# FOUNDATION DAY LECTURE

**M S Prabhakara**

# *Getting off the Moral High Horse: Some Aspects of the Democratic Transition in South Africa*

OKDISCD

OMEO KUMAR DAS INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL
CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT
GUWAHATI

**Foundation Day Lecture No.1**

Copyright © Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, 2004

Published by Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change
and Development (OKDISCD) website: www okdisdc.org

This lecture was presented by Dr. M.S. Prabhakar on the occasion
of the Foundation Day of the Institute, March 30, 2003.

The lecture is distributed free of charge

Present Address:

Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development,
K. K. Bhatta Road, Chenikuthi, Guwahati 781 003

e-mail: dkdscd@yahoo.co.in
dkdscd@hotmail.com

Printed at Labanya Press, 64 F.C. Road, Guwahati-781001, India.

OKDISCD

# Preface

It is our humble endeavour to celebrate each year the Foundation Day of the Institute which falls on March 30. It was on this day this Institute came into being as a result of the concerted efforts of leading social scientists belonging to the region. The original name of this premier Institute was Institute of Social Change and Development. In 1995 it was renamed in the present form to pay tribute to an eminent educationist, social reformer and freedom fighter.

On March 30, 2002 the Institute celebrated its Foundation Day for the first time by launching its website www.okdiscd.org . On that historic day it was decided to celebrate the Foundation Day by organizing a lecture. Dr. M.S. Prabhakara, a scholar and celebrated columnist of international repute, who has been writing extensively on North East India and its neighbours, and also on South Africa, was kind enough to deliver the First Foundation Day Lecture on March 30, 2003. His lecture has been made available in the print form to enable it to reach out to readers and scholars.

The Institute plans to publish each Foundation Day Lecture to disseminate ideas and noble thoughts for healthy debate and discussion among the intellectual community.

**Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed**
Director
Omeo Kumar Das Institute of
Social Change and Development

# GETTING OFF THE MORAL HIGH HORSE

## SOME ASPECTS OF THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

I am deeply honoured to be asked to deliver this, the First Foundation Day Lecture of the Omeo Kumar Das Institute for Social Change and Development.

The lecture, written out as an Essay, is in three parts. First, it discusses some problematic aspects of the South African transition from colonialism, segregation, institutionalised racism, from a state and a structure deeply rooted in theft, exclusion and violence and created over the years by an alliance in contention and collaboration comprising the majority of White settlers of European descent, English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking, to democracy, in particular the limits implied in the term, 'negotiated revolution' which most aptly describes that transition. The public phase of the transition process (preceded by an armed struggle which it is now politically correct to run down) began with the release, in stages (1989-90), of the political prisoners on the Robben Island and elsewhere and the unbanning of the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party and other banned people's organisations that had spearheaded the liberation struggle; and culminated in the holding of the first democratic elections (27 April 1994) and the swearing in of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically President of South Africa (10 May 1994). The process is still an ongoing one. The formal structures of democratic governance are in place; but so are the relations of power, subjugation and exclusion that were, and continue to be, the defining elements in the relation between the overwhelming majority of the black people and a privileged white minority, still in control of the country's resources, though under the programme, perhaps more accurately a slogan, of black empowerment, some dent has been made in this privilege. This part also considers briefly the political strategy and tactics of the liberation movement in so far as these are reflected in what has come to be known as the Tripartite Alliance, comprising the ANC, the SACP and COSATU (the Congress of South African Trade Unions), with the acknowledged leadership position of the ANC in this alliance, and its trajectory since the advent of democracy, focusing on the so-called 'dual membership' across the ANC and the SACP.

Two, and in deference to the widely held belief, not entirely without reason, that there is a profound 'Indian' connection to the South African revolution, the Essay discusses some aspects of this 'Indian' connection. The subject is vast, encompassing a history and a connection that goes much farther back than 16

OKDISCD

November1860, the day on which S. S. Truro, the steamship carrying 340 men, women and children who had embarked in Madras docked at the Durban harbour. These were the first group of a migration that went on till 1911 during which 1,52,184 persons, most of them indentured immigrants, arrived in the British colony of Natal. Almost all these embarked at the ports of Calcutta and Madras. The figure does not include the so-called 'passenger' Indians, that is, those who travelled (some of them from Mauritius where their ancestors had gone earlier) at their own expense in the wake of the traffic of the indentured as auxiliaries of that traffic, with a view to providing goods and services to the indentured Indians.

Three, the Essay points out some of the similarities and, more importantly, the differences between the transition and its aftermath in India and in South Africa, in particular the perils and promises and the salutary lessons that they offer in both the instances. It is in this context that the title of the Lecture is explicated and elaborated and, I trust, justified in a brief concluding section.

Another point, both as introduction and explanation. The use of single inverted commas (in text) or of the expression 'so-called' (in speech) to indicate scepticism about the legitimacy of the term or idea being discussed, if done repeatedly, is distracting. Hence, though this Essay uses such terms as 'elections', 'parliament', 'government', 'president', 'prime minister' and so on while discussing the political system in apartheid South Africa, each of these terms as well as the very political universe crafted in the years between 1910 and 1994, the years of the Union of South Africa and the Republic of South Africa, and even the systems as existed earlier, were utterly fraudulent, and amounted to little more than politically obscene abominations. All these high sounding concepts amounting to little more than wind – and a very foul-smelling wind at that – have to be seen in the unique context of South Africa long before the consolidation of apartheid, under settler and colonial rule, as a Dominion of the British Commonwealth and as a Republic, under all of which arrangements the majority of South Africans, over 90 per cent of the population, were considered non-citizens, temporary residents on sufferance from imagined homelands, with no political rights in the land of their and generations of their ancestors' birth, with only the minority population of White European descent qualified to vote and seek political office.[1]

## I

Perhaps the best way to deal with what I call 'some problematic aspects of transition' is to begin with a 'joke' – not in the least funny, by the way — that the well-known South African playwright and actor, Pieter-Dirk Uys (aka Evita



Bezuidenhout) used to insert in his one-person shows, and probably still does, a line that always touched a raw nerve in his audience. The problem facing South Africa, his character used to say, is not about its future, but about its past.

Let me illustrate the relevance of this observation about the contested nature of South Africa's past, and its relevance to the present transition process, with a Letter to the Editor, fairly typical of one particular kind of mindset, that of the English speaking White South Africans, that appeared in *Sunday Times* of Johannesburg on 4 March 2001. The writer, Michelle Friedman, is responding to an earlier letter (25 February, by one who had signed himself as 'Country-less') that had complained about the failure of the democratic government to do anything about corruption, rampant crime and so on, an all too usual complaint, and announcing his resolve to emigrate – not an unusual resolve either. Rather more interesting is the response to such whining and whingeing in the letter I want to quote. Bemoaning the decision of 'Country-less' to emigrate, which meant missing 'the opportunity of a lifetime' to take part in the exciting task of building a democratic South Africa, the Correspondent says: "Yes, there is brutality and savagery. Have you thought why this erupts now? Have you considered what was the effect of the brutalisation of millions of people *over three generations* could be? Did you think we'd all live immediately in a non-sexist, non-racist society after one election? Indeed you were starry-eyed. That's the problem" (Emphasis added).

The high-minded Correspondent's heart is in the right place even if her reading of the history of her own country is hopelessly wrong. It is really possible that anyone can believe that oppression in South Africa began about 'three generations' ago which would mean, given the date of the letter, that the bad days for the majority of South African began around the time when the National Party (Oh, those awful Nats!) came to power and apartheid became state policy?

