Bible. Thus the argument that in the initial stages of his life in South Africa he was an ardent racist doesn’t seem valid if we analyse his life objectively.

His life in South Africa was a period of intense transformation in terms of evolution of his personality and the world of ideas. To some extent he was influenced by major developments in the world and in certain cases he went far ahead of his time. At the personal level, he took vow of Bramacharya and undertook experiments in community living through Phoenix settlement and Tolstoy Farm. At the societal level, he evolved a strategy expressed in the form of satyagraha which turned out to be quite effective in meeting the challenge of racial discrimination and getting some relief and respite for the people of Indian origin in South Africa in his fight for human dignity.

Gandhi’s general reading and John Finot’s classic work Race Prejudice helped him to understand and broaden his ideas and approach to racial issues. He was revolutionary in his approach because he even talked about the commingling of all races. No Indian in 1908 probably thought of such an idea, let alone spoke about it.

In the third chapter, through the analysis of major criticisms against Gandhi in South Africa the study tries to remove the apprehensions from the minds of the readers about some important issues like his support for the Aryan bloodline theory to show that the Whites and Indians were from the same lineage and the natives had no place in the whole discourse, his
use of the term *kaffir* to describe the natives, his lack of concern for their issues, his failure to solve the problems of Indians and his outright loyalty to the British.

The fourth chapter analyses the citations which were quoted in the wake of installation of Gandhi statue in Ghana and the effort of Indian government to install a Gandhi bust in Malawi to show the reductionist approach of persons who interpret the comments or text out of context with no consideration for the then prevailing circumstances and judge them by applying the present standards.

In the fifth chapter, the citations of Gandhi presented in an article along with the whole text are given in order to help the readers understand the relevant context. Further, it has to be noticed that some of the comments made by Gandhi about the blacks of South Africa are from his experiences at jails where once he was thrown out of the lavatory and narrowly escaped with his life.

From the analysis of his tumultuous and eventful life in South Africa it is clear that Gandhi continued to evolve and grow throughout this period while retaining his basic formulations and ideas. Thus one can see consistency, evolution and growth in the entire process of his life and work in South Africa and later in India. This in itself is a great achievement by any standard of human endeavour. Another aspect which strikes any scholar of Gandhian thought is that unlike many others he did not always go out of his way to defend his earlier held ideas and actions. At times, he has the courage of conviction to say that he has committed Himalayan
blunders. Only in this light, his fight against any attack on human dignity whether on the count of caste, colour or creed could be viewed and assessed. In a nutshell, the present study has gone a long way to show that he was neither a racist nor a casteist so far as his record of work in South Africa is concerned.
APPENDIX – I

M. K. Gandhi’s written Statement in the
Great Trial of 1922

I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England, to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why from a staunch loyalist and co-operator, I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator. To the court too I should say why I plead guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection towards the Government established by law in India.

My public life began in 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and an Indian, I had no rights. More correctly I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian.

But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of Indians was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticizing it freely where I felt it was faulty but never wishing its destruction.

Consequently when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Ladysmith. Similarly in 1906, at the time of the Zulu ‘revolt’, I raised a stretcher bearer party and served till the end of the ‘rebellion’. On both the occasions I received medals and was even mentioned in dispatches. For my work in South Africa I was given by Lord
Hardinge a Kaisar-i-Hind gold medal. When the war broke out in 1914 between England and Germany, I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London, consisting of the then resident Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly, in India when a special appeal was made at the war Conference in Delhi in 1918 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda, and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service, I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen.

The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act - a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against it. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and culminating in crawling orders, public flogging and other indescribable humiliations. I discovered too that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussalmans of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the forebodings and the grave warnings of friends, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919, I fought for co-operation and working of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Mussalmans, that the Punjab wound would be healed, and that the reforms, inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India.

But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was whitewashed and most culprits went not only unpunished but remained in service, and
some continued to draw pensions from the Indian revenue and in some cases were even rewarded. I saw too that not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude.

I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage, in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations, before she can achieve Dominion Status. She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British advent India spun and wove in her millions of cottages, just the supplement she needed for adding to her meager agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India’s existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witness. Little do town dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for their work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town dweller of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiased examination of the Punjab Marital Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent of
convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion, in nine out of every ten, the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of hundred, justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion, the administration of the law is thus prostituted, consciously or unconsciously, for the benefit of the exploiter.

The greater misfortune is that the Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many Englishmen and Indian officials honestly believing systems devised in the world, and that India is making steady, though, slow progress. They do not know, a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organized display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other, has emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation. This awful habit has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators. Section 124 A, under which I am happily charged, is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote, or incite to violence. But the section under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases tried under it, I know that some of the most loved of India’s patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under that section. I have endeavored
to give in their briefest outline the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King’s person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. And it has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me.

In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-co-operation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my opinion, non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good. But in the past, non-co-operation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavoring to show to my countrymen that violent non-co-operation only multiples evil, and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge and the assessors, is either to resign your posts and thus dissociate yourselves from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil, and that in reality I am innocent, or to inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country, and that my activity is, therefore, injurious to the common weal.
SIBY KOLLAPPALLIL JOSEPH

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INSTITUTE OF GANDHIAN STUDIES

The Institute of Gandhian Studies (Gandhi Vichar Parishad) is an educational and public charitable institution that has been set-up as one of the commemorative projects of the Jamnalal Bajaj Centenary Year. It was established at Wardha in October 7, 1987. The object of the Institute is to promote, organize, sponsor, undertake the study of the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi as well as the predecessors of Gandhi and contemporary thinkers and social revolutionaries who have drawn inspiration from Gandhi, or arrived at similar views as a result of their own experience and reflections, as also, to undertake comparative studies of the philosophy and methodology of Gandhiji and other thinkers and social revolutionaries. It offers courses of study of different durations oriented towards the academic community including the Departments of Gandhian Studies in universities, thinkers, religious groups, activists, trade unionists, panchayat leaders, workers among unorganized labour, workers of voluntary/grass root organisations, women, youth, students and similar other groups.

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This is a timely book that puts to rest the allegation made time and again that Gandhi was a racist. Siby K Joseph has meticulously contextualised each of the statements advanced by the detractors of Gandhi to demonstrate the lopsidedness with which they presented their claims. He has also come up with relevant quotes to make the issue more nuanced than straightforward.

- John S. Moolakkattu
Professor, Department of International Relations & Politics, Central University of Kerala
Editor, Gandhi Marg, New Delhi; Gandhi-Luthuli Chair Professor in Peace Studies (2008-2010)
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

We live in an age when reputations can rise and fall in a nanosecond, when even such titans as Gandhi can be tarnished by innuendo, or by blindly focusing on perceived flaws and errors and thus missing the totality of the person. I salute Siby K Joseph and his meticulous work which solidly opposes such tendencies and sets the record straight.

- Gabriel Rosenstock
Irish Poet and author of Walk with Gandhi: Bóthar na Saoirse, Dublin, Ireland

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