

THE  
COLLECTED  
WORKS  
OF  
MAHATMA  
GANDHI

VOLUME TWELVE



THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION



renewed, this time with better hope. Dr. Booth went over to the Bishop of Natal,<sup>1</sup> who intervened—and he would not take no for an answer—till at last the offer was not only accepted, but they were able to form a very decent Stretcher-bearer Corps which, as they all knew, did its humble share. If he had dealt with that matter in some detail, it was in order to render a humble tribute to the European friends and to say that at that time, as on many other occasions, there had been a perfect blending, a perfect harmony and a perfectly friendly tone, that at that time they were not without European sympathy and without European friends. With what a heavy heart, then, would he leave South Africa when he had all those rich memories. If he dwelt upon that incident, he also dwelt upon it in order to show to his countrymen that, if they always clamoured for their rights, if they always wanted to resist any encroachment upon their rights, they had also to recognize their obligations as members of a state. That was an occasion which offered itself for such a recognition on the part of the Indian community, and though they had been only a few thousand, he thought that they had done whatever it was in their power to do, and he wished to remind his countrymen of that occasion and wished them to understand that the settlement also carried with it obligations.<sup>2</sup>

*Indian Opinion*, 22-7-1914 & 23-9-1914

### 36. SPEECH AT VERULAM<sup>3</sup>

July 12, 1914

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

When I agreed to come over to Verulam, I had no idea in my mind that I would receive an address. I came only to pay homage to my indentured brothers and to explain to them the facts under the new law. Moreover, a visit to this place is for me like going on a pilgrimage, for the Indian friends here played

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Vol. III, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Brief reports in *The Transvaal Leader* and *The Star*, both of 13-7-1914, said: "Mr. Gandhi made an important statement to the effect that Indian disabilities were only partially satisfied by the Relief Bill, and added that the question of equal status was bound to come up in the future. He was leaving South Africa for some years, but might return."

<sup>3</sup> Gandhiji addressed a farewell meeting of about 5,000 indentured and other Indians. Some representative Europeans also attended. Addresses and purses were presented to him on behalf of Tamils and other Indians from Verulam and Tongaat. E. H. Langston presided. Gandhiji first spoke in Hindi and then in English. For the speech in English, *vide* the following item.



a great part in the recent strike; and in what wonderful a manner! When all the so-called leaders were resting in their private rooms or were busy making money, the indentured brethren of this place, the moment they happened to hear that a strike was on in Charlestown and elsewhere about the £3 tax, struck work too. They looked for no leaders. The leaders at Verulam, Tongaat and Isipingo were busy going round collecting money. But spontaneously, the friends here struck work. This proves that poverty is real wealth. The poor are like kings. They will have their way. Be it here or in India or anywhere else, our salvation lies through poverty. The poor are the soul of a great movement like this.

As I accept the addresses that you have presented to me, I remember an injunction in the scriptures: "Man! Flee from a place where you find yourself being praised, or at least plug your ears with cotton-wool." I keep turning over this injunction in my mind whenever I hear myself praised. But, on this occasion, I have not been able to act as enjoined. When one can do neither, the injunction says: "*Jiva*<sup>1</sup>, if you cannot act as enjoined here, offer all the praise you receive to Lord Krishna." And this is what I do. Obedience to such religious injunctions and the path of uprightness will ensure success in every undertaking. What I mean to say is that you are not right when you attribute our success to me. It was the strength of our indentured brothers that brought us success. It is they who have done something really great. Even if I and those near me had continued to be in gaol to this day, a settlement would not have come about as quickly as it did.

[Having explained that the tax, including the arrears, would not be collected henceforth, Gandhiji said:]

The prevalent impression that because of the repeal of the tax Indians would have to remain permanently under indenture or be repatriated is entirely mistaken. On the expiry of your contract, you can stay as free citizens. My own advice to you is that you should never re-indenture yourselves. You will, of course, have to complete the term of the present contract; no one can escape that. Those who become free can obtain passes from the Protector at Durban. Free Indians who remain here for three years will be treated as domiciled here. After completing three years, anyone who wants to go to India and return will be able to do so. Such a person should go to India at his own expense,

<sup>1</sup> The individual Self, conscious of its separate identity

and not approach the Government for the purpose. But those who have made up their minds not to return here will be able to claim from the Government the expenses for the journey to India.

I take this occasion of my visit to Victoria County to offer thanks to Mr. Marshal Campbell for help in securing the repeal of the tax. He worked indefatigably in the Senate to achieve that end, unmindful of his own interests.

Your feeling unhappy, as you say, at my going away binds me all the firmer to you in love. But I am leaving Phoenix behind me. You may approach Mr. West or the other inmates on any matter connected with the law or when you are up against any other difficulty. They will encourage you, advise you and work for you. They will not charge you a single penny and, in case they can be of no help, they will direct you to the right quarters. If ever they start demanding money from you at Phoenix, you should refuse even to turn your eyes in that direction again. I shall, of course, continue to work for you. You are under indenture with one person for five years, but I am under indenture with 300 millions for a life-time. I shall go on with that service and never displace you from my heart. All the money I have received here, I shall use for local purposes and the books for my own study.

It made me very unhappy to know that, during the recent strike, provoked no doubt by excessive cruelty or some other cause, you raised your hand in retaliation. Had I been with you, I would have had my head broken rather than allowed you to do what you did. For the future, however, I wish to put before you one important suggestion. If it should ever happen that the Government is harsh with you or that your employers ill-treat you, you should fearlessly strike work; sit yourselves down at one place, go hungry if they do not give you food, suffer yourselves to be abused and kicked and finally, if such be your lot, submit even to hanging or being shot dead, but do not waver in your faith in God. If you act thus, even the stoniest heart will melt. Such is the power of satyagraha. Have trust in it. This alone is pure satyagraha. It is a weapon which surpasses all weapons, all your clubs and other weapons. Cling to it—therefore; it will never fail you in times of need. Good-bye to you.

[From Gujarati]

*Indian Opinion*, 22-7-1914