

THAMBI NAIDOO AND HIS FAMILY

The Story of Thambi Naidoo, a lieutenant of Gandhi in the Satyagraha in South Africa, and of his family which sacrificed for five generations in the struggle for a free South Africa

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Thambi Naidoo and his family were honoured by the Gandhi Development Trust at its annual awards ceremony in Durban on 26 August 2013.

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FOREWORD

South Africa's history is as diverse as its "rainbow nation" and the history of the Indian community is equally diverse. Much has been written about the Indians brought into South Africa in the 1860s as slaves, indentured workers imported from the 1860 and the whole system of indenture, a new form of slavery, the traders and artisans who struggled along under the oppressive racist regime. But there is also the history of the great satyagraha led by Gandhiji from 1906 to 1914. There is the national liberation struggle from the 1940s: the campaign of defiance against unjust laws and other non-violent actions followed by the underground movement, the exiled community, the collaborators and those who opposed them. So much needs to be written and much needs to be learnt by the new generation of youth to understand the South African history.

There is a sizeable literature on the early days of the struggle with emphasis on Mahatma Gandhi and his role. Some writers, however, have criticised Gandhiji as being concerned only with the interests of the business class and not playing a greater role in the African struggle or the struggle of the workers. They have distorted his life as a parent and even as a friend. Recent historians such as Anil Nauriya and E.S. Reddy have found sizeable evidence to dispel these negative stories.

This story of Thambi Naidoo opens up a section of history about the key players in the struggle against colonial oppression during those early days of the struggle. While certainly Gandhiji was instrumental in guiding the community to a path of nonviolence, there were many people who were leaders in their own right and mobilised the community.

It often happens that when a leader of the stature of Gandhiji is involved in a struggle, his lieutenants, or foot soldiers, remain unrecognised and their contributions are overshadowed. This happens to wives of leading activists as well. So to tell the stories of people like Thambi Naidoo is important in drawing attention to the crucial role played by him and by other activists whose lives remain obscure and unknown.

Rightfully Thambi Naidoo was the most important leader of that struggle and so his story has to precede those of the other leaders of the time. An important aspect of his life is the fact that not only was he a prominent and fearless satyagrahi but

his entire family was involved in the struggle. His legacy has inspired his children and grandchildren and even a great grandson at school.

The tremendous amount of research done by Mr. Reddy, his personal experience and deep and intimate understanding of the nature and intensity of the liberation movement makes this book invaluable. Indeed in the year of the centenary of the historic strike of 60,000 Indian workers against the onerous and inhuman three pound tax and the famous march of more than two thousand men, women and children from Newcastle across the border of the Transvaal is an ideal time to read the histories of our stalwarts of the struggle such as Thambi Naidoo. We are grateful to Mr. Reddy for spending time to write this biography of a man who played a leading role in that historic strike and the march of 1913, and describe the sacrifices of his family in the liberation struggle.

Durban,
22 December 2012

Ela Gandhi

INTRODUCTION

In 1988, I wrote a short pamphlet on Thambi Naidoo and his family on the eve of the visit to India of Mrs. Ama Naidoo, his daughter-in-law, and Ms. Shanthie Naidoo, his granddaughter, on the invitation of the Government of India.

Ama and Shanthie arrived in India for the observance of Gandhi's birthday in October 1988 and spent about two weeks in the country. They were received by the President of India, R. Venkataraman, Vice-President Shankar Dayal Sharma and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who assured them of India's full support to the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

Wherever they went - Delhi, Madras and Ahmedabad – Ama and Shanthie received an enthusiastic welcome. People were moved by the saga of several generations of the family which had made sacrifices matching the tremendous escalation of brutality by the racist regime since the days of Gandhi and Thambi Naidoo. Their visit received extensive coverage in the media.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi, then assistant to the President, hosted a reception attended by Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali, Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Nikhil Chakravartty and other eminent Indians, as well as several journalists and others. That was a happy occasion for him to become acquainted with the family of Gandhi's adopted children.

I had met Ama and three of her children, who were forced into exile, in London and enjoyed their affection and hospitality. I met the rest of the family on my first visit to South Africa in 1991. Since then we have maintained close contact.

I have learnt more about the family since 1988 from members of the family and from research. I decided to prepare this small book in the hope that it will help a new generation of people in India and South Africa to understand and appreciate the contribution of the Indian community in all phases of the struggle for freedom from 1906 to 1994.

There are many gaps in this account. None of the persons who have passed away have left their memoirs. And the police raided the homes of the Naidoo family numerous times and took away photographs, letters and documents so that much of the information about the family is lost.

I thank the family, as well as Ms. Luli Callinicos and Shafiur Rahman for their encouragement and help. I must make special mention of Ms. Gabriele Blankenburg who shared some of her research on Thambi Naidoo with me.

E. S. Reddy

FROM THE MAHATMA TO MANDELA: AN OVERVIEW

Struggle for Freedom and the Role of Indians in South Africa

This is a story of the perseverance of an Indian family in the long and difficult struggle for the freedom of all South Africans, and its sacrifices over five generations.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the African kings and chiefs in South Africa had been defeated and Britain had occupied all of the country. Settlers from Europe were granted self-government and they proceeded to exploit, humiliate and oppress the African people more than the colonial rulers. Armed resistance by Chief Bambatha and his followers in 1906 against an increase in the poll tax was brutally suppressed by the authorities in Natal, thus ending the phase of armed resistance.

Organisations of the African people seeking to defend African rights through appeals and deputations emerged and they united to form the South African Native National Congress (later renamed the African National Congress) in 1912.

By then there was a small Indian community in South Africa, especially in the Natal and the Transvaal. It comprised indentured labourers recruited in India on five-year contracts to work in the plantations, mines and railways in Natal, with the promise of security and land at the end of the term; workers who had completed their indenture and their descendants; and some traders.

By 1890, the white settlers found that Indians had become competitors in agriculture and trade. They began to harass and humiliate the Indians in order to force them to leave.

M. K. Gandhi, a young barrister, arrived in South Africa in 1893 and soon became involved in assisting the Indians to defend their rights and their honour. Numerous appeals, petitions and deputations to local authorities and to the imperial government in London failed to stop the ever increasing disabilities imposed on Indians. Gandhi became convinced that the appeals needed some force to back them. He chose non-violent defiance of unjust laws, or satyagraha, as the means of struggle for freedom and dignity.

In 1906 when the provincial government of the Transvaal passed an ordinance for the registration of Indians to force them to carry certificates to be shown on demand by the police, Gandhi decided that there was no choice except to defy the law. He led the resistance of Indians in the Transvaal in which well over two thousand people, out of a population of about ten thousand, went to prison. The struggle was extended to the whole of South Africa in 1913. Women were invited to join the satyagraha as the government ignored appeals for redress when the Cape Supreme Court declared Hindu, Mahomedan and Zoroastrian marriages invalid in South Africa on the grounds that they permitted polygamy. Indian workers were encouraged to strike to secure the abolition of the onerous three pound tax imposed on those who completed their indenture, as well as their wives and children. Again hundreds of Indians, including women, went to prison, and tens of thousands of workers in Natal went on strike.

Thambi Naidoo and many of his relatives and friends – including his wife, son and mother-in-law – went to prison during that campaign and suffered imprisonment with hard labour. Thambi Naidoo himself was in prison fourteen times. He was the main organiser of the strike in the mines, railways and municipalities. The imprisonment of women satyagrahis in deplorable conditions and the brutality against the workers by the government and the employers outraged public opinion in India. Faced with fearless resistance by the Indians, and pressure by Indian and British governments, the South African regime came to an agreement with Gandhi, conceding the main demands of the resisters.

While this struggle was confined to the Indian community, the success of mass passive resistance on South African soil exerted great influence on the thinking of leaders of the African people.

African women launched passive resistance in the Orange Free State in 1913 against passes, and won after a few years of struggle. However, when African men launched passive resistance against passes in the Transvaal in 1919, it was brutally suppressed by the government. The world was yet totally insensitive to cruelty against the African people.

South Africa had to wait almost three decades to launch another mass passive resistance. Again, the Indian community took the lead as a new generation of Indians, born in South Africa, sought full equality and recognised that they must link their destiny with that of the African majority rather than depend on the benevolence of the white minority in power.

The Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses launched a passive resistance campaign in 1946 against a law designed to confine Indians to segregated ghettos. About two thousand men and women went to prison for occupying a park designated for whites in Durban. A number of Africans, Coloured people and whites joined the defiance in solidarity with the Indian people, making this the first multi-racial resistance against racism.

In this campaign, Narainsamy (Naran), son of Thambi Naidoo, was an organiser and served two terms in prison. His wife, Mononmony (Ama), and his sister Thailema also courted imprisonment.

Though this mass resistance did not succeed in securing the abolition of the Ghetto Act, it helped unite people of all racial origins in the struggle for freedom. The South African racial problem was discussed in the United Nations, on the initiative of India. The resistance marked the beginning of the international movement of solidarity with the South African struggle which was to play a crucial role in forcing the racist regime to negotiate with the genuine leaders of the South African people.

From then on, the struggle in South Africa was no more for the amelioration of oppression, but for the destruction of the racist order and the establishment of a truly democratic society.

The Indian passive resistance led to the multi-racial Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws (1952) in which eight thousand people went to prison, and to the convening in 1955 of the Congress of the People, the most representative assembly until that time, to adopt the Freedom Charter.