It is true that the National Party that derived its support from this section of the White community came to power in the so-called elections of May 1948, marking and end to the dominance of the English speaking whites. But then, in every single 'election' held since 1910 when in a 'grand gesture of reconciliation' (and hard negotiations) at the end of the Anglo-Boer War the English and Afrikaans speakers of European origin, the Brits and the Boers, came together to form the Dominion of South Africa, only the Whites were allowed to vote - barring the limited and qualified franchise allowed to the Coloureds in the Cape till 1948 when even this limited franchise came to an end. Every one of the so-called parliamentary constituencies had on the average about 5,000 voters, if not less. In



OKDISCD

the 1948 Elections (26 May) whose outcome was seen as a terrible tragedy for the country by the English-speaking Whites (as is implied in the letter I have quoted), a total of 10,75,328 votes (80.3 per cent of the 'electorate') were cast, while the population of South Africa was then around 20 million.

The exclusion of over 90 per cent of the people from franchise, in which both the Brits and Boers were complicit, was causally linked to the system of racial segregation, which too was a unique British invention. What the Boers did after capturing political power in 1948 was to give this policy a local habitation and name, apartheid, and implement in a brutally and bureaucratically institutionalised form, covering every aspect of life, public and private, the here and the hereafter, of all South Africans, though contradictorily as it were central to the system was also the exclusion of the majority of the inhabitants of the land except as victims.

Resisting the beguilement of the seeming civility of the English mindset, one should always bear in mind this fundamental truth about South Africa's past, the utter vileness of settlers of European origin, across all other divides, in so far as their relations with the majority of the black indigene; and even more so, towards the black migrant labour they imported; one should never, ever, lower one's guard. Neither colonialism nor racial oppression, both causally linked necessary conditions required to sustain each other, began with the coming to power of the Nats. The Black population of South Africa, in particular the African population, understand this too well – notwithstanding the frequent public admission by Nelson Mandela to being somewhat of an Anglophile. As occasion and material interests demanded, both the Afrikaner and English settlers and colonists have been fighting against each other and getting to bed with each other virtually throughout the period of colonial dominance. The high points of this contention which coincided with the discovery of Diamonds (Kimberley, 1857), the subsequent Gold Rush (1871-86, mainly in the Witwatersrand), and their exploitation by Anglo-American capital, were the Anglo-Transvaal War (1880-81), also known as the First Anglo-Boer War, and the Anglo-Boer War, now known in a fit of post-democratic transition political correctness as the South African War (1899-1902).

The first brought to an end the British annexation of the Transvaal, though not British ambitions as events were to prove later; the second ended with the defeat of the Boer forces and the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging (31 May 1902), marking an end to the dreams of an independent Boer Nation in South Africa.

However, when it came to the systematic theft of the indigenous people's



land and its resources through trickery and conquest, the suppression with extreme violence of African resistance, the exclusion and the denial of the right of Africans to exist in the land of generations of their ancestors' birth, the denial of their very humanity, the two contenders were of one mind, with hardly any difference between the two. Indeed, within the perspective of the value systems then ruling, it can be argued that if anything the Boers who, whatever their other crimes, had (in terms of their own unique perspective) 'Africanised' themselves and had no 'homeland' except South Africa, had a rather more legitimate cause claim in their fight against the Brits (the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902) unlike the English-speaking Whites for whom Britain was and continues to be even now 'kith and kin'.[2] Only this explains why so many progressive forces and individuals in Europe supported the Boer cause, some even volunteering to fight along with the Boer forces, even while being fully aware that it was essentially a war between two contending colonial powers shaping up to be full time imperialists, united on the fundamental issue of oppressing and excluding the Black majority.

Ironically, there was also an element of Black participation in this struggle, mostly involuntary and under duress on the part of those Blacks forcibly engaged at very low levels on both sides of the divide. Though the Blacks were linked to the Boers in a unique relationship of oppression, paternalism and dependency arising out of a common attachment to land, they knew instinctively that it was not their war. The case of the Blacks commandeered to serve on the side of the Brits — some from other overseas colonial possessions including India — is a subject full of contradictions given the firm conviction of both Boer and Brit leaders that "natives should not be called in or mixed up with the quarrels between the whites" since such participation would put "dangerous ideas into the heads of black communities, with dangerous implications for the White people's 'self-preservation". In the words of Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, the circumstances of the war (one set of White colonials fighting another set of white colonials) being peculiar, employing 'natives' to fight the war would be 'bad policy'.[3]

Perhaps some explanation would be in order as to why I dwell on this historic relationship of Contention / Collaboration between the Boers and the Brits. Instinctively, most well minded opponents of racial oppression in South Africa not closely or directly involved in the resistance to these evils either as victims or active opponents and whose reading of South Africa's past is distorted by an English prism associate apartheid with the Boers, the Afrikaans speaking settler community of Dutch (and later Protestant French Huguenot) origin. This settler community which traces its origins to 17th century Dutch (and later Flemish) migrants began

to identify itself as 'Afrikaner', which is merely the Dutch spelling of 'African' early in the 18th century, within half a century of the arrival of the first settlers. The landing on the shores of Table Bay (modern Cape Town) on 6 April 1652 of Jan van Riebeeck, an official of the Dutch East India Company is generally considered as marking the first arrival of these settlers. The 'refreshment station' that van Riebeeck established at this point, not exactly the southern tip of Africa though viewed so in popular imagination, and the vegetable garden he planted to supply the Dutch East India Company's ships on their voyage to and from the colonies in the East Indies, all on the directive of the Company, marked the first 'permanent settlement' of Europeans on this part of Africa though other European travellers and explorers had landed on the Cape coast earlier, had indeed tried to establish settlements.

The first recorded use of the name, 'Afrikaner', to describe themselves as a people is traced by Andre Brink, the noted South African writer, to 1707, when a 17 year old Hendrik Bibault, a fractious youth of seventeen, who defied the order of the magistrate to keep peace and disperse. "I won't go. I am an Afrikaner, and even if the Landdrost (magistrate) beats me to death or puts me in jail I shall not, and will not, be silent." [4] To take note of these nuances is not to ignore the truly vicious features of the apartheid regime, its refinement of the cruelties and atrocities that the Brits had perpetrated on the Boers during the Boer war when over 28,000 people, the majority of them women and children - and an almost equal number of blacks for whom no memorials exist - died in the concentration camps built by the British. The death of Afrikaner women and children in these camps is a matte of never to be forgotten historical memories for the Boers, and is monumentalised all over the country, in particular in Bloemfontein. Rather, its is these nuances that invest the transition with its problematic dimensions.

Take for instance the position of Afrikaans language, in particular what I would like to call the 'ownership' of the language and its extraordinarily rich resources. Under apartheid, especially after the Soweto uprising of June 1976, Afrikaans was axiomatically identified by the Blacks, in particularly the majority of Black youth, quite rightly as an instrument of oppression. This position has dramatically changed in what few nowadays refer to as 'new' South Africa. Afrikaans is no longer the language of the oppressor but is rather another 'African' language. Indeed, the majority of speakers of Afrikaans have always been 'non-white', in the sense that more 'Coloureds' than 'White Afrikaners' speak Afrikaans as their home language. Interestingly, some of the most popular music of the townships is in a patios of African languages and Afrikaans, not to be confused Fanakalo of an older vintage, the language crafted in the mines and hostels by the



Africans workers (and their white supervisors) forced to work together and communicate with each other down in the in belly of the earth.[5]

Inasmuch as the contention under colonialism and apartheid was between Boers and the Brits, a potent symbol of the new challenge being faced both by the Boers and the black majority (which continues to feel oppressed though not through institutionalised state violence) is the English language, the language of power, of globalisation and of the Anglo-American agenda of recolonisation, indeed the language in which the liberation struggle was conducted even though the majority of those struggling for liberation were not fully literate in English.[6] Thus the subtle resonances linking Afrikaans speakers with the speakers of other nine recognised African languages, evident in popular art of the black townships, particularly music. And yet, even while warily discovering each other on terms of relative equality, even able to share in humour, some sick and dark, rooted in racial stereotypes which during apartheid was unthinkable, both the African and the Afrikaner with legitimate reasons to fear the hegemony of the English are also embracing the English language, in grudging acknowledgement of its instrumentality as a source of power.

Such ambiguities and contradictions abound in every aspect of South Africa's transition. These are indeed inherent in the very process of transition that may be best described as 'negotiated revolution'. On the face of it the term is a contradicting in terms; but in the context of South Africa, it is a most apposite term, and most accurately describes the transition. The transition was a negotiated one; and it was also a revolutionary one. This has resulted in all sorts of contradictions. For instance, the mindlessly facile manner in which terms like 'non-racialism' and 'multiracialism' are used virtually interchangeably as presenting the 'democratic alternative' to apartheid, a mindlessness which is one of the obverses of the 'negotiated revolution', is among the most serious contradictions that the ANC itself is yet to resolve.

As anyone with even the most superficial acquaintance with the South African situation would know, multiracialism is merely another fancy word for apartheid – which its defenders anyway always insisted meant 'separate development'. One wonders if the confusion is simply terminological. My own reading is that the 'liberal' opponents of apartheid, fundamentally driven by their anti-communism and hatred of the Soviet Union, worried about the perceived closeness of the ANC to Moscow, and anxious and possessing the intellectual and material resources to set the agenda for the 'new South Africa' which they were percipient enough to see on the horizon, have consistently tried to push the liberation movement in the



OKDISCD

direction of 'multiracialism' as the democratic alternative to non-racialism, seeing the latter as nothing but creeping communism. Thus, in his 'authorised biography'; of Nelson Mandela, Anthony Sampson is able in the space of less than a page, indeed in one instance on the same page, to discuss 'ANC's non-racialism' and 'ANC's multiracialism'. [7] However, such ambiguity and confusion has not been solely part of a calculated ideological undermining of the liberation movement by its liberal supporters, for this an agenda that continues even now. One occasionally sensed the confusion – if it is that – even in the leadership of the ANC, especially during election campaigns, when those chosen to campaign and the themes of campaign were tailored to meet the perceived preoccupations of the target electorate.

This background is relevant to what follows — the exploration of another contradiction rather more widely known and is a constant theme in the South African media, the working of the Tripartite Alliance, in particular the unique relationship between the ANC and the SACP in which the SACP while remaining a separate political party having its own programme also allows its members to be members of the ANC. Holding as I do to the view that history, whether in the lower case or with a capital 'H', is not dead, I make no apologies for using terms and concepts, or dealing with polemical issues, that many may consider obsolete in the paragraphs that follow.[8]

An important aspect of the anti-colonial and national liberation movements of the last century was the relationship these movements forged with the international communist movement led by the Soviet Union. The leaders of the October Revolution were fully aware of the critical necessity in the broader interest of the survival and advancement of the October Revolution itself of extending support to these national liberation struggles. Thus the creation of the formal structures like the Comintern and the Cominform to co-ordinate this support and, where possible, also to influence the substance and direction of these struggles.

The relationship was complex, given the different political and social perspectives of the leaders of the national liberation movements that, at that point of time, seemed far away from reaching the goal of national independence, and the communists already controlling the levers of state power in the largest country in the world. Though colonialism and imperialism were often seen in the popular imagination and perspective of the oppressed people as one and the same enemies of national liberation and socialism, the complex relations between these two in countries yet to attain national independence were in practice marked as much by collaboration as by rivalry and contention. One can think of any number of



instances in the formerly colonised countries (including India) where the indigenous capitalists in the colonial state tried to contend against the colonial power and make common cause with the national movements even while being staunchly anti-communist and so naturally collaborating with imperialism.

Thus, the historic tensions, sometimes creative but more commonly debilitating, in the relationship between the national liberation movements and the international communist movement. An interesting exception to this generally fraught relationship is the one crafted over decades of common and shared struggle against colonialism and apartheid in South Africa between the ANC and the SACP (formerly CPSA, Communist Party of South Africa.) [9]

Not that the ANC-SACP alliance has been entirely without problems and tensions. This was so as much in the period when both the parties were banned and many of its leaders were in exile as at present, when the SACP is very much a part of the ANC led government. One of the most serious challenges to the ANC-SACP alliance during the years of illegality and exile was led by a group of senior ANC leaders (the so-called 'Gang of Eight') on the ground that the ANC was being taken over by the Communists masquerading as Africanists. Earlier, on much the same issues of an alleged undue influence exercised by the 'whites, communists and Indians' (all one and the same, in such perceptions) some of the ANC leaders left the party to form the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania.

With the advent of democracy other kinds of tensions have emerged among the Alliance partners, which now includes the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). What is unique about these differences is that they are openly acknowledge on all sides in passionately argued polemical exchanges, and are even claimed as an indication of the inherent strength and vibrancy of the Alliance.

Such tensions are perhaps natural, indeed inevitable, given that the ANC is now a party of the government while the SACP, some of whose leaders are also in the government but wearing their ANC hat, while remaining committed to the ANC's formulation that the completion of the National democratic Revolution (NDR) is the immediate task in South Africa is also equally committed to its own objective of 'building socialism now'. In other words, the struggle against racial oppression and discrimination and the class struggle were one and the same not merely during the struggle against colonialism and apartheid; they continue to remain the same even now, at the present state of the National Democratic revolution. This understanding about the NDR is explained and analysed in a key ANC document, thus:



OKDISCD

*Our alliance with the South African Communist Party is a relationship cemented in the trenches of our struggle against apartheid colonialism. The political alliance between the ANC and the SACP is informed by the fact that the programme of the ANC and the SACP is the same. This is premised on the understanding that the contradictions of apartheid colonialism brought together national and class forces whose interests are served by the victory and advancement of the NDR. These are the black people in general and Africans in particular. In class terms they are made up of the working class, the rural masses, black professionals and black business people. Therefore the SACP, as a party for socialism, in is route towards socialism identified that the first phase consists of the tasks of the NDR and that this phase is led by the national movement — the ANC. It is this understanding that gives rise to this unique relationship of dual membership wherein members of the SACP join the ANC as members in their own right. They participate fully in the political life of the ANC, the formulation of its policies and execution of its programmes. This enhanced our cohesiveness as individual organisations as well as the revolutionary alliance. For more than four decades, this relationship worked well.*[10]

The uniqueness of this phenomenon of dual membership, which continues to be a sub-text of virtually every polemical exchange within the Alliance, is that there is no formal provision in the constitution of the two parties allowing for such cross membership. Nor have the parties at any time adopted a formal resolution allowing such cross membership. As a matter of working arrangement, I did not know a single member of the SACP during all my years in South Africa who was not also a member of the ANC – though the reverse is certainly not the case. Strictly speaking there is no need for any specific constitutional provision in so far as the ANC is concerned to enable an SACP member to be also an ANC member. Notwithstanding the injunction of St. Matthew, a politicised South African can serve two masters, and has been doing so for decades. Further, the ANC, which has historically viewed itself as the 'parliament of all African people' has never required one to give up previous or existing political affiliations, "except those that are incompatible with ANC membership". As a senior ANC leader once explained to me, an SACP member (before 1950, CPSA) in the ANC no more represented the Communist Party than individual Christian members represented Christian denominations.

Indeed, this passage between the two parties was most natural for African members of the CPSA / SACP who as a matter of both choice and necessity joined the ANC, 'the parliament of all African people'. The problem arose only when the ANC, following its Morogoro (Tanzania) Congress in April-May 1969 allowed



non-Africans to become members. Till then, non-African Communists necessarily as well as a matter of tactics organised themselves under the various other 'Congresses' – the South African Coloured People's Congress (Coloureds), the Congress of Democrats (Whites), the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses (Indians), which together became the Congress of the People.

Historically speaking, this practice of 'dual membership' traversing a national liberation movement and a communist party is not exactly a unique South African phenomenon. One may recall that members of the Communist Party of India were encouraged to enrol as members of the Congress Socialist Party and the relationship endured till the CSP threw out the CPI members. The working of this arrangement in South Africa however presents some unique features because of the unique circumstances of the country's history – 'apartheid colonialism', as ANC puts it, or 'colonialism of a special type', a classic SACP formulation of unchallenged historical validity.

## II

Leaving aside for the moment the question whether there are any lessons for India here, I want to deal in this part of the Essay with the 'Indian' dimension of the South African liberation, the role of South African 'Indians' who more accurately should be described not even as South Africans of Indian origin but as South Africans whose ancestors were of Indian origin; and the role of India and Indian political leaders. For the sake of convenience, however, I will refer to them as 'Indian South Africans'.

The Indian contact with South Africa considerably predates the docking in Durban harbour on 16 November 1860 of S. S. Truro, the steamship carrying 340 men, women and children who had embarked in Madras as labourers indentured to work on the sugar plantations of the British colony of Natal. Similar traffic went to other British colonies in the Pacific, in the Caribbean, on the islands of the Indian Ocean.[11]

However, traffic of Indian slaves commandeered by the Dutch East India Company had been going on almost from the very beginning of the Dutch settlement in Southern Africa. A woman called 'Mary of Bengal' was bought for Jan van Riebeeck in Batavia in 1653, that is, within a year of his landing at the Cape, an event generally acknowledged as marking the beginning of European settlement in Southern Africa and the enslavement of the African people in this part of the continent. There are indications in the archival records of the slave trade that Mary, described in an article by Enuga S. Reddy as 'the first Indian slave', was found in



OKDISCD

bed with a constable, Willem Cornelis. While he was fined and dismissed from his post, Mary, apparently not punished, was sold to van Riebeeck. Two years later, in 1665, van Riebeeck purchased from the commander of a Dutch ship returning from Asia to Holland a family from Bengal – Domingo and Angela and their three children. On 21 May 1656, one 'Catherine of Bengal', a freed slave, was married to Jan Wouters, a White. Later in the same year, Anton Muller was given permission to marry 'Domingo Elvingh of Bengal'. [12]

For instance, the origin of the people known as 'Cape Malays' (as well as under several other variations of this nomenclature) is now known to be as much what is modern Indonesia and Malaya as the east coast of India. A fascinating 'history from below' by Professor Nigel Penn of the University of Cape Town features several such characters, the dregs of slave society, identified as 'Carel of Bengal', 'Cupido of Malabar', 'Gerrit of Tuticorijn', 'Isaac of Masulipatam', 'Moses of Bengal', 'Scipio of Corramandel', 'Simon of Malabar' (who was hanged), 'Titus of Bengal'. [13] Professor Marius F. Valkhoff in his path-breaking and densely argued study of Portuguese and Creole, wherein he argues that Afrikaans is essentially a Creole language, the result of a process of 'Creolisation' of High Dutch, refers to two freed men, Isack of Bengalen and Jouan van Mallebar, both in the context of a law suit about a small sum of money, the references going back to 'as early as 1704' as well as to others of the same stock, like January van Coetchin and Fortuyn van Mallebar.[14] While slaves like these bore names given by their masters, their origins (which was part of their name, for purposes of easy identification) remained unmistakably Indian.

The pre-1860 origins of 'Indians' in South Africa is also acknowledged and celebrated by some creative writers writing in post-apartheid South Africa: A central 'character' in Andre Brink's powerful novel, The *Rights of Desire*, is the ghost of 'Antjie of Bengal'. The original names, indeed even the original spiritual and moral universe of these persons, as is so often the case in the case of slaves and continued to be the case of even the indentured Indians, were arbitrarily changed to enable the masters to 'comprehend' them with little effort. The phenomenon was not merely common in respect of indentured labourers shipped overseas but also in respect of Indians indentured to work within the country in areas far away from their homes, as in the tea plantations of Assam.

These figures, and numerous others of their kind who have not attained even such a mention in old records and archives, do not figure in the imagination of contemporary Indians many of whom feel emotionally close to their own 'kith and kin' in South Africa. Indeed they do not figure in the imagination of the



majority of South Africans of Indian origin either. However, unlike the descendants of the indentured labourers many of whom continue to carry the burden of an Indian memory, the descendants of this slave traffic also do not carry such a debilitating baggage. Included in the category of the 'Coloureds' and having Afrikaans as their first and only home language, they are more unambiguously South African, with the least doubts or uncertainties or conflicting 'tribal' perceptions about their 'ethnic identity', than any of the other South African people — this, irrespective of the deprivation and squalor of the existence of the majority of them, unrelieved by solidarities or self-esteem induced by wealth, tribal or caste or religious affiliations.

However, when one speaks of Indian South Africans, one is speaking of people with an Indian connection that began and, in most cases for all practical purposes, also ended with the arrival of the first human cargo of indentured labourers. By the time organised immigration of such indentured labour ended in 1911, 1,52,184 indentured immigrants had arrived in the British colony of Natal, almost all of them having embarked at the ports of Calcutta and Madras.

The figures do not include the so-called 'passenger Indians', that is, those who travelled in the wake of the arrival of the indentured labourers at their own expense, as auxiliaries of that traffic, with a view to providing goods and services to the this community in their new sojourn. The overwhelming majority of this 'passenger' traffic originated in the port of Bombay, though many also made the journey from Mauritius where they (or their ancestors) had travelled earlier, again on their own as traders. The descendants of this traffic, indentured and passenger, constitute the present South African Indian community, whose population according to the 1996 Census was 10,45,596, constituting 2.6 per cent of the total population of a little over 40.5 million.[15]

Rather then dwell on how this community is faring and what role it can play in improving and advancing 'India-South Africa relations', all proper subjects of official concern, we will briefly deal with the role of this community, in so far as it is possible to consider so diverse a community in unidimensional terms, in the liberation struggle, and in democratic South Africa. The record, despite what both official India and Democratic South Africa would like to believe, is not an unmixed one.

One has nothing but the most unqualified admiration for those heroic figures of recent history, those Indian South Africans who played an active role at all levels of the liberation struggle, inside the country and in exile, in prison and on the streets and in the trenches, openly and in the most clandestine of structures.



OKDISCD

Some of them are still alive and active; it was a privilege to know them.

Beginning with an involvement in specifically Indian grievances and in the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses, they also realised very soon that their own liberation was inextricably linked with the liberation of the African majority. The greatest of such South African Indian revolutionaries, responsible for the radicalisation of generations of Indian South Africans, as indeed generations of Africans and Coloureds and Whites as well, was Yusuf Dadoo (1909-83). It is widely believed, for instance, that it was Dadoo who recruited Braam Fischer, the Afrikaner communist revolutionary, whose stirring life and uncompromising resistance to apartheid even unto death evokes a moving resonance in the hearts of every democratic South African.[16] The roll call of honour of such Indian South Africans is long; their inspiring role has been acknowledged above all by the African masses. The recollection of their revolutionary lives, even at this distance in time and space, is a moving experience.

What about the average Indian South Africans (if such a creature exists) and how are they shaping up in democratic South Africa? For a people who came, and were brought, in unimaginably hard and desperate circumstances, and for decades lived in circumstances of the most terrible deprivation and hardship, the Indian South Africans have done very well for themselves. At present, and even during the years of apartheid, in every indicator of economic and social well being and development, the Indian South Africans come next to the Whites in the historically predicated sequential order under apartheid, with the Coloureds and the Africans way below, the majority of the Africans indeed at the very bottom. The average annual household incomes of an Indian South African family in Gauteng province at Rands 110,000, for instance is just a shade below that for a White household, at Rands 118,000. The figures are a little over a year old, but the trend is unlikely to have been reversed.

A box item in the April 1999 issue of the South African Indian glossy, *Indigo*, entitled 'How We Live: Indian Households of South Africa', highlighted several indicators oaf comfortable standards of Indian domestic life: 92 per cent of the community lives in a house or a brick structure; 99 per cent use electricity; 96 per cent use piped water, 77 per cent have telephones / cellular telephones; 99 per cent have flush toilets; and so on. This is the social and economic profile of a people who constitute 2.6 per cent of the population. No wonder several polls canvassed before and since the last general elections (June 1999) showed that the majority of Indian South Africans canvassed were rather nostalgic about apartheid, even while agreeing that apartheid was bad. The national profile (the figures for



the Africans, if disaggregated, would be even more depressing) presents a rather different picture: 87 per cent of all African children under 12 years old are underfed ('nutritionally compromised'); 38 per cent also suffer from stunted growth; at least 12 million South Africans, almost all of them Black, do not have access to potable water in their homes, or on their home sites; an estimated 2,00,000 children between the ages of 10 and 14, representing four per cent of all children in this age group, are engaged in various forms of casual labour....

One can go on, but the profile is clear enough. As every official and non-official analyses of poverty in South Africa note, poverty in South Africa has a strong race dimension[17]. Nearly 95 per cent of South Africa's poor are African. The corresponding percentages for the other race groups are: Coloureds (five per cent), Indian or White (less than one per cent).

The standard explanation for this relatively high levels of prosperity of a people who were part of the larger oppressed community of blacks is that the Indians, following the cultural traditions and practises they carried from their native land, placed high value on the education of their children. The poorest Indian family, one is told, skimped and saved to send its children to school, even starting their own schools where none existed. While this is certainly the case, the accumulation of wealth and capital among Indian South Africans during the years of apartheid cannot have been entirely due to habits of thrift, investment in the future and related virtues alone. For, Indian business too, from the small trader in a black township to the bigger traders engaged 'import-export business', the source of real Indian wealth and prosperity, have done very well. Indian business in particular did well under apartheid; it is doing even better under democracy.

A whole history is still waiting to be written of the India-South Africa commercial traffic, including the highly lucrative trade, direct and via third countries, brazen and clandestine, going beyond the so-called saris-spices trade, during the years of apartheid, when formally India did not have any links with the apartheid regime. For a brief moment during the Janata Party government under Morarji Desai, the veil was lifted when questions were raised in Parliament about the alleged transfer of used Indian military equipment to South Africa. The government indignantly denied the suggestion; and even those who raised the issue did not press the matter further.

A confirmation of such commercial contacts between the two governments, in variance with the public policy of the Government of India, not to speak of UN imposed international sanctions, has however come recently from a most unexpected quarter. An article in the Israeli journal, *Ha'aretz*, on Dieter Gerhardt,



OKDISCD

a senior commander in the South African Navy who operated as a Soviet agent for over 20 years, was exposed, tried and convicted to life imprisonment in 1983 and later released (in 1992) when the transition process was on, has this passage, casually thrown in as an explanation for a fit of 'panic' Gerhard had when the commanders of counter-intelligence and military intelligence confronted him with a 'serious problem' one morning. Gerhard feared that his cover was blown; but was reassured when he learnt that "the problem involved the tanks we were secretly smuggling out of India...they were concerned that the operation would be discovered" [18].

Politically, too, Indian South African have achieved representation at all levels of government and administration, at the centre and in the provinces, far out of proportion to their actual numbers. Four cabinet ministers (out of the total of 27) and one Deputy Minister (out of a total of 13) are persons of Indian origin. They are also well represented in the provinces. More crucially, Indian South Africans occupy key positions in the administration, and are prominent in all the professions. Even in crime they are well represented.

It is hardly surprising, given the vast gulf that separates the material life and living standards of Africans and Indians, and the political clout that the Indian South Africans have in democratic South Africa, that there are some tensions between Africans and Indians. A well-known African playwright was recently in the news for his song that heaped racial abuse on Indian South Africans. Though the controversy died out when the song was withdrawn, the issue of such antipathy between Africans and Indians, often brushed under the carpet or explained away as part of the legacy of apartheid, is yet to be addressed openly and honestly on all sides.

These feelings of antipathy, which like every other feelings also have a material base, go back to the very first encounters between the two people in the colony; it is something from which even Gandhi was not free.

Which brings us, finally, to Bapu. His life and work in South Africa is a matter of historical record. As is the case with any great revolutionary leader, his record, much of it set out in detail by Gandhiji himself, is constantly being embellished and reconstructed (and, of late, deconstructed) to suit the political and ideological exigencies at given points of time.[19] The appropriation of Gandhi in democratic South Africa sometimes stretches one's historical credulity. In a notable speech at Stanger in KwaZulu-Natal, Nelson Mandela once coalesced the figures of King Shaka, Mahatma Gandhi Albert Luthuli, finding the most unsuspected commonalities bonding them.[20] Such fiction notwithstanding, there



is profound truth in the proud claim made by politicised South Africans, across the race spectrum, acknowledging Gandhi as one of their own: "He came to South Africa as a barrister to fight a case; we sent him back to India as a revolutionary". Yes, but what did he think of Africans, amidst whom he lived and worked for 21 years, but somehow seems to have remained untouched by the inner essence and the all too evident deprivation and oppression of the people all around him?

While old-fashioned atheists (like this writer) may consider references to them as Kaffir or Heathen as badges of honour, it is also true that the word Kaffir, as has been given currency in South Africa under he British and the Boers, carried (and still carries) extremely offensive connotations. The word was part of the colonial nomenclature used by the master to address directly, or refer indirectly to, his ordained inferior, a creature who did not even deserve his or her humanity. Kaffir and its derivatives occupy over 26 columns in small print in the standard (large-sized) dictionary of South African English [21]. The words, each of them supported by a citation of its first usage (the first usage cited for Kaffir is dated 1589) cover a whole universe of revilement and diminishment.

Along with Kaffir for the Africans, the other two corresponding words used in respect of the two other black people (though many Indian South Africans really do not want to be classified as 'black') were, and in some private conversations even now are, Coolie for Indians and Hotnot (contraction of the Dutch Hottentot) for the Coloureds. The internalisation of such revilement and diminishment of the 'other' has been so powerful a phenomenon that the Zulus, themselves reviled as Kaffirs, the largest single 'national' group in South Africa who constitute the majority population of Natal where also the majority of South African Indians live, have appropriated the word Coolie into Zulu language as *ikula*.

Gandhi (like many South Africans even now in private conversations among their own kind) had no inhibitions about referring to Africans as Kaffirs. This is not surprising since the substance of these observations about Africans was that they were savage and uncivilised; and their purport was to caution and advice South African Indians against even trying to make common cause with the Africans. E. S. Reddy in his collection of essays on Gandhi in South Africa provides numerous citations from Gandhi's writings, the most frequent of which is the reference to the 'raw Kaffir'. [22]

In the words of Surendra Bhana, "Gandhi, in common with the Indian leaders generally, not only harboured racial prejudice against Africans, but considered them inferior. Gandhi reflected his jail experiences with other satyagrahis, and he expressed his objection to having to share the same facilities with Africans. The

prejudices against 'kaffirs' as he called them, show through. 'We may entertain no aversion to Kaffirs', he wrote in 1909, 'but we cannot ignore the fact that there is no common ground between them and us in the daily affairs of life".[23] Reddy also notes that Gandhi, who continued to be closely involved from distance in the Indian politics in South Africa, was consistently opposed to every suggestion or proposal — Jawaharlal Nehru was apparently the leading spirit behind such thinking — that the Indian National Congress should advice the Natal Indian Congress and the Transvaal Indian Congress to launch joint struggles with the Africans.

Such truth, Gandhi's own truth recorded by Gandhi himself, also compels one to admit that Gandhi's struggle in South Africa did not embrace the majority of the land's inhabitants. Indeed, one can argue that it did not embrace all sections of the Indian community either but only the trading community to argue the brief of one of whom in a property dispute he had been recruited, and other Indians in the process of urbanisation. His one involvement with the problems of Indian labour on the sugar plantations, the 1913 strike, which was also linked up with the issue of the withdrawal of the Poll tax, ended at best in an impasse, with Gandhi himself leaving the country within a year of the strike. According to Maureen Swan, not merely did Indian political expression and mobilisation in the Transvaal and Natal predate Gandhi's arrival; the true radicalisation of the Indian working class had to wait for a new generation of profoundly committed South African radicals – Indians and others – who set in motion large scale labour organisation underpinned by the ideology of class struggle [24].

III

Colonialism in South Africa was a unique phenomenon. In the literature, it is described as 'Colonialism of a Special Type' (CST). One of the features of the CST is that unlike in other colonised countries where the colonist always considered himself as part of a ruling elite, with a home country to which he would eventually return, in South Africa the colonists, in particular the Afrikaners, viewed themselves as and indeed became natives, to the extent of denying the actual natives the rights of citizenship of their own country. However, even admitting the uniqueness of the CST which invested the liberation struggles with all its problematic aspects, colonialism in South Africa as a system shared, indeed had to share, given its economic and political underpinnings, common features with other colonial ventures. The reaching out for commonality of interests and experiences among decolonised countries in bilateral and multilateral international structures is therefore not entirely pointless.



Gandhi's experiments in the political and social organisation of sections of the Indian community in South Africa, the presence of a large community of person of Indian origin in the Transvaal and Natal, the shared experience of British colonialism – all these have contributed to the perception that the liberation movement in South Africa was deeply influenced by the Indian experience. The widely known and documented similarities between the INC and the ANC, in their nomenclature, their all-class composition and internal structures are generally pressed to the exclusion of important differences – in particular the way in which the national liberation movements in the two countries negotiated the linkages with the working class and the Communist Party. Most crucially, the near-total correlation between race and class in the South African situation, with the oppressed majority suffering both race and class oppression, was absent in the Indian situation. All attempts by some so-called anti-Manuvadi ideologues to construct a caste-class correlation, the spark that would ignite the genuine Indian revolution, have floundered on the bedrock (or should one say, quicksand?) of other social realities.

Such important differences notwithstanding, there are useful lessons that both countries can learn from each other. Decolonised South Africa, like decolonised India nearly half a century earlier, began as the toast of the world. India had its Gandhi; South Africa had (and still has) Nelson Mandela. The other leaders of the Indian and South African struggle, many of them first among equals of Gandhi and Mandela, were equally impressive. Like India in the first decade and half of independence by when the edges of glamour were looking decidedly frayed, South Africa too revelled in international adulation. Every international visitor wanted to, and even now wants to, have a photo opportunity with Nelson Mandela. The similarities with Jawaharlal Nehru, an authentic hero for Nelson Mandela, who too enjoyed being consulted, are unmistakable.

Just as was the case with India in the early years of independence, South Africa too is going through a moral high. Apartheid, a most practical device that helped in the development of South African capitalism, and which the many leaders of democratic South Africa, especially those in the government, are keen to defend and advance arguing in a rather convoluted manner that in this they are only advancing the principles of the Freedom Charter – *the* ideological divide informing as well as transcending the polemical exchanges in the tripartite alliance — is now seen in retrospect as having invested South Africans with a unique suffering badge. The passage from moral high to moral arrogance and entitlement is very short, quick.

Internally, the Indian vision of virtually painless nation building, seamless



OKDISCD

economic and social progress, consolidation of model democratic institutions, a fine balance between growth and distributive justice, public welfare and so on, turned sour soon. In fact, given the unresolved national and class questions, it was inevitable that the scaly horrors would creep out from under the rocks sooner than later. It would take a very brave person to crow about the Indian path to economic progress, social prosperity and justice. Neither the thorny path of 'mixed economy' of the past, nor the broad highway of unbridled liberalisation and the orthodoxy of the market has delivered on its promises. Once upon a time, political analysts after making brief visits to Shillong and Guwahati used to return to the metropolitan centres and write anguished articles informing the rest of the country that Assam and the rest of northeast India presented the starkest example of the failure of India as a state. The scenario is now being played several times over with even more frightful denouements in nearly every part of the country. The point hardly needs to be pressed.

Hence, the relevance of India as a salutary example, a cautionary tale from which South Africa can learn a few lessons. Apart from the bitter awakening that South Africa, in as much as India, will experience when the 'free market' will turnout to be free only selectively, the Indian failures in the northeast hold particular lessons to South Africa whose unresolved national problems are at the least as severe as India's.

Interestingly, writing in his capacity as President of the African National Congress, in a recent issue of *ANC Today*, the ANC's online weekly journal, President Thabo Mbeki specifically refers to two problematic areas of the national question in South Africa. The theme is elections and the ethnic question in Nigeria; but lessons Mbeki wants to point out is how these apply to South Africa:

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith country. To deal with this diversity, from the beginning it organised itself as a Federal Republic. Over the years, the number of states that constitute the Republic has increased, as various groups have felt that they needed their own State legislatures and governments. Nevertheless, these efforts did not stop a costly civil war, which ended in 1970, and was occasioned by the attempt of people in the eastern part of Nigeria to secede and establish an independent state called Biafra. Nigeria continues to battle with the matter of a stable political system that will satisfy all the people of that country. As was to be expected, these matters of diverse regional interests were a significant feature of the recent elections.

*Given that many of our countries, including our own, are multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith, we are naturally interested to draw lessons from the*



*progress that Nigeria makes in ensuring the success of the objective of unity in diversity in the Federal Republic. We too have had to confront similar challenges, as represented, for instance, by the demand by some, for a unique Kingdom of KwaZulu within a republican state, and a similarly unique Afrikaner Volkstaat within a non-racial state.*

One of the difficult matters that Nigeria has been grappling with is the issue of revenue sharing. This has to do with an equitable distribution of national revenues among the various States, to ensure balanced regional development, without favouring some and punishing others. This matter is complicated by the fact that the oil resources are found in one part of the country, the Niger Delta, called the South-South, many of whose residents therefore call for a disproportionate share of the oil revenues.

This has resulted in violent conflicts in this area. Speaking not long after the 1999 elections, President Obasanjo said: "The security situation in the Niger Delta Area remains fragile and largely volatile." This situation persisted even during the latest elections. *We are aware of the past tensions in our own country over the issue of sharing of resources among our provinces. In addition, tensions around the issue of wealthier sections in our municipalities helping to fund the development of poorer parts of the municipalities will be with us for some time.* [25] (Emphasis added)

Eleven distinct national groups in nine provinces at very unequal stages of development, with the most numerous of them, the Zulus, also with the most authentic memories supported by historical records of heroic resistance to colonialism; an erstwhile ruling national group, the Afrikaners, talented and resourceful, who too cherish equally authentic memories of heroic resistance against the mighty British empire, and for some of whom the war (meaning the Boer War) has not **really** ended; the scheming English speaking South Africans unrelenting with their agenda of recolonisation, strengthened in this resolve by the entrenched international alliance between the United States, Britain and other English speaking countries of the Old Commonwealth. And on the ground, the increasing disparities in incomes, quality of life and lifestyles, the other side of globalised capitalist development, the unrelenting rage.

Time to get off the moral high horse and get some dirt on one's hands?



OKDISCD

## Notes and References

[This is an edited and revised version of a Lecture delivered on 30 March 2003, the Foundation Day of the Omeo Kumar Das Institute for Social Change and Development, Guwahati. The reading list gives some idea of my sources and borrowings. More indefinable, but no less substantial, is the debt I owe to numerous friends and colleagues in Johannesburg and Cape Town for sharing with me, along with food and wine, their ideas about the past, present and future of their country, about apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Even though I have not named them, lest they feel embarrassed at such an association, they will know, if ever they read this, how much I owe to them.

I am grateful to the Editors of The Hindu and Frontline, Mr G. Kasturi, Mr N. Ram and Mr N. Ravi, and the management of Kasturi & Sons, for taking me on the staff of the paper and later enabling me to live and work in South Africa for nearly eight years. I am also grateful to Krishna Raj of *Economic Political Weekly*, who made it possible for me to break away from teaching at a time when I thought there was no exit. I remember with thanks and affection the late Samar Sen of *Now* and *Frontier* who published my first, and what now in retrospect seems a not very cogently argued, piece of writing on South Africa more than 30 years ago.

An earlier essay presenting a preliminary background to some of the ideas discussed in this essay, based on a Seminar presented at the Madras Institute of Development Studies on 8 March 2002, has been published in *Review of Development & Change,* Chennai, January-June 2002.

Parts 2 and 3 of this paper have appeared in a slightly different form in *Economic and Political Weekly* of 10 May 2003.]

1. For a more detailed treatment of one of these preliminary points, see 'Independence or Freedom? An Aspect of South Africa's Transition to Democracy', in *Review of Development & Change*, Madras Institute of Development Studies, January-June 2002, pp. 167-173.

2. As one who had been in the country for less than six months, I had my own 'shock of non-cognition' when, while visiting Bloemfontein, the capital of what was then still called Orange Free State in December 1994, for the ANC's 49th National Conference, I found that Afrikaans, rather than English, was a more useful language to have if one wanted to communicate with the ordinary people, including Africans.

3. **Uyadela Wen'osulapho: Black Participation in the Anglo-Boer War** ***by Bill Nasson, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1999; and*** **The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War** ***by Apollon Davidson and Irina Filatova, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1998.***

4. *Writing in a State of Siege: Essays on Politics and Literature* by Andre Brink, Summit Books, New York, 1983,.p.15. It took over a century longer for the usage of this expression in this sense to find acceptance by the English-speaking settlers. The earliest citation in English of this term in this sense, provided in *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (Oxford University Press, 1996), is 1820.

5. For an historical and linguistic account of Fanakalo, see 'Fanakalo in South Africa' by Ralph Adendorff in *Language and Social History: Studies in South African Sociolinguistics* edited by Rajend Mesthrie, David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1995.

6. The Constitution of South Africa lists the eleven 'official languages' of the Republic in this order: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. The official Yearbook, published by the Government Communication and Information System, lists these languages in a different order: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati (sic), Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

7. *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* by Anthony Sampson, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1999, pp. 280-281; p. 512.

8. Some of the arguments in this section are adopted from the article, 'The ANC-SACP Alliance' in *The Hindu* (21 December 2001).

9. Literature on this subject is vast. Much of it comprises material put out by the ANC and the SACP. Almost all of it is available on the ANC's website www.anc.org.za which also opens the doors to the websites of the SACP and Cosatu.

The best single book dealing with the subject, admittedly from a sympathetic perspective of a partisan of the liberation struggle, is *ANC: A View from Moscow*, Vladimir Shubin, Mayibuye Books, Cape Town, 1999. *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile* by Stephen Ellis and 'Tsepo Sechaba', James Curry, London, 1992, is an occasionally tendentious account of exile politics, useful if read with the sceptical correctives provided by Shubin, op.cit. Other useful documentary and historical works from among the vast available literature are: *South African Communists Speak: Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party, 1915-1980*, Inkululeko Publications, London, 1981; *Raising the Red Flag: The International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa, 1914-1932* by Sheridan Johns, Mayibuye Books, Cape Town, 1995; *Moses Kotane: South African*





OKDISCD

*Revolutionary* by Brian Bunting, Mayibuye Books, Cape Town, 1998; and *S. P. Bunting: A Political Biography* by Edward Roux, Mayibuye Books, 1993. The last two are reprints of classics long out of print.

10. 'Briefing Notes on the Alliance', ANC National Executive Committee, October 2001. The document evoked a spirited response by the SACP: 'Defend the Unity of our Alliance, Defend Democratic Debate', SACP Politburo Discussion Document, 19 October 2001. Se also issues of ANC's Online journal, *ANC Today*, dated 24-30 August 2001, and 12-18 October 2001.

11. Literature on the South African Indians, and on Gandhi in South Africa, is vast. Many of the works cited below carry bibliographies, which open further doors. Of particular help are the references provided in the works cited in footnotes 15, 19, 23 and 24.

12. 'Indian Slaves in South Africa' by Enuga S. Reddy, available on the E. S. Reddy Page in the ANC website: www.anc.org.za

13. *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways: Eighteenth Century Cape Characters* by Nigel Penn, David Philip, Cape Town, 1999.

14. *Studies in Portuguese and Creole, with Special reference to South Africa* by Marius F. Valkhoff, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1966, Chapter V.

15. *Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860-1911* by Surendra Bhana and Joy Brain, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1990; and *A Documentary History of Indian South Africans, 1860-1982* edited by Surendra Bhana and Bridglal Pachai, David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1984.

16. *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary* by Stephen Clingman, David Philip and Mayibuye Books, Cape Town, 1998, p. 148.

17. *Key Indicators of Poverty in South Africa*, Analysis prepared for the Office of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, Cape Town, October 1995. Also, see *Measuring Poverty in South Africa*, Statistics South Africa, Pretoria, 2000.

18. See *Mail and Guardian* of Johannesburg (11-17 April 2000)

19. One of the best reappraisals of Gandhi in South Africa, a description disputed by many Gandhi scholars, is *Gandhi: The South African Experience* by Maureen Swan, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985. Also see, *Gandhi and South Africa: Principles and Politics* edited by Judith M. Brown and Martin Prozesky, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1996.



20. Speech by President Mandela at the Birth Centenary celebrations of Chief Albert Luthuli at KwaDukuza (Stanger) on 25 April 1998.

21. *A Dictionary of South Afrioan English on Historical Principles*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.

22. *Gandhi Ji: Vision of a Free South Africa* edited by Enuga S. Reddy, Sanchar, Delhi, 1995. See in particular the essay, 'Gandhiji and Africans in South Africa'.

23. *Gandhi's Legacy: The Natal Indian Congress, 1894-1994*,by Surendra Bhana, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1997. p. 22.

See also that most interesting study of Gandhi in South Africa, *Gandhi: A Patriot in South Africa*, by Joseph J. Doke, Publication Division, Government of India, Delhi, 1994 (Reprint). This slim volume, apparently the first book on Gandhi (and, according to a source with close links with the Mahatma's family, virtually written or dictated by Gandhi himself) was first published as a series of articles in *The London Indian Chronicle* in 1909 and brought as a volume by an Indian publisher in the same year. Of particular interest are the chapters XVIII onwards, which present, often in Gandhi's own words, his views on the Empire, his view that what the Indians in South Africa were demanding was to be treated as loyal subjects of the empire and not as 'natives' and, of course, of the 'natives' themselves. *Frontier* (Calcutta) of 24 July 1971 carried a review article on this book by the present writer.

24. Further on this theme, see *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class in Durban, 1910-1990* by Bill Freund, University of Natal Pres, Pietermaritzburg, 1995.

25. *ANC Today*, 25 April 2003.

***Further reading***

I present below a brief descriptive account of a very personal selection of a much vaster literature on the history, society and the political economy of South Africa during apartheid and under the democratic dispensation. These are the books, from among the many more, from which I have learnt much.

The Peopling of Southern Africa by R. R. Inskeep, David Philip, Cape Town, 1978.

Written as a textbook of prehistory, it challenges in its narration and organisation of material the view that the land was virtually uninhabited when the first European arrived in Southern Africa, or that settled agriculture in southern Africa was essentially a post-European settlement phenomenon. Short and densely

OKDISCD

written, fully of interesting insights

The Rise and Fall of South African Peasantry by Colin Bundy, David Philip, Cape Town, 1988

Essential reading to understand the land question, in particular the destruction of a settled peasant economy.

South Africa: A Modern History by T. R. G. Davenport, Macmillan, Johannesburg, 1987

Structured as a textbook, this is a reliable and comprehensive narrative by a professional historian with a broadly liberal perspective. Professor Davenport has published a follow-up slim volume covering the post-1990 developments. I cannot recall the title, nor have I read it.

A History of the African People of South Africa from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s

by Paul Maylam, David Philip, Cape Town, 1986

History of the African people, from an African perspective. Essential reading as a corrective to the predominantly Eurocentric perspective of much African history, even those written by Black scholars.

A Proper Degree of Terror: John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier by Ben Maclennan, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985; The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom: The Civil War in Zululand, 1879-1884 University of Natal press, Pietermaritzburg, 1994; and Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention by Carolyn Hamilton, David Philip, Cape Town, 1998.

Riveting accounts of the conquest and annexation of the Xhosa and Zulu kingdoms, with the last going beyond being merely an historical account, being an investigation of how the past is being continuously reinvented to suit the requirements of the present.

Foundations of the New South Africa by John Pampallis, Zed Books, London, 1991

Originally written as a textbook for exiled South African students at the ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, Morogoro, Tanzania. Well-organised and easily readable text with several box items and photographs, written from the perspective of the liberation movement. Useful appendices.

The Puritans in South Africa: A Story of Afrikanerdom by Willem de Klerk, Penguin Books, 1976



A popular and sympathetic account of the origins and growth of Afrikaner nationalism.

The Rise of the South African Reich by Brian Bunting, Penguin, 1964

A must read classic. Incisive analysis of the social base and the political economy of apartheid.

Literature on the history of the liberation movement in South Africa is vast. Leaving aside archival sources and internal party documents, much of which can be accessed on the ANC websiste [www.anc.org.za] and the numerous doors it opens, the most comprehensive best single work, yet to reach its completion, is From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1892-1990 by Gwendolen Carter, Thomas G. Karis and Gail M. Gerhart, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, California, 1972 onwards. A paperback edition of the first four volumes, which take the narrative up to 1964, appeared in 1987. A fifth volume, covering the period 1964-79, published by UNISA, Pretoria and Indian University Press, Bloomington, was released in 1997. South African Communists Speak Inkululeko Publications, London, 1981, is a useful collection of important Communist Party documents, which together constitute a running history of the Communist movement.

ANC: A View from Moscow by Vladimir Shubin, Mayibuye Books, Cape Town, 1999

Essential reading. Startling insights and revelations casually strewn across, a thoroughly non-dogmatic revolutionary perspective, marvellous read.

The UDF: A History of the United Democratic front in South Africa, 1983-1991

by Jeremy Seekings, David Philip, Cape Town, 2000

Highly informative and useful account of a turbulent decade of recent South African history. Excellent documentation.

Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-94

Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1996 and Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948 Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983

Both by Dan O'Meara. The books from which I have learnt most, in particular the second one. The theme of both the books is broadly the same, that far from inhibiting capitalist growth, apartheid actually facilitated it; and, notwithstanding the disclaimers by the revisionist orthodoxy of liberal scholars, South African and



OKDISCD

international capitalism immensely benefited from apartheid.

South Africa: Limits to Change by Hein Marais, University of Cape Town Press, 1998 / 2001

An insightful analysis of South Africa's political economy since the transition.

The bibliographies in many of these works include political biographies / autobiographies of key figures of the liberation movement and the apartheid regime. No understanding of contemporary South Africa is possible without a study of the political and personal lives of persons like Louis Botha, J. B. M. Hertzog and J. C. Smuts; and of D. F. Malan, J. G. Strijdom, H. F. Verwoerd,

B. J. Vorster, P. W. Botha, and F. W. de Klerk, the six leaders at the head of the apartheid regime between 1948 and 1994.

Very few accounts of the leaders of the liberation movement appeared before 1994. The exceptions were journalistic accounts of the Treason Trial and the Rivonia Trial by sympathetic western journalists; and two classics of life under detention and in prison: *117 Days* by Ruth First, Bloomsbury, London, 1965; and *Island in Chains* by Indres Naidoo, Penguin Books (UK), 1982; and Penguin Books (South Africa), 2000.

Beginning with the works of Govan Mbeki, especially his last work, *Sunset at Midday* (Nolwazi, Johannesburg, 1996) and Nelson Mandela's autobiography (*Long Walk to Freedom*, Macdonald Purnell, Johannesburg, 1994) many other leading figures of the liberation movement have published memoirs of armed struggle, imprisonment and exile. Of the several books of this genera I have read, I want to mention three, each a classic of its kind: *Bandiet* by Hugh Lewin, David Philip, Cape Town, 1989; *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter* by Albie Sachs, Paladin, London, 1990; and *Inside Apartheid's Prison* by Raymond Suttner, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2001.

Walter Sisulu, Mandela's close comrade of more than sixty years, and his wife Albertina Sisulu are the subject of a biography by Elinor Sisulu: *Walter & Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime*, David Philips, Cape Town, 2002. The long awaited biography of Govan Mbeki by Mark Gevisser is yet to be published.

Apart from the biography of Braam Fischer, referred to in the notes, two other works by leading figures of the liberation movement of more or less the same generation need to be mentioned. They are: *Memory against Forgetting* by Rusty Bernstein, Viking / Penguin Books (South Africa), 1999; and *The Unfinished Autobiography* by Joe Slovo, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1995.

---

OKDISCD