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## **“We Shall Resist” The Role of Indian Women in the Passive Resistance Campaign 1946-1948**

By

Kalpana Hiralal

The passive resistance movement of 1946-48 is well documented. Yet, in the vast corpus of historical literature the role of women as a viable political constituency has not been fully examined. Most accounts of women's role are descriptive, not critical or analytical. They do not examine either the motives or the implications of this upsurge of political activity by women of all classes. The dominance of elite perspectives can be demonstrated by the accounts of historians to link women's participation with reform movements ignoring the large number of women from the working class, or the housewives, mostly mothers and wives - who provided direct and indirect support. However, there are exceptions: For example D.Chetty in, "Sammy" and "Mary" go to gaol: Indian Women and South African politics in the 1940s. Here some attempt has been made to examine women's role in participatory politics and their level of politicisation.<sup>[1]</sup> This paper addresses three issues: Firstly, it examines the socio-economic events and developments of the 1930s and 1940s and ways in which this aided in the politicisation of Indian women. Secondly, it traces and analyses the nature of women's participation in the movement and raises several questions in the process: How did participation affect women's families and the women as individuals? What were the social strata of women in each region? Who attended to their familial responsibilities when women were imprisoned? What were the regional patterns in women's participation? Thirdly, it examines to what extent did political participation aid women's liberation? What was the relationship between the movement's ideology and women's issues? Did women participate only in the defiance of discriminatory laws or also for women's freedom? Was it successful in challenging the gender hierarchy in Indian society?<sup>[2]</sup>

Indian women have been active in South African politics since the launch of the 1913 passive resistance campaign. A number of women, both Tamil and Telegu speaking Hindus and Gujarati speaking Hindus and Muslims played a crucial role in mobilizing support, defying discriminatory laws and serving prison sentences. Among the prominent women were Miss Valliamah Naidoo, Mrs Thumbi Naidoo, Mrs N.Pillay and Mrs Bhavani Dayal.<sup>[3]</sup> Though the participation of women in the 1913 campaign to some extent set the precedent for later years, in the aftermath of the movement it did not lead to long-term political mobilization of women. This can be largely explained in terms of the social pressures, which confined women to a subordinate

position within the family, which prevented them from engaging in sustained political activity. Women's primary role was to be a good wife and mother and in most families any attempt to deviate from these norms was met with resistance. Prejudice from within the Indian community against women participating in any form of activity outside the home was deeply entrenched. According to Walker, in 1913 because women were acting in defence of their religion and their domestic role, their participation was condoned, even encouraged.<sup>[4]</sup> Political activity largely became the domain of men.

In the post war period, very few women entered wage employment. Women's only activity at organization and management position outside the home, was centred around cultural and charitable work. Among them were the Friends of the Sick Association (FOSA) of which Dr Kesavaloo Goonam, an active member of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) (the first Indian woman to qualify as a medical doctor) and Gadija Christopher (wife of Advocate Albert Christopher) were actively involved. Other institutions and organizations that women were involved in were Child Care, Red Cross, Cripple Care, Race Relations and the Benevolent Society. There were other forms of organizations based at communal level, for example the Gujarati Mahila Mandal (Women's association) which largely catered for the needs of ethnic groups stratified along caste linguistic and religious lines.<sup>[5]</sup> Indian women were active in other organizations in the 1930s but were largely reformist or apolitical in character. An Indian Women's Reading and Educational circle was started in 1936 and by the early forties was known primarily to be concerned with feeding needy children. Another Indian Women's Club made clothes for needy charities.<sup>[6]</sup>

The problems of mobilising Indian women - isolated, poorly educated, and almost totally dependent on the network of their families for both social and economic support - were still very large. However by the beginning of the 1940s, confronted by events and new developments, the first signs of political activity among a small, privileged segment of Indian society could be discerned. Two organizations, the Left Book Club (LBC) and the Liberal Study Group (LSG) offered young intellectuals a platform to discuss issues of topical interest and engage in political debate. Its members were predominantly trade unionists and communist party supporters.

### ***Impact of the Second World War***

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 had important economic and social and political ramifications for South Africa. South Africa's total dependence from mining and agriculture to manufacturing created boom conditions for the economy. Despite this, most workers, mainly blacks, men and women, derived no benefits in the form of higher wages or cheaper consumer goods. The war had unleashed an upward spiral in the cost of living that further depressed the standard of living of workers and peasants. The cost of staple foods rose by 91 per cent between 1939 and 1944.<sup>[7]</sup> The price of basic foodstuffs more than trebled in comparison with prices in 1938 and 1948, rice from 2/7d to 7/9 per lb, tea, 25/7d to 50/7d per lb, eggs, 21/7d to 37/-d per doz and jam 5/5d to 17/3d per lb. The situation was further worsened by the

dislocations in the marketing and supply system, which led to periodic shortages of basic foods in the shops. Black marketeering also contributed to the problems by causing artificial shortages and pushing up prices of food still further.<sup>[8]</sup>