The South African Indian Congress, now allied with the African National Congress, was in the leadership of the campaign and the small Indian community contributed more than its share of resisters. Naran, Ama and Thabilema again defied the racist laws and courted imprisonment. Ama attended the Congress of the people with her children.

As the movement grew, so did the repression and the brutality of successive racist regimes professing the inhuman policy of apartheid.

In 1961, the leaders of the ANC decided that in the face of ruthless repression and the banning of the organisation, it could no longer continue strict adherence to non-violence and retain the faith of the people. They set up *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (“Spear of the People”), the underground and military arm of the ANC, to sabotage apartheid installations, while taking care to avoid loss of innocent lives, to warn the government and draw the attention of the international community to the grave situation. It was led by Nelson Mandela and included in its leadership Ahmed Kathrada, Mac Maharaj and other Indians. *Umkhonto* carried out hundreds of acts of sabotage in the first year. The regime responded with legislation which violated all canons of the rule of law, resorted to arbitrary banning orders, indefinite detentions without access to families or lawyers, torture by specially trained policemen, leading to the deaths of many militants and the imprisonment of tens of thousands of people.

Repression and resistance escalated.

During this period of armed resistance, four of the five children of Ama and Naran Naidoo – Shanthie, Indres, Murthie and Prema – suffered imprisonment and inhuman torture. Shanthie, the eldest daughter, was kept in solitary confinement for more than a year. Indres, who was in one of the first teams of *Umkhonto*, was shot and tortured. He served ten years in the Robben Island prison where Nelson Mandela and other leaders were confined. Murthie was severely restricted and detained for two long terms and tortured. Prema, the youngest, was also detained and tortured.

While tens of thousands of people made sacrifices during the course of this long struggle, and many have given their lives, the Naidoo family is unique in that five generations of the family have participated and sacrificed in every phase of this epic struggle.

The story of the Naidoo family is a mirror of the development of the freedom movement in South Africa from appeals for elementary rights to militant action against all discrimination, from an isolated struggle of the small Indian community to the building of a united democratic front, from non-violent resistance to a combination of non-violent mass defiance and armed confrontation.

SATYAGRAHA OF INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS, 1906-1914

THAMBI NAIDOO

One of the first satyagrahis in the movement of 1906-14 and a most loyal and courageous colleague of Gandhi was Govindasamy Krishnasamy Thambi Naidoo.¹ Apart from defying the law and going to jail many times, he mobilised the Tamils in the Transvaal to participate in the satyagraha and the workers in Natal to strike for the abolition of an unjust tax which caused enormous suffering.

He was born in 1875 in Mauritius where his parents had migrated from Madras Presidency.² According to his daughter, Thayanyagi Pillay (known as Thailema), his father was a prosperous fertiliser and cartage contractor in Mauritius. Thambi was his youngest son. One day, his father said to him, "You are my youngest son. You must think of the people before you think of yourself". Thailema continued:

"My father was very impressed by his father's seriousness when he said these words and he took them to heart and afterwards built his life on them and taught them to us his children".³

He went to South Africa with his sister and brother and started business in Kimberley, centre of diamond mines, in 1889 when he was 14 years old. He moved three years later to Johannesburg when gold was discovered in the Transvaal. He started hawking fresh produce, set up shop on Bree Street and gradually expanded his business into that of a produce merchant and wholesaler. He also became cartage contractor.

His obituary in *The Star* and *Rand Daily Mail* (1 November 1933) reported that he had founded the Transvaal Indian Congress with H. O. Ally in 1893. If that is correct, this Congress was formed earlier than the Natal Indian Congress which Gandhi established in 1894.⁴

¹ Thambi Naidoo was always referred to in *Indian Opinion* as C.K. Thambi Naidoo. But an obituary in the *Rand Daily Mail* (1 November 1933) gave the full name which, I believe, is the correct name.

Thambi Naidoo was the second satyagrahi. The first was Ram Sunder Pandit, a priest who left the struggle after one term of imprisonment.

² Mrs. Manonmany Naidoo, his daughter-in-law, said the parents came from Mattur in Tamil Nadu. (*The Patriot*, New Delhi, 1 October 1988).

³ Interview to Freda Levison

⁴ I have been unable to find information on the Transvaal Indian Congress.

C. M. Pillay, a Bachelor of Arts, wrote a letter to *Transvaal Advertiser* complaining that he had been violently pushed off the footpath. He was apparently mistaken by the *Natal Advertiser* for Gandhi, a barrister who was then living in Pretoria. Gandhi sent two letters to that paper which published them on 16 and 19 September 1893. Mr. Pillay sent another letter to the press on 17 August 1899 and a letter to Gandhi on December 26, 1897. He signed them as Late Secretary, Indian Congress, Pretoria and Johannesburg. (Gandhi archive at Sabarmati, Serial Numbers 2797 and 3697).

The caption under a photograph of Mr. Ahir Budree in *Indian Opinion*, 22 October 1913, identifies him as Vice-President of the late Transvaal Indian Association.

His public life began soon after arrival in Johannesburg when Law 3 of 1885, which restricted Indians to segregated locations, was put into operation. He had grown up in Mauritius where there were no humiliating restrictions as in the Transvaal, and he reacted with anger and determination. To quote his daughter Thailema:

“... there was a smallpox epidemic in the Indian location and the Indian traders, not only from the location but those living in Market Street where there was no smallpox, were excluded from the Newtown Market and their livelihood was threatened, while European traders from Market Street were allowed free access. Father was active among the organisers of a protest against this discrimination and when they threatened a protest march in Johannesburg the restrictions were removed from all except residents of the actual quarantine area. He also played a leading part in the formation amongst traders and other workers of the Tamil Benefit Society which looked after its members’ interests...”⁵

He led a deputation to Johannesburg Municipal Council when he was only 19. He was in a deputation to see President Kruger of the South African Republic and present a petition concerning the Law of 1885.

He collaborated with Gandhi, when the latter settled in Johannesburg after the Anglo-Boer War, in resisting anti-Indian measures. He became a member of the executive of the Transvaal British Indian Association of which Gandhi was secretary.

In September 1906, Transvaal Indians held a large mass meeting in Johannesburg in protest against the Asiatic Ordinance which required all Indians to carry certificates with impressions of ten fingers. The meeting decided to refuse registration under the Ordinance (which later became Asiatic Act) and to go to jail if necessary. Thambi Naidoo seconded the resolution and explained it to the Tamil-speaking people in the audience.⁶

When the satyagraha started in earnest in July 1907 with the picketing of registration offices, Thambi Naidoo was the chief picket in Johannesburg. He was arrested and served 14 days’ imprisonment. On December 28th that year he was charged with Gandhi for refusing to register and ordered to leave the Transvaal within 14 days.⁷ On 10 January 1908, he was sentenced with Gandhi for disobeying the order. He did the cooking for the nearly two hundred fellow prisoners in the Johannesburg prison.

At the end of January, an agreement was reached between Gandhi and General J. C. Smuts, the Minister of the Interior, and the prisoners were released.⁸ It provided for voluntary registration rather than compulsory registration. Gandhi understood that the Government would repeal the Asiatic Act when the Indians and Chinese registered voluntarily.

In February 1908, after the Smuts-Gandhi agreement, Gandhi was severely assaulted by Mir

⁵ Interview to Ms. Freda Levishon. Thambi Naidoo was President of the Tamil Benefit Society from 1912.

⁶ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG)*, Volume 5, p. 440.

⁷ He told the court that he was a married man with five children – the eldest of whom was 13 and the youngest about 18 months.

⁸ The letter to Smuts was signed by Gandhi, Thambi Naidoo and Leong Quinn, the leader of the Chinese community who also undertook passive resistance against the Asiatic Act.

Alan, a Pathan who was probably influenced by false rumours and felt that the agreement was a betrayal. Thambi Naidoo went to his rescue and was also assaulted. *Indian Opinion* reported on 15 December 1908:

“... Mr. Thambi Naidoo engaged the attention of Mir Alam, who rained blow after blow upon him, which fortunately, Naidoo was able to ward off by means of an umbrella he was carrying at the time. Eventually the umbrella broke and one more blow felled Naidoo to the ground, his head being gashed, and when he was on the ground, further blows were struck at him and he was considerably bruised.”

Almost all Indians registered voluntarily, but Smuts denied that he had promised to repeal the Asiatic Act and negotiations between Gandhi and Smuts failed to find a solution. The Indian community then held a mass meeting at which the registration certificates were thrown into a large cauldron and burnt. Satyagraha resumed.

Thambi Naidoo repeatedly defied the law and went to prison. While the Satyagraha continued, he never thought of personal affairs, but only of the struggle.

It is said that once when he was leading a group picketing the registration office set up under the Asiatic Act, Gandhi came to tell him that his wife had given birth to a stillborn child. Thambi Naidoo retorted: "Don't you see I am on duty? Go and bury the child yourself".⁹ That does not seem quite correct; Thambi Naidoo was in prison when the child was born.

The reverend Joseph J. Doke referred to this incident in *M.K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, the first biography of Gandhi:

“When ‘the old offender,’ Mr. Thambi Naidoo, the Tamil leader, was sent to prison for the third time, to do ‘hard labour’ for a fortnight, Mr. Gandhi suggested that we should visit the sick wife together. I assented gladly. On our way, we were joined by the Moulvie and the Imam of the Mosque, together with a Jewish gentleman. It was a curious assembly, which gathered to comfort the little Hindu woman in her home - two Mohammedans, a Hindu, a Jew, and a Christian. And there she stood, her eldest boy supporting her, and the tears trickling between her fingers. She was within a few days of the sufferings of motherhood. After we had bent together in prayer, the Moulvie spoke a few words of comfort in Urdu and we each followed, saying what we could in our own way to give her cheer. It was one of the many glimpses, which we have lately had of that divine love, which mocks at boundaries of creed and limits of race or colour. It was a vision of Mr. Gandhi’s ideal”.

Indian Opinion reported on 8 August 1908:

“When Mr. Thambi Naidoo went to the Fort last week, he left Mrs. Naidoo in a condition wherein she anticipated almost immediate motherhood. On Sunday afternoon she gave birth to a son – still-born. The child was buried at the Braamfontein Cemetery on Monday afternoon.”

⁹ Interviews by Ms. Muthal Naidoo and Ms. Freda Levishon with Thailema, daughter of Thambi Naidoo.

A Satyagrahi with Few Equals

Indian Opinion wrote on 21 May 1909:

“Before the movement commenced Mr. Thambi Naidoo was a self-satisfied trolley contractor earning a fat living, and was a happy family man. Today, he is a proud pauper, a true patriot, and one of the most desirable of citizens of the Transvaal, indeed of South Africa. His one concern, whether in jail or outside it, is to behave like a true passive resister, and that is to suffer uncomplainingly”.

Gandhi reported in his “Johannesburg letter” published in the Gujarati edition of *Indian Opinion* on 12 June 1909:

“... Mr. Thambi Naidoo has given up smoking, tea and coffee for ever, though, before he went to jail, he could not do without any of these things even for an hour. He has, moreover, pledged himself not to allow his moustache to grow so long as the struggle is on”.

Gandhi described him as a "hero".¹⁰

"He has an incomparable spirit. What need is there to write in praise of him? This struggle has produced few satyagrahis who can be his equals".¹¹

"Mr. Naidoo is one of the most determined and persevering of passive resisters. Whether in or out of the jail, he gives himself no rest. His one aim is to live so as to deserve the high title of passive resister as the term is understood among the strugglers in the Transvaal".¹²

"Another person who can match Mr. Naidoo in self-sacrifice is unlikely to be found even in India".¹³

He wrote to Gopal Krishna Gokhale on December 6, 1909:

"But perhaps the bravest and the staunchest of all (Indians in jail) is the indomitable Thambi Naidoo. I do not know any Indian who knows the spirit of the struggle so well as he does. He was born in Mauritius, but is more Indian than most of us. He has sacrificed himself entirely, and has sent me a defiant message, saying that, even though I may yield and accept anything less than Lord Amthill's amendment, he alone will offer resistance and die in the Transvaal jails".¹⁴

¹⁰ CWMG, Vol. 10, p. 92

¹¹ CWMG, Vol. 10, p. 267

¹² CWMG, Vol. 10, p.270

¹³ Gandhi's speech in Durban, 16 June 1911

¹⁴ CWMG, Volume 10, p. 97

Fifteen years later, Gandhi described Thambi Naidoo in *Satyagraha in South Africa* as "lion-like" and wrote of him:

"He was an ordinary trader. He had practically received no scholastic education whatever. But a wide experience had been his schoolmaster. He spoke and wrote English very well, although his grammar was not perhaps free from faults. In the same way he has acquired a knowledge of Tamil. He understood and spoke Hindustani fairly well and he had some knowledge of Telugu too, though he did not know the alphabets of these languages... He had a very keen intelligence and could grasp new subjects very quickly. His ever-ready wit was astonishing. He had never seen India. Yet his love for the homeland knew no bounds. Patriotism ran through his very veins. His firmness was pictured on his face. He was very strongly built and he possessed tireless energy. He shone equally whether he had to take the chair at meetings and lead them or whether he had to do porter's work. He would not be ashamed of carrying a load on the public roads... Night and day were the same to him when he set to work. And none was more ready than he to sacrifice his all for the sake of the community... the name of Thambi Naidoo must ever remain as one of the front rank in the history of Satyagraha in South Africa".¹⁵

The spirit of Thambi Naidoo and the Tamils can be seen in the letter he sent on 4 October 1909 to Gandhi, then in a deputation to London. Passive resistance was at an ebb at the time, as most of the merchants were afraid to defy the law for fear of confiscation of their property. He wrote:

"... I beg to inform you that all Tamil prisoners discharged from the prison during your absence are ready to go to jail again & again until the Government will grant us our request. I was in Pretoria on the 22nd and 23rd of last month in order to receive the Tamil prisoners who was discharged on those dates and I did receive them with a bleeding heart. I could not recognise more than about 15 men out of the 60 prisoners who were released. The reason for this was that they were so thin and weak some of them nothing but skin & bone but in spite of this suffering that they have to undergo they were all prepared to go back to jail today... the reason for the prisoners to get weak & thin is the insufficiency of food and of the absence of ghee".¹⁶

While Thambi Naidoo, the sole breadwinner of the family, was constantly courting imprisonment, his wife Veerammal had to take care of the seven children. She could not manage her husband's substantial business as cartage contractor and owner of a fodder store. She began to sell off horses and carts one by one. The family had nothing left. Her brother took them to his home, but he too went to prison and they were homeless again. As many Tamils faced such problems, Gandhi, with the help of Hermann Kallenbach, established the Tolstoy Farm where former prisoners and families of prisoners could stay.¹⁷ Thambi Naidoo took all his family to the

¹⁵ *Satyagraha in South Africa*

¹⁶ From Gandhi archives at Sabarmati, Serial Number 5107

¹⁷ Mr. Kallenbach, an architect and associate of Gandhi, purchased the farm. He helped greatly in the satyagraha and served a term in prison.

farm.

Veerammal was a cook in the Farm; Thambi Naidoo was in charge of marketing and sanitation; and their four children carried water from springs almost a mile away.

Final Stage of the Satyagraha

Satyagraha in the Transvaal was suspended in 1911 after a provisional agreement between Gandhi and General Smuts. But the government did not implement the agreement. Meanwhile, the Cape Supreme Court declared in 1913 that marriages performed according to religions which allow polygamy – such as Hinduism, Islam and Zoroastrianism - were not valid in South Africa. That judgment had serious repercussions as most Indian women became legally no more than concubines and their children became illegitimate. The government ignored appeals for legislation to remedy the situation. Gandhi decided, after consultation with his associates, to invite women to join the satyagraha.

At the same time, the three pound tax which was levied on workers in Natal who had completed indenture, and their wives and children, was causing so much suffering that action had to be taken to secure its abolition. It was, therefore, decided to persuade Indian workers to go on strike until the tax was abolished.

Members of the Thambi Naidoo family, including his wife and mother-in-law, were among the eighteen Transvaal women who went to Natal to explain the three pound tax to the workers and persuade them to suspend work.

Thambi Naidoo led the women and went from mine to mine to persuade the coal miners to suspend work. After the women were arrested and sentenced to three months in prison with hard labour, he continued organising the strike of workers in plantations, railways, municipalities and other locations. He marched throughout Natal and addressed huge meetings without any rest and often without food.

He addressed a mass meeting of four or five thousand people in Pietermaritzburg in November and it adopted a resolution calling for a general strike the next day. Workers in sanitary, hospital, electricity departments were, however, requested remain at their posts.

Towards the close of the meeting, Thambi Naidoo was informed that a C.I.D. officer had arrived with a warrant for his arrest issued in Durban. *Indian Opinion* reported:

“... he exhorted his hearers to have no fear, as he was not afraid to go to jail for the cause. A sensation was created by the announcement, and Mr. Naidoo proceeded to warn the crowd not to initiate any acts of violence, but to remain passive resisters and obey the commands of law and order. Let them, he said, suffer for the cause, but on no account resort to acts of aggression or violations of the law.”

He was later released in Durban and joined other resisters in organising delivery of food to

striking workers. Natal saw the biggest general strike in its history while Gandhi was in prison.

The severe sentences on women satyagrahis and the brutality against the workers outraged Indian public opinion. Faced with the tenacity and heroism of the workers and pressure from India and Britain, the South African government released Gandhi from prison, negotiated with him and signed an agreement acceding to the main demands of the satyagraha.

Thambi Naidoo spent a total of fourteen terms in prison during the satyagraha. Seventeen members of his family were reported to have courted imprisonment.

Fighter till the End

After Gandhi left South Africa in 1914, Thambi Naidoo continued to lead the Indian community while struggling to make a living. Soon after the end of the *Satyagraha*, he joined the successful appeal to the courts against segregation in tramways and fought for the removal of the colour bar in the municipal market. As there were renewed attempts after the First World War to harass Indians, he was active in mobilising the people to protest.

He was elected President of Transvaal Indian Congress in 1932. He denounced the Transvaal Asiatic Land Tenure Act and the Licences (Control) Ordinance, which added to the disabilities of the Indians and persuaded the TIC to decide in principle on passive resistance. He offered himself and his family to go to jail for the cause. He condemned the decision of the leaders of the South African Indian Congress to join the Colonisation Enquiry Committee, set up by the regime to find ways to induce Indians to emigrate to distant lands like Borneo; from his sick bed in August 1933, and against doctor's advice, he went to a Conference called by the South African Indian Congress and fought to the end.

He also led the fight, early in 1933, for the removal of untouchability at the Melrose Hindu Temple in Johannesburg.

He passed away on 31 October 1933, after long illness, and his ashes were buried in the Indian Cemetery in Brixton on 1 November. *Indian Opinion* reported on his funeral on 17 November:

“Great crowds turned out for the funeral of the late Mr. C.K.T. Naidoo, at his residence in 176 President Street. The streets were thronged with people and cars that special policemen were on duty controlling the traffic. The procession was nearly two miles long. It was an awe inspiring sight and a fitting tribute to a great patriot and hero...

“There were 80 cars in the procession besides the horse vehicle. The funeral procession went through President Street right into the heart of the town. Hundreds lined the street.

“As the cortage arrived at Vrededorp the whole of 17th Street from Delarey Street was crowded. Many signs were evident of the great appreciation that men and women had for the man who was determined to lay down his life for the honour of the Indian community in South Africa...

“The coffin was laid in the beautiful courtyard of the crematorium. Mr. M. Nursoo acted as chairman for the great meeting. Speeches were made and the first to speak was Mr. H. Kallenbach, who spoke very feelingly – for does he not know the sterling qualities of Thambi Naidoo. He said that we have to lay to rest a brave and courageous man and above all a man of peace. He was overcome and he stopped. Mr. J. D. Rheinalt Jones also spoke and said that he had great veneration and admiration for Mr. Naidoo who was vice-chairman of the Indo-European Council, one who truly interpreted the great Indian Nation...”

Indian Opinion wrote in an obituary on 3 November 1933:

"With a sturdy physique and brawny arms, he fathered many a weakling and made life in jail easier for him. Thambi Naidoo was always there to finish his own task as well as to help those who lagged behind to finish theirs. During his leisure time he would be reading religious books or singing hymns and keeping gay those who had a tendency of being morose having never suffered jail life. It was indeed a sorry time for those inside prison when Thambi Naidoo was released. But he was never out long. He required no rest. One heard of Thambi Naidoo's release and within a day or two news flashed once again that he was arrested. This is the life that Thambi Naidoo led from the beginning to the very end of the great struggle in 1914. During the intervals he was the chairman of the Tamil Benefit Society which did a great deal of organising among its own people. During the great strike in 1913 as a protest against the £ 3 tax on Indian labourers, the late Thambi Naidoo played a heroic part. He led the women from Johannesburg and marched from place to place throughout Natal organising strikes without any rest whether by day or by night and often without food. As he was determined so was he fearless”.

Gandhi wrote to Manilal Gandhi and his wife Sushila on 24 February 1934: “...take whatever steps may be necessary to perpetuate Thambi's memory”. Apparently nothing was done and Sonja Schlesin wrote to him in 1945 about perpetuating his memory. Gandhi wrote to her on 13 May 1945:

“Anything can be named after him here (in India). It will mean nothing. Something worthy should be done there. You must shape things there. Thambi must have many admirers besides you and me”.

He enquired about Thambi Naidoo's wife and children and asked if she could send him a photo of the family with Thambi in it.

A FAMILY OF SATYAGRAHIS

Thambi Naidoo inspired many members of his family and friends to join the satyagraha.

In 1913, when women were allowed to join the satyagraha, Veerammal, her mother Mrs. N. Pillay, and her sister-in-law Mrs. Narainsamy Pillay volunteered.¹⁸ They were in the first batch of Transvaal women who went to Natal, informed Indian workers in the mines and railways about the injustice of the three pound poll tax, and persuaded them to suspend work. They were arrested at Newcastle on 21 October 1913, and sentenced to three months with hard labour under the Vagrancy Act. They served the sentences in Pietermaritzburg prison under dreadful conditions.

Mrs. N. Pillay (Parenithama) was the oldest of the women satyagrahis.

Veerammal volunteered, though pregnant at that time, and took her infant daughter Seshammal with her. She gave birth to a son, Mithalin, the day after she was released from prison.¹⁹

Narainsamy Pillay, brother of Veerammal, was jailed in November and in December 1908 to brief terms with hard labour for hawking without licence.²⁰ He was sentenced twice in 1909 to three months with hard labour.²¹ His wife, Lachimi, served her sentence with an infant, in the Pietermaritzburg prison.

T. Coopoosamy (Kuppusamy) Naidoo, the eldest son of Veerammal and Thambi Naidoo, went hawking with Manilal Gandhi soon after turning 16, but was not arrested. He was sentenced later in 1909 to seven days with hard labour for hawking without licence. He went hawking again with Manilal Gandhi in February 1910. He was arrested and charged with hawking without licence, and charged also for not having a registration certificate under the Asiatic Act. He was sentenced to three months with hard labour.²²

After the start of the third phase of the satyagraha in 1913, he went to Newcastle and Charlestown, and joined Great March but was not arrested. He returned to Charlestown where he assisted in the care of the families of imprisoned strikers. He made several attempts to court arrest by crossing the Natal-Transvaal border, but was on each occasion recognised and allowed to pass unchallenged.²³

¹⁸ Thambi Naidoo and Narainsamy Pillay came from Mauritius to South Africa around the same time and became lifelong friends. There was much intermarriage between the Naidoos and the Pillays.

¹⁹ In an article in *Harijan* on 11 August 1946, after the death of Veerammal, Gandhi reproduced a letter about her, probably from Sonja Schlesin, his secretary in South Africa:

“She was a sweet soul, a real friend and had a genius for home-making. There was always a beautiful atmosphere in the Naidoo home and one could drop in at any time, no matter how busy she was and always feel a welcome guest. And what a heroine she was!... I do hope that there will be a joint memorial to her and Thambi.”

²⁰ *Indian Opinion*, 21 November and 19 December 1908

²¹ *Indian Opinion*, 6 February and 23 October 1909

²² *Indian Opinion*, 12 February and 5 March 1910

²³ *Indian Opinion*, 4 March 1914

FROM INDIAN RESISTANCE TO ALLIANCE OF ALL THE PEOPLE

THE “FOUR PEARLS” OF GANDHI

At the farewell banquet to Gandhi in Johannesburg on 14 July 1914, Thambi Naidoo offered four of his sons – Naransamy, Barasarthi, Balakrishnan and Pakirisamy - to Gandhi and said: “I have the honour to present these four boys to be servants of India”.

The following is from a summary of Gandhi’s speech on that occasion:

“Of all the precious gifts that had been given to them (to Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi and himself), those four boys were the most precious... They (Mr. and Mrs. Naidoo) had gone through the ceremony of adoption, and they had surrendered their right to their four children and given them (Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi) the charge. He did not know that they were worthy to take charge of those children. He could only assure them that they would try to do their best. The four boys had been his pupils when he had been conducting a school for Passive Resisters at Tolstoy Farm and later on at Phoenix. Then when Mrs. Naidoo had sought imprisonment, the boys had been taken over to Johannesburg, and he thought that he had lost those four pearls, but the pearls had returned to him. He only hoped that Mrs. Gandhi and he would be able to take charge of the precious gift”.

Gandhi arranged for them to be taken to India and sent to Santiniketan of Poet Rabindranath Tagore until he returned to India and set up an ashram at Kochrab in Ahmedabad in May 1915.

There was much sickness in the ashram.²⁴ Pakiri, in particular, was frequently ill at Kochrab. He was sent for some time to a nursing home in Surat.²⁵ Gandhi thought he was “unable to restrain his palate”.²⁶ He passed away in March 1916. Gandhi wrote to Kallenbach on 1 April 1916:

“Fakiri’s death was a glorious death. I have seen few dying such a peaceful death. He was conscious to the last moment. He was screaming with pain. I said, ‘Fakiri, take the name of God’. He began to utter the sacred syllable and went off to sleep from which he never awoke. The cremation ceremony was the simplest. We gave information to nobody. We fasted for half the day. We chanted hymns before the body was taken to the crematorium”.

Gandhi wrote in a letter to the inmates of the ashram on May 30, 1932:

“His (Fakiri’s) death was a test for me. I remember that I sat up, alone, by his side for the whole night on the last day of his life. In the morning, I had to catch a train for Gurukul. I

²⁴ Gandhi moved the ashram to Sabarmati in May 1917.

²⁵ Gandhi’s letter to his nephew, Maganlal Gandhi, 28 October 1915

²⁶ Gandhi’s letter to Herman Kallenbach, 11 March 1916

watched the bier being borne away and then, hardening my heart to stone, took the road to the station. Fakiri's father had entrusted him and his three brothers to me, knowing that I would make no distinction between them and others. When Fakiri had gone, I lost the other three brothers too".²⁷

After Pakirisamy's death, Thambi Naidoo wrote to Gandhi requesting that the other boys be sent back. Barsarathi and Balakrishnan returned to South Africa in 1919. Narainsamy apparently decided to stay longer and returned in 1928.

NARAINSAMY NAIDOO

Narainsamy, commonly known as "Naran" or "Roy", was born in 1901 in Pietermaritzburg where the family had moved during the Anglo-Boer War.

He went to India as Gandhi's adopted son and spent two years at Santiniketan for further education. He developed a close friendship with Devadas Gandhi. He was a volunteer in Gandhi's campaigns in India.

He returned to South Africa in 1928, deeply influenced by the Indian national movement, and dedicated his whole life to the cause of freedom for all South Africans. He worked in a laundry and later as a driver for a bakery. He organised Indian workers and became chairman of the Witwatersrand Bakers' Union.

Naran married Mononmony Pillay in 1934. She too dedicated her life to the struggle for freedom.

By the mid-1930s, a new generation of Indians, born in South Africa, had grown up. While the elders in the community continued to seek security by compromises with the white regime as it instituted ever more discriminatory measures, they sought to struggle for full equality and recognised the need for resistance against the racist regime in cooperation with the African majority. When Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, Dr. G.M. Naicker and Dr. K. Goonam Naidoo returned after medical education in Edinburgh and provided militant leadership to the Indian community as respected professionals, Naran became one of their associates.

Naran joined the Communist Party and supported Dr. Yusuf Dadoo in 1939 in forming the Nationalist Group in the Transvaal Indian Congress to replace its compromising leadership and develop cooperation with the Africans. He helped form the Non-European United Front in the same year to promote a united struggle of Africans, Indians and Coloured people. He led the first group of resisters in the limited passive resistance campaign organised by the Nationalist Group in 1941 to protest against the extension of the Pegging Act which segregated Indians.

When the leadership of the Transvaal Indian Congress was replaced in 1945, with Dr. Dadoo as President, Naran was elected a member of the Working Committee and in 1946 as Vice-

²⁷ CWMG, Volume 49, pp. 494-95

President. Stressing his commitment to mass action and unity of the oppressed people, he said in 1946:

"I have always maintained that the Indian people of South Africa cannot improve their lot until they come out in open defiance of the whole policy of segregation which is aimed at keeping the entire non-European peoples under subjugation. The days of going to Government officials with hat in hand and begging for minor concessions is over".²⁸

He was elected Vice-Chairman of the Transvaal Passive Resistance Council which led the Indian passive resistance struggle of 1946-48, and served two terms in prison. He organised assistance to the African mineworkers when the government crushed their strike in August 1946 with brutal violence. He risked his life in 1949, during the Zulu-Indian riots fanned by the white racists in Durban, touring the riot areas to bring peace. He was one of the organisers of the May Day strike and the National Day of Protest against apartheid laws in 1950. He helped plan the 1952 multi-racial Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws in which 8,000 people of all racial origins went to prison, and served two terms in prison. As chief welfare officer of the campaign, he organised assistance to the families of thousands of people who courted imprisonment.

He was Chairman of the Transvaal Peace Council, and Vice-President of the Tamil Benefit Society and was active in many other organisations. He was a founder and life vice-president of the Witwatersrand (Indian) Cricket Union and a prominent footballer.²⁹

He was in every campaign against racism until his death in 1953, at the age of 53. He was assaulted more than once by the police. Even heart attack in prison did not deter him.

He passed away on 14 November 1953, at the age of 52, giving the Afrika salute of the freedom movement. He was cremated and his ashes were buried with those of his father. Most Indian shops in Johannesburg were closed in the afternoon of 16 November, at the time of cremation, as a mark of respect to him.³⁰ The Transvaal Indian Congress said in its tribute that he was "a soldier and a general, a leader and a follower. Of worldly goods, he had none...(But) his hospitality was known throughout South Africa. No stranger who was stranded was unwelcome in his home".

He inherited from his mother, Veerammal, the trait of generous hospitality which was shared by his wife Mononmony.

BARASARTHI NAIDOO³¹

²⁸ *Passive Resister*, Johannesburg, 30 September 1946

²⁹ *The Star*, Johannesburg, 16 November 1953

³⁰ *The Star*, Johannesburg, 16 November 1953

³¹ I am grateful to Ms. Dawn Jackson and Ms. Stephanie Moonsamy, granddaughters of Barsarthi Naidoo, for information about him.

Barasarthi was born on 22 December 1903.

After returning from India, he took part in public activities with his parents and served as Treasurer of the Transvaal Indian Congress.

He married Nellie van Sitters in 1928 and they had nine children.

He was under constant police surveillance by the South African police because of his political activities. His home was raided at all odd hours by the Special Branch of the police who were looking for banned literature or evidence of illegal gatherings. He was placed under severe restrictions by banning orders from 1964 to 1974, and was confined to home at nights and weekends. The banning orders prevented him from attending important family functions such as the weddings of his children and the birth of his youngest child.

When his sister Thayanayagie's daughter, a teacher in Lenasia, was struck by lightning and killed, he rushed to visit her home. He was arrested the next day for contravening the provisions of his banning orders.

The terms of the banning orders even forced him to give up his modest occupation as a hawker and grocer. He found employment as a driver for various businesses but he lost the jobs as the Special Branch of the police went to the employers and warned them.

He was active in the ANC underground after the organisation was banned.

He passed away in September 1980 at the age of 76.

THAYANAYAGIE (THAILEMA) PILLAY

Thailema, daughter of Veerammal and Thambi Naidoo, was four years old when her family moved to the Tolstoy Farm.³²

As she grew up, her father used to tell her stories of the struggle. He took her to meetings to protest discriminatory laws and she sometimes spoke at them. She became politically active.

In 1930, Thayanayagie Naidoo married Perumal Pillay and moved to Pretoria.³³ Her father-in-law, had left his wife, Achieammal, and seven children, and returned to Mauritius. At first Achieammal had struggled to maintain the produce trade started by her husband but, with the help of friends, she survived.

When the Indian passive resistance against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, denounced by the Indian Congress as "Ghetto Act", was launched in 1946, Thailema joined the resistance, though she had six young children. She spent a month in the Durban and

³² She was the oldest surviving resident of Tolstoy Farm when I met her in Pretoria in September 1991.

³³ Perumal was a brother of Manonmony who married Naran Naidoo in 1934 and moved to Johannesburg.

Pietermaritzburg jails. Perumal's brother, Sooboo and his mother also went to prison in the 1946-48 Indian passive resistance.

Thailema again volunteered during the Campaign of Defiance against Unjust Laws in 1952. She was in the batch led by Patrick Duncan, son of a former Governor-General, which entered the Germiston location on 8 December 1952 without permits. Manilal Gandhi and Mosie Moola, ANC representative in New Delhi for many years, were also in this batch. She was sentenced to three months.

She joined the march of 20,000 women to government buildings in Pretoria in 1956 in protest against pass laws for African women.

In 1959, she organised the delivery of food to leaders of the liberation movement who were under trial for treason.³⁴ Volunteers collected funds and groceries from merchants, cooked the food and took it to a church near the venue of the trial for the accused at breakfast and lunch. Security police came to her house on several occasions and demanded information about people who provided supplies and funds, and she was once taken to the police station. But she was not intimidated.

Those on trial who benefitted from this were prominent leaders of the liberation struggle like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Duma Nokwe, Helen Joseph and Joe Slovo.

Thailema was detained in 1983 for protesting against a new racist constitution.

She passed away on 19 December 1991. She saw Nelson Mandela on his release from prison in 1990 but did not live to vote in the democratic elections of 1994 which led to the election of Mandela as the President of South Africa.

MONONMONY ("AMA") NAIDOO

Manonmony Pillay was born in Pretoria on 31 November 1908. Her family was originally from the Thanjavur district in India.³⁵ Her maternal grandparents were indentured labourers. Her mother married Govindasamy Pillay, a hawker from Mauritius. They developed a business selling fruit and vegetables to hotels. Mononmony was the fifth of nine children and the only daughter.³⁶

Mononmony married Narainsamy Naidoo in 1934.

³⁴ The government arrested 156 leaders of the freedom movement in December 1956 and charged them with treason, a crime which carried the death penalty. The trial was held in Johannesburg and many of the accused were acquitted. Thirty remaining accused, the main leaders of the movement, were tried in Pretoria.

³⁵ *The Hindu*, Madras, 7 October 1980

³⁶ Lu li Callinicos, *A Place in the City* (Ravan Press), 1993

She was with her husband in all political activities. She took her children to political meetings and raised them in the spirit of the freedom struggle. She was imprisoned in the Indian Passive Resistance Movement in 1947, shortly after her husband served four months with hard labour. Three of her brothers went to prison in the campaign. She went to prison twice during the Defiance Campaign of 1952.

She was elected to the executive of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) when it was formed in 1954. She attended the Congress of the People in June 1955, which adopted the Freedom Charter. In 1956 she was among the 20,000 marchers to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the proposal to institute pass laws for African women. In 1963, she marched to the Union Buildings again to protest against the appointment of the South African Indian Council, a puppet body created by the apartheid regime. When the Transvaal Indian Congress was revived in 1983, she was elected Vice-President.

She became known as "Ama" or "Amma" (mother) not only to her children but to thousands of people in the freedom movement.

Ama and Naran had scant means as Naran spent his life fighting for freedom, and they could not provide college education to their children. The situation became desperate in 1945 when Naran had a heart attack and had to give up his job. Ama supported the family by sewing and taking students as boarders. But Ama's hospitality - there were always visitors from the freedom movement - was proverbial. The family home on Rocky Street in Doornfontein came to be called "People's House". Mandela was a frequent visitor to this home, as were Walter Sisulu and Moses Kotane.

All her five children - Shanthivathie, Indresena, Mithrasagaran, Ramnie and Premanathan - joined the freedom movement and, as repression increased, they began to suffer vengeful persecution - detention, solitary confinement and torture. It was said that if any mother was to be honoured for heartache during the freedom struggle, she would deserve the gold medal. But despite her agony, she always remained a source of inspiration and strength to her children.

She always said that with the spirit imbued from their parents, the children could be nothing else. When her youngest son, Prema, was detained in 1981, she said;

“There is no despair.

“The time is not far away when we will all be back together as one family. I believe I will live to see that day”.³⁷

When Mandela was in prison and his wife, Winnie, was being harassed, Ama took care of their children, defying police intimidation, and enrolled them in a Coloured school on Rockie Street. Winnie used to pick them up over the weekends. Zeni and Zindzi were happy at her home, but police harassed the principal of the school into expelling them before the end of the year on the grounds that they were not “Coloured people”.³⁸

³⁷ *Sunday Express*, Johannesburg, 6 December 1981.

³⁸ They were then transferred to a school in Swaziland.

Shanthie, Indres and Ramnie returned to South Africa in 1991, and for the first time since 1963, she had all the children with her. The children arranged a birthday party for her in November 1991, and it was attended by several leaders of the movement, including Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Mac and Zarina Maharaj, Ahmed Kathrada and Helen Joseph. To quote Indres:

“She died on Christmas Day 1993 at the age of eighty-six. One of her most fervent wishes was to see freedom in South Africa and to vote in the first democratic election. She saw freedom, but unfortunately died a few months before the election in April 1994... We had a family Christmas dinner at a friend’s house. Mom was there, happy to be with her family, when her heart failed her. She died peacefully later that day.”³⁹

Ama Naidoo received posthumously the Order of Luthuli, a national award by the Government of South Africa, in recognition of her “excellent contribution to the struggle for democracy, equality and justice in South Africa.”

³⁹ Indres Naidoo, *Island in Chains*, Second edition, p. 292.

ARMED STRUGGLE AND MASS DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

SHANTHIVATHIE (SHANTHIE) NAIDOO

Shanthie, the eldest child of Ama and Naran, was born in Pretoria on 6 March 1935. She spent her childhood with her maternal grandmother in Pretoria.

In her youth, she was active in the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and then in the multi-racial Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) which was established in 1954.

After the death of her father in 1953, she worked as a clerk in the office of the Congress of Democrats, an organisation of whites allied to the African and Indian Congresses, until it was banned in 1962. She then went to work in the office of the South African Congress of Trade Unions but was obliged to give up that job after eleven months, in December 1963, when she was subjected to restrictions under a five-year banning order.

Her brother Indres had been imprisoned about eight months before she was banned, so that she had become the main breadwinner for the family. She managed to find a job in Vanguard, a small bookshop.

“Banning” is a punishment invented by the apartheid regime to restrict, silence and harass opponents of apartheid. The Minister of Justice could arbitrarily issue banning orders to anyone and there was no recourse to courts. While the banning orders were generally for two or five years, they could be renewed indefinitely. They usually prohibited persons from leaving a district, communicating with other banned persons and attending “gatherings” of three or more persons. The banned persons were required to resign from listed organisations. They were often prohibited from entering factories, schools, newspaper offices etc. so that they could not pursue their professions. They could not write for publication and could not be quoted. In some cases, persons were prohibited from leaving their residence all day or at nights and weekends – a form of “house arrest”.

Shanthie was arrested on 29 February 1965, on the charge of contravening the banning orders. She had gone to court to attend the trial of Bram Fischer, a great Afrikaner jurist and supporter of the freedom movement. Bhana Mohamed, an Indian who had also been banned, greeted her and she held her finger to her lips to warn him that she was also banned. For that she was charged with "communicating with a banned person" and held in jail overnight but was acquitted.

On another occasion, when she fell ill and was taken to a hospital, the Security Police went to her bedside and threatened her for not reporting her "change of address" as required by the banning orders.

She hoped that the restrictions would be over in December 1968 but, instead, she was served with more stringent orders for another five years.

She then decided to leave for Britain, where her younger sister, Ramnie, had gone as an exile, in the hope of finding a job and leading a more normal life. She applied for an “exit permit”. Until then, the regime was freely granting “exit permits” to opponents of apartheid, depriving them of citizenship and prohibiting their return to South Africa. But Shanthie was refused the “exit permit” though she had never been convicted even by an apartheid court.

Then, on June 19, 1969, she was detained under the ‘Terrorism Act’ without any charges and kept in solitary confinement. Neither her family nor her lawyer could visit or communicate with her. Her family did not even know where she was held. They engaged a senior counsel and made representations to the authorities that she would leave the country immediately if she was released, but in vain.

Shanthie was interrogated for a whole week without sleep. She was brought to the court on December 21, 1969, to give evidence in the trial of Mrs. Winnie Mandela and 21 others who were charged, after several months of imprisonment, with furthering the aims of the African National Congress. That was the first time the family could see her since she was jailed and learn that she was now imprisoned under a law which allows the police to detain anyone who can be a potential witness in a case.⁴⁰

Under questioning by her counsel, she said that she had been kept in solitary confinement and made to sleep on the floor. She was denied even the minimum of 30 minutes a day for exercise to which prisoners were entitled.

"I was forced to stand for five days and nights, while they fired questions at me. I lost all sense of time. I only knew it had been five days when they took me back to the cell and the wardress told me what day it was. I also began to lose hold on reality towards the end of the interrogation. I had terrifying hallucinations, like nightmares, in which the questions became all mixed up with broken dreams. I didn't know what was happening..."

She said the police also threatened that her whole family would be detained if she did not make a statement. Finally, she made a statement to the police.

But she told the court that she did not wish to give evidence, despite a warning by the judge that he would have to convict her unless she had "just" reasons for not giving evidence. She said:

"I have two friends among the accused. I don't want to give evidence because I will not be able to live with my conscience if I do".

She referred to Mrs. Winnie Mandela and Mrs. Joyce Sikhakhane, a journalist.

One would have thought that any judge with human feelings would have been moved and at

⁴⁰ In 1965, the regime enacted Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, known as “180-day law”, which authorised it to detain *incommunicado* anyone who might possibly provide evidence in a trial.

least tried to protect the frail woman from torture. But in South Africa, judges who had to enforce inhuman laws had lost much of their humanity.

Mr. Justice Bekker ruled against Shanthie and declared:

"It is obviously unpleasant to be called upon to give evidence against friends. Your excuse is a moral one but, in my opinion, is not a just one".

He sentenced her to two months' imprisonment and warned her that she would be sentenced again to one year if she continued to refuse to give evidence.

Later the judge sent a message to her lawyer to ask the family to persuade Shanthie to testify as he was reluctant to send her to prison again; he pitied her as she looked so frail. The family rejected the advice of the judge. When Murthie, who was informed by the lawyer, told his mother Ama, she said: "Whatever Shanthie does we will stand by and support her."⁴¹

On 16 February 1970, the Attorney-General stopped the prosecution of Winnie Mandela and others for lack of evidence. There was now no need for evidence by Shanthie, and her mother made an urgent application to the court for her release. The police, however, told the court that they were again detaining Shanthie under the "Terrorism Act" and that the court could not order her release. Shanthie was not released until June, after 371 days in prison, most of it under solitary confinement, for no offence.

But her ordeal was not over.

She again applied for an exit permit to leave South Africa and was happy to receive it from the Minister of the Interior in March 1971. But, since she was restricted by the banning orders to the magisterial district of Johannesburg, she needed permission from the Minister of Justice to go to the airport on the outskirts of the city. She applied for permission but was refused.⁴²

To quote Anthony Holiday in the *Rand Daily Mail* on 16 March 1971:

"So it is back to square one.

"So Shanthie Naidoo goes on with her work in a city bookshop and waits for what will happen next.

"She reports to the police every Monday between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. She is careful not to attend social gatherings and not to speak to any of her old friends who may be banned. She may not publish her feelings in writing, nor communicate them to any newspaper.

"But the look in her eyes says clearly enough: 'I am not afraid.'"

⁴¹ Information from Murthie Naidoo, May 5, 2012

⁴² She was the first South African to be placed in this situation. Robert Sobukwe, the leader of the Pan Africanist Congress, was the only other person so confined.

She could not attend the wedding of her younger brother or the funeral of a close relative. She could not talk to her closest friends or go on a holiday. She could not go to Robben Island prison to see her brother, Indres, who had been jailed for ten years.

She applied to the Supreme Court in Pretoria to be allowed to leave the country but it ruled against her. She appealed to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court: it also ruled against her in December 1971 and ordered her to pay the costs of the hearing.

Finally, in September 1972, after international pressure and the intercession of Mrs. Helen Suzman, a liberal member of Parliament, she was given permission to leave South Africa. She was also allowed, for the first time, to visit Indres in prison.

Relatives and friends hurriedly collected money for the fares and the court costs so that she could leave immediately. More than two hundred people of all racial origins went to the airport to bid her farewell and sang "We Shall Overcome". She had to say good-bye to one person at a time because of the banning order.

She worked at the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa in London for many years, and was active in the African National Congress. She later worked at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, established by the African National Congress in Morogoro, Tanzania.

She returned to South Africa in April 1991 with her husband, Dominic Tweedie, and worked in the Department of Education of the University of Witwatersrand.

INDRASENA (INDRES) ELATCHININATHAN NAIDOO

Indres, son of Ama and Naran Naidoo, worked as a clerk and became the main support of the family after the death of his father in 1953. He was also active in the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress of which he became secretary, and was elected an executive committee member of the Transvaal Indian Congress in 1958. He was one of the founders of the Human Rights Committee in 1973.

On the night of 17 April 1963, he was caught with two other Indians - Reggie Vandeyar and Shirish Nanabhai - after they blew up a railway tool shed and tried to dynamite a signal relay case.

Indres and his friends were among the first to be caught in the Transvaal while committing sabotage as members of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* ("Spear of the Nation"), the military wing of the African National Congress.⁴³ They had been betrayed by a spy. They were also among the first

⁴³ In 1961, leaders of the African National Congress abandoned strict non-violence and established *Umkhonto we Sizwe* under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. It was the policy of *Umkhonto* to commit acts of sabotage while taking care to avoid loss of life.

victims of policemen who were specially trained in brutal and sophisticated torture of freedom fighters.⁴⁴

Lt. T. J. Swanepoel shot Indres on his left shoulder before capture and the bullet came out between his spine. Several policemen kicked him when he fell on the floor. He was taken to the hospital to remove the bullet and then to his home for a search, with his shirt saturated with blood. He was beaten and tortured during the next few days. The following is an extract from his account:

"I felt a punch, and before I realised what was happening all the police had made a ring around me and were kicking and pushing me, saying 'Now we're playing rugby' - one policeman would dive full length on to me, hitting me on the side, then another would come up and kick me as though I was the ball..

"The next thing, I felt a wet cold canvas bag being put over my head... they started squeezing a knot and choking me. I gasped for air, and every time I breathed in, the canvas hit me in the face. I was choking, my nostrils and mouth were blocked by the wet canvas; the harder I tried to get air into my lungs, the tighter the bag clamped over me, cutting off the air, preventing my lungs from working..

"Coolie, today you're going to die. *Laughter.* 'We've got the bastards.'

"I was struggling, thrashing around, almost unconscious.

"*Laughter and talking among themselves.* The bag was released and I swallowed air desperately, but then the canvas slapped back into my mouth and once more I started to choke, my body in a total panic.

"Coolie, you're going to talk.' *More laughter.*

"I kicked my legs and arms as hard as I could, feeling my head go dizzy. The bag opened. I was finished. I could hardly stand...

"They pushed me into a chair, and I found my shoes being taken off and two policemen holding my hands behind the back of the chair.. One of the group started hitting me on the soles of my feet with a rubber baton and a terrible pain shot up my leg...

"Next I felt all sorts of wires being attached to me... My arms were stretched out at my sides and I was held down from behind, and then I saw the main lead running to a dry cell battery... as they attached the lead to the battery I felt a dreadful shock pass into my body...

⁴⁴ During the trial the police testified that Major W.H. Brits, Lt. T.J Swanepoel and a Lt. van Wyk had been observing the location for three nights. They were among a group of policemen trained in France and Algeria in methods of torture to extract information. In subsequent years, these three security policemen appeared in numerous political trials. They were notorious for brutally torturing prisoners, many to death.

"Again the shock travelled through my whole body, convulsing every particle of me, going on and on for ever, absolute pain from top to toe".

They wanted to know from him who was giving instructions to his group and where *Umkhonto* had its headquarters.

When Indres and his friends were eventually brought to trial, they told the court that they had agreed to commit sabotage "as a form of protest against oppression and government policy", after persuasion by a Gamat Jardine and on the assurance that there was to be no damage to life.

The only person who could have tipped off the police, Gamat Jardine, disappeared after the event. An enterprising newspaperman found him in Cape Town a month later but he was never arrested.

Indres and his colleagues were sentenced on 13 May 1963 to ten years` imprisonment. As they left the dock, they smiled, waved to relatives and friends and gave the clenched fist salute. About two hundred people waited outside the court in a demonstration of solidarity and shouted freedom slogans.

The torture did not end with the sentence. It continued in prison. I quote a few extracts from his evidence before the special hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on prisons.

"They then locked all three of us up in separate cells in the isolated section of Leeuwkop Prison and they gave us exercises twice a day for half an hour. They gave you exercises in such a fashion that you hated exercises. They made you run at full strength, full speed, barefoot, short pants, short sleeved shirt, they made you run along a corridor with a concrete floor and you ran from one end to the other. On the one end was a warder by the name of Magalies whose real name is Liebenberg, another warder by the name of Kumalo would stand on the other side and as we run past them they would hit us on the knees and our ankles. Each time we ran past them they would say faster, faster. As a result we dreaded this form of exercise.

"We were kept there for a couple of months and this continued. Subsequently we were moved to Robben Island. It was the most awful journey I`ve had in my life, it was a journey that took two whole days. We stopped for a short while at Bloemfontein prison, we were all handcuffed and chained on our feet. At Bloemfontein we stopped to have lunch but from there we went right through without stopping until De Doorns. I was handcuffed to my comrade Henry Makgothi and you could hardly move in the van. We appealed to the warders to stop so that we could relieve ourselves, they would not listen to us. We became absolutely desperate...

"We were then transferred to Robben Island...I was amongst very few prisoners who were given lashes on Robben Island. The warders came up to me... one of the Kleynhans brothers as there were four of them altogether who were sadists, absolute sadists, the eldest one came up to me and said I must go to the pool of dirty, stinking, stagnant water

and drain the water in the quarry. I went there and I started draining the water when he said, no, no, no, take off your shoes and get into the water. I said no, there's no way I'm going to get into the dirty stagnant water as there was fine gravel stone there, you could get cut and it wasn't safe so I refused.

“On returning to the prison that evening, he reported me to Lieutenant Naude saying that I refused to work and I disobeyed a lawful command. I was then charged for disobeying a lawful command and the final result was I was sentenced to four strokes. They tie... your hands on both sides and your feet down there, you are stark naked, they put a padding on your back and a padding on your thigh exposing your buttock only.

“The warder who did the caning could easily have weighed a hundred kilograms or more and he was a person two metres tall. He chose one of six or seven canes that were lying there. He tested them all, he tested the first, he tested the second and when he tested the one that gave him the right sound he said, this is it, this is it, I'm going to make the Coolie cry today. ...

“The first shot that landed, landed right in the middle of my buttock, it cut my buttock down the middle, I felt the pain but I kept my mouth shut and held on. The warder then applied iodine which was even worse because the iodine burnt you... The fifth one landed right on the first cut, cutting me even deeper and they again applied iodine....

“They loosened me and I felt that if I put my clothing on there I would faint immediately so I just grabbed my clothing and walked to my cell with my clothing. It was only when I got to my cell that I fainted.

“With the atrocities, it was a daily occurrence on the Island, we were beaten with rubber hoses, we were beaten with batons, we were beaten with anything that they had with them....

“I was beaten so badly on the Island that today I am totally deaf in my left ear...”

Before release in May 1973, Indres was served with stringent banning orders. He was confined to his home each day from dusk to dawn and on weekends and holidays. He could not attend “gatherings” or receive visitors, and could not leave the magisterial district of Johannesburg. He was also required to report to the police once a week. He could not even “communicate” with his sister Shanthie and his brother Murthie as they were also banned.

When he was released, many relatives and friends waited at the prison gate to receive him. As he had been prohibited from attending gatherings, they had to embrace him one by one.

When Indres married soon after release, he needed special permission to enter the Magistrate's Court for the wedding and to be with three witnesses. He was allowed, as a special favour, to go to Cape Town for a brief honeymoon.

He managed to find a job with Frank and Hirsch, South African distributors for the Polaroid Corporation of America, and rose to a senior position as chief storeman for the company. But in 1976, the company asked its black employees to take a lie detector test: Indres refused, considering that an affront to dignity, and was fired. He escaped from South Africa in January 1977 to work for the African National Congress abroad.

The Polaroid Corporation had undertaken, because of public pressure in the United States, not to sell its products to the military and repressive agencies in South Africa. It claimed that its agent, Frank and Hirsch, was following liberal employment policies and assisting blacks.

Indres now produced proof that Frank and Hirsch was secretly supplying Polaroid products to the South African regime. There were strong protests in the United States and Polaroid was obliged to close its operations in South Africa.

While in Mozambique, Indres was in the office of the ANC and was actively involved in activities of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, of which he was a leading member.

He was transferred to the ANC Headquarters in Lusaka in 1987 and after a year sent to Berlin, German Democratic Republic, as deputy representative of the ANC. The South African regime attempted to assassinate him in Mozambique and in the German Democratic Republic.

He returned to South Africa in 1991 after the bans on the ANC and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* were withdrawn. During the democratic elections in 1994, he was elected Senator and served until 1999. He lives in Cape Town with his wife, Gabriele Blankenburg from the German Democratic Republic.

In 1982 Penguin published *Island in Chains*, a book by him on his experiences in Robben Island prison. The second edition in 2003 contains an epilogue describing his activities in Mozambique, Lusaka and Berlin.

MITHRASAGARAN (MURTHIE) NAIDOO

Murthie, the second son of Ama and Naran, worked as a clerk. He was detained from November 1965 to April 1966 without any charges and tortured. He was “listed” in the Government Gazette on 25 August 1967 as a Communist. Because of the listing, he could not join any organization and could not be quoted in the press.

In his evidence on 21 July 1997 to a special hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on prisons, he said:

“I was first detained in 1965 on my way to visit Indres on Robben Island. I was arrested at the airport in Cape Town and was held overnight in a dark filthy cell in Roeland Street Prison. The next day I was taken to Swartkop Aerodrome in Pretoria in a light military aircraft. It was a journey I will never forget to this day because I vomited from Cape

Town to Pretoria, I was violently sick the entire flight from airsickness. I was driven to Pretoria Central Prison, I was stripped naked and searched and was given back my clothes except for my belt, shoelaces and watch...

“I was held in solitary confinement for a fortnight in a small cell of about three metres by two metres. I slept on a grass mat with two blankets, it was bitterly cold. One small bucket in the corner was my bathroom, another bucket contained water. I was fed mielie rice and water only and I was usually allowed to exercise for half an hour a day.

“After two weeks I was taken to ... buildings where I was interrogated, verbally abused and assaulted. One of my torturers was... Swanepoel, that’s the only policeman I remember who boasted to me that he had shot my brother. At one point I was kept awake for two days and one night. After making a statement I was taken back to my cell where I was kept in solitary for four months under the 180-day law.⁴⁵

“I must confess that solitary confinement is the worst kind of torture that can be inflicted on any human being...

“On my release I was listed as a communist.

“My second spell of detention stretched from May 1980 to August 10th, 1980 under the General Law Amendment Act. I’d been involved with the Parents of Detainees Committee ... during the student unrest. During this period I was again interrogated, assaulted and held in solitary confinement for two weeks...

“Subsequently we were taken to Modder Bee prison where I was held with other detainees from around the country in communal cells until the 10th of August when we were released.”

RAMNIE DINAT

Ramnie, the second daughter of Ama and Naran, worked in the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress since her childhood. At the age of nine, while distributing Congress leaflets, she was knocked down and stepped on by a constable.

She married Mohamed Ismail (“Issy”) Dinat. Issy was detained on December 9, 1964, and held for three weeks. He was detained again in 1966 and called to give evidence at the trial of Bram Fischer, a great Afrikaner jurist and a leader of the underground Communist Party. Ramnie, then pregnant, queued up daily at the court for the hearing, sometimes to be turned away as the seats for the non-whites in the gallery were all taken, many by the police.

Issy spent four months in detention and escaped from South Africa soon after release.

⁴⁵ Legislation which authorised imprisonment of potential witnesses for 180 days.

Ramnie decided to leave South Africa in February 1967, with her two small children, Nataly and Sean, to join her husband in London. But her passport was withdrawn two days before she was due to leave. After hurried approaches to the authorities, she obtained an "exit permit", prohibiting her from returning to South Africa, and left as planned.

In London, she worked at the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa and was active in the African National Congress and the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Ramnie and family returned to South Africa after the ban on the ANC was withdrawn in 1990. She worked as a liaison officer with the Johannesburg City Council.

PREMANATHAN (PREMA) NAIDOO

Prema, the youngest son of Ama and Naran, was born in Doornfontein in 1945.

He went to the government Indian school in Doornfontein until he was due to enter high school. The government then closed the school to force Indian families to move to the segregated location of Lenasia. He then attended the Central Indian School which was established by the Indian Congress in Fordsburg. Its faculty included many leaders and activists in the liberation movement such as Mrs. Molly Fischer, Duma Nokwe, Alfred Hutchinson and Dennis Brutus. He had to leave school early and look for a job as his brother Indres was imprisoned in 1963.

He was employed in a clothing store owned by Issy Heymann, a Communist, but the store was closed by the police and most employees arrested. Then he worked as a welder in a factory.

From the late 1960s, when all political activity seemed to have been suppressed by massive repression and terror, he was active in the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress. He was a founder of the Human Rights Committee, established to focus attention on political prisoners and assist their families, together with Miss Sheila Weinberg, a former prisoner whose family had suffered persecution, and Mohamed Timol, whose brother, Ahmed, had been tortured to death in prison.

He was assistant secretary of the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Council (TASC) which, in 1981, led the very successful boycott of elections to the South African Indian Council, a puppet body set up by the regime.

He was first arrested when he was fifteen while distributing leaflets of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, on the charge of trespassing railway property. He was found guilty, cautioned and discharged because he was under the age of sixteen.

About his political activities during that period, Prema said:

“We were under constant surveillance. We used to be raided regularly, at least once a month. But we were very careful. We never kept banned literature at home. We used to

be careful when we talked over the telephone. We weren't involved in underground work as such. But a guy would come and say: 'Listen, I came on a mission. I want transport to take me to the border'. My brother and I would arrange the transport. There were smugglings sometimes from Robben Island to London. Then we would look for somebody who was not political, who was trustworthy and who was going to London to take the message. So throughout the period we would do that kind of work".⁴⁶

Prema was detained in November 1981 under the Internal Security Act, and subjected to beatings and torture. He was brought to court after several months and sentenced on 1 April 1982, to three years' imprisonment (two years suspended) on the charge of harbouring an escaped convict.⁴⁷ He shouted "Amandla" and gave the salute of the freedom movement as the sentence was passed and his wife, Kamala, told the press she was proud of her husband.

Prema was detained again when a State of Emergency was declared in 1985.

In his evidence on 21 July 1997 to a special hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on prisons, he said:

"I was arrested for the first time in my house in Lenasia at 5 a.m. on the 27th of November 1981. I was in perfect health physically and mentally. The security police did not tell me where they were taking me, all they said was, "pack your bag", and I was taken to John Vorster Square for questioning.

"I was in solitary for three months and during that period I was badly tortured and my health was severely damaged. I lost the hearing of my left ear, until today I still wear a hearing aid as I lost 75% of my hearing in my ear. When I was beaten on my right ear my ear rang, I've still got a buzzing sound in my ear since then. Within hours of my being detained a Major Abrie grabbed me and smacked me, he beat me up, banged my head on the desk and he said to me that I must give him the names of people who belonged to the Internal Reconstruction and Development Department of the ANC or I would die. I told him I had nothing to do with that department. He made me sit in the corner for a few hours and he then took me to the cell...

"I was left in my cell the Saturday and Sunday and on Monday morning my interrogation began. They handcuffed my wrist to my ankle and I was told to remain like that and I was asked questions such as, who were the other people who were members of IRDD. The person who handcuffed me, my wrist to my ankle was Warrant Officer Smith. He then placed a plastic bag and proceeded to question me and each time I gave the same answer he punched and kicked me.

⁴⁶ From Prema's interview to South African Democracy Education Trust in *South Africans Telling Their Stories*.

⁴⁷ Stephen Lee, Timothy Jenkins and Alexandre Moumbaris - three white political prisoners - had managed to escape from the Pretoria maximum security prison in 1979. Prema was accused of finding a place for Stephen Lee during his escape, at the request of their mutual friend, Shirish Nanbhai.

At lunch time the bag and handcuffs were removed and I was given soup and bread. Immediately after lunch the handcuffs were put back onto my wrist and ankle and the questioning and punching started again. After about two hours the cuffs were removed and Warrant Officer Smith made me squat and do pushup exercises on the floor. This routine followed the next day.

That afternoon late a policeman by the name of Prins came into the room and without saying anything, my wrist was still handcuffed to my ankle, he pushed me down onto the floor and put his foot on the cuffs which dug into my ankle and with a little piece of stick which had a key on it, he beat me onto the soles of my feet. This continued for some time.

“After that the cuffs were removed and I was asked to hold a chair above my head kneeling and the questioning continued. This kind of interrogation continued for the next two days at John Vorster Square...

“The next morning I was taken to Vereeniging Police Station. At Vereeniging Police Station I was interrogated continually for six days and six nights in teams...

“On the sixth day of my interrogation I began to fall asleep on my feet and I had a dream and I began to talk about my involvement in harbouring and assisting in the escape from the country of Steven Lee. I began to talk...

“It was probably the worst period of my life because I had broken and I had given names, I really felt ashamed that I had done that. There were two electric wires that were sticking out of the ceiling and I was thinking how to get there because of what I’d thought I’d done, I’d given names of comrades who trusted and worked with me but those wires were too high. I was then left in the cell for a few days and one morning I was taken from my cell and I was chained, leg irons and handcuffed and taken to John Vorster Square...

“They took me to the tenth floor, they took me to a room and there must have been about ten security policemen in the room, I was still handcuffed and chained. They then brought my wife into the room, they were abusive to my wife and to me and they told my wife if she said anything other than personal matters, they would detain her and lock her up. That meeting lasted for about five minutes, it was the first time that I’d seen a family member.

“They then took me back to Vereeniging Police Station...

“I was sentenced to eighteen months for harbouring and assisting in the leaving of the country of Stephen Lee.”

He requested the Truth Commission to investigate the documents and other treasured possessions which were taken away from their families over the years. Some were telegrams after the death of his grandfather Thambi Naidoo.

Prema has been a Councillor of the City of Johannesburg since the democratic elections of 1994.

KUBEN NAIDOO

When Prema and others were detained in 1981, the South African press published a photograph of his ten-year-old son, Kuben, holding up a banner outside the magistrate's court in Johannesburg calling for the release of all detainees. It quoted him as proclaiming:

“I feel proud to be doing it for the struggle and I am not scared”.

Kuben, later a leading member of Lenasia Students' Union, was detained in October 1988, shortly before the municipal elections which were boycotted by the people. Hundreds of high school students boycotted classes in protest against his detention. He was held for two weeks and assaulted in prison. He had to write his matric examinations in prison.⁴⁸

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