The vast majority of Indians in Durban in the late 1930s and 1940s became part of the urban proletariat and were engaged primarily in commerce and industry. Very few women worked outside their homes or in wage labour. Those economically active were self-employed as hawkers and market gardeners. These were poorly compensated occupations and placed them at the bottom of the economic structure. They were predominantly Tamil and Hindi speaking Hindus and led a very depressed life. Continuous rent increases and restrictions on areas that they could trade made it very difficult for them to survive economically. Many lived below the poverty line. Income from these occupations was insufficient to support the family and many women were forced to seek outside work engaging in hoeing and watering. Some families occasionally used child labour to supplement their income.<sup>[9]</sup> The seriousness of this situation on the Indian working class families can be understood in terms of the level of poverty noted among Indians during the war years. This seriously had a negative impact on the community, especially women. Unemployment, shortage of housing and low wages was a feature of Indian life in Natal during the war years. In 1948 a government body, the Social and Economic Planning Council produced a report, which looked at the degree of urban poverty for the total population. The poverty datum line (PDL) report found that 70.6% of Indians in Durban were living below the poverty datum line and that 40% were destitute.<sup>[10]</sup> Dr Goonam, a prominent activist in the campaign described the depth of poverty amongst the Indian community quite vividly in her autobiography, *Coolie Doctor*:

“During my home visits, I discovered the depth of Indian poverty. The staple diet was mealie rice, dholl, herbs, potatoes and pickles. Protein was sadly lacking, meat, fish and chicken being beyond their reach. I enjoyed the visits, but felt helpless against the poverty.....”<sup>[11]</sup>

Thus the rising cost of living, periodic food shortages, and high levels of poverty as well as the urban housing crisis, seriously affected working class women, since they were most immediately involved in the nurturing and feeding of their families. As wives and mothers, and their general economic insecurity they could not ignore the socio-economic and political crisis of the time. The issues affecting them centred on home issues and many women were inevitably drawn into protest movements. According to Walker, it was the most important area in which women were active at the time.<sup>[12]</sup>

### **The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA)**

The CPSA was also another influence on the political organization of women during this period. Sisters Fatima and Rahima Seedat, Dr Goonam, Mrs Cissy Gool and Mrs Rahima Ally, all prominent activists in the passive resistance movement came of age in a political era heavily influenced by communist's party members. Among them were Ray Alexander, Hilda Watts, Jack Simons and Dora Tamana and activists such as Mrs Cissy Gool.<sup>[13]</sup> Their influence led to an interest in politics. They attended

party meetings, and later worked on the electoral campaigns of various Communist candidates for local government. Fatima Seedat joined the Communist party in 1945. Communist ideals and the Soviet Union, also appealed to young women activists. The ideals of gender equality, universal franchise, and the party's recognition of the need to mobilize women on the political front appealed to youths such as Dr Goonam, Fatima and Rahima Seedat, Rahima Ally and others. Soviet ideas of womanhood as popularised by the party also began to gain recognition. According to Chetty they valorised motherhood and child bearing as personified in the image of the 'national mother'. These ideals were certain to play a part in Fatima's conceptions of her own identity. She was proud to be the mother of nine children.<sup>[14]</sup> Sisters Amina Cachalia and Zeinub Asvat were also prominent activists in the passive resistance movement. Zeinub was a member of the Indian Youth Congress and during her senior primary years was introduced to communist ideals and philosophy by her teacher, Mervyn Thandry, who was a member of the CPSA.

The CPSA was also alert to the significance of the wartime grassroots campaigns and protests. During the war the rising cost of living became a particular important issue whereby the CPSA tried to organize women. In June 1946, one thousand Indian women demonstrators, led by the Communist Party engaged in protest marches. Two thousand women boycotted a government depot in Mayville, in the city of Durban, in opposition to the distribution system and lack of supplies. The Mayville branch of the CPSA, was asked for assistance and promptly agreed to lead a march to the Food Controllers Office. The CPSA also organized a major demonstration against black marketing in Durban. Four thousand demonstrators gathered in the Market Square, with Indian women in the majority.<sup>[15]</sup>

## **Trade Unions**

The influence of trade union activity served as a politicising agent on Indian women. By the 1940s a small percentage of women, predominantly Hindi and Tamil speaking women entered wage labour. They were mainly employed in the clothing and textiles industry and the food industry. The unions were important in that it opened up opportunities for political training. In the 1940s certain trade unions played a very important part in nurturing and directing the course of women's movement. They dealt predominantly with working-class women, who up until this time, had been virtually excluded from political organizations. The unions introduced women to new techniques and concepts of organization and management. Women later rose to leadership positions and were drawn into the wider political movement.<sup>[16]</sup> For example Rahima and Fatima Seedat entered politics through their jobs with the Food and Canning industry after school.<sup>[17]</sup> In the early forties there was a major strike at the Durban Iron Falkirk Works. H.A.Naidoo, active in the Communist Party and a trade unionist enlisted the support of Dr Goonam and successfully, mediated together with the NIC, and extracted concessions for Indian workers. Dr Goonam actively supported the trade union movement.<sup>[18]</sup> During trade union disputes, Goonam was appointed medical attendant to the striker's families, and clearly understood the plight of union workers.<sup>[19]</sup>

India's struggle for independence and the courageous efforts of women in the movement had a huge impact on Indian women in South Africa. In fact as early as August 1942, in response to the situation in India, a meeting was convened by 13 women to protest against the arrest of Indian nationalists. Dr Goonam and Mrs Marie Naicker, wife of Dr Monty Naicker addressed the meeting. They were concerned particularly with the arrest of Kasturba Gandhi, Sarojnini Naidu, Vijayaluxmi Pandit and Mira Bhen. These women served as role models for activists such as Zainub Asvat, Dr Goonam and Zohra Bhayat. <sup>[20]</sup>

The South African Indian Congress during the war also paved the way for the entry of Indian women into politics. The NIC, the political organ of the Indian community in Natal, was by the late 1930s primarily controlled by the Indian elite, more representative of the commercial class than the working class. This group had accumulated real estate and privileges within the segregatory framework and their main concern was to protect those privileges. <sup>[21]</sup> It was in this claustrophobic political environment, that the LSG was established. Dr Goonam became the best known Indian member. Indian women were in the minority in the Group which did however include in its ranks a number of white women activists with whom Goonam was closely associated. The former were either trade unionists or members of the Communist party. Among them were Fay King Goldie, Vera Alberts, Sarah Rubin and Pauline Podberry. <sup>[22]</sup> The LSG requires closer examination. It played a very vital role in shaping women's political consciousness and policies of those who took over the leadership of the NIC after 1945. The Group met periodically and was active in organising debates on topics of contemporary interest such as capitalism, imperialism etc. Goonam lectured at the inaugural meeting. The LSG also gave rise to bodies such as the Women's Liberal Group (WLG) and the Durban and District Women's League and the Women's Class. At the inaugural meeting of the WLG, Goonam raised issues concerning secondary education for women, the status of women in the community and the greater need for unity among women across racial lines. The inauguration of these women's bodies marked a new era of female participation in the Indian Congress. The Group composed of radical students, young lawyers, doctors and trade unionists. Many of them were also members of the NIC, but intensely critical of the leadership and they awaited the opportunity to reform that organization. As the Second world war progressed the conditions of the Indian people worsened. Anti-Indianism also intensified. Faced with an acute land and housing shortage, some Indians rented and purchased property in areas that had become traditionally white. The NIC became defensive and advocated a system of voluntary segregation. Thus the radicals within the LSG formed the Anti—Segregation Council and fought the existing leadership. The struggle for leadership resulted in victory for the radicals, in both the Transvaal and Natal congresses. However during the first elections of the newly formed NIC, Dr Goonam took to the platform on numerous occasions. There was a large presence of women at election rallies, but women did not exercise their voting rights as the NIC's constitution had denied that right to women. At the very first meeting of the new NIC executive an urgent amendment was made to the archaic constitution whereby women were given full membership on equal basis with

men. This significant change opened the doors for women to engage in political activity. Thus the position of women within the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) and the NIC was augmented. Dr Goonam was one of the leading women activists within the NIC. By 1946, Goonam was elected vice-president of the NIC. In October 1946 three women were elected to the TIC executive committee, the first time women had ever held senior posts. One of them was Zeinub Asvat, the other two were Mrs P.K. Naidoo and Mrs Suriakala Patel.<sup>[23]</sup>

The passive resistance movement of 1946-48 involved women from differing socio-economic, religious and linguistic groups. The women who assumed leadership roles – in most instances- were educated, wealthy, came from politically active families and were victims of racial and sexual discrimination. They were in the main predominantly Gujarati speaking Hindus and Muslims. For example, Fatima and Rahima Seedat were born into an Urdu speaking Muslim family of Cape Town. Her father was a trader and her mother a housewife. Both sisters received formal education and their father encouraged them to seek employment.<sup>[24]</sup> Dr Goonam, was the first Indian women medical doctor of the time. Dr Goonam's family was based in Durban. Her father grew betel leaves and fresh produce. He sold his produce through various businesses in Grey Street, the hub of the Indian commercial area. Both her parents were of Tamil descent and Goonam in her autobiography *Coolie Doctor* attributes much of her spirit and success to her mothers influence. Her mother attended mission school and then continued to educate herself through informal means at home. This informal education consisting of political and social commentary, came from the Indian print media in the vernacular. The influence spread to her children who were aware of contemporary developments like Gandhi's return to India and the emergence of Sarojini Naidu, and of their Indian heritage. Goonam went to Edinburg for a career in medicine.<sup>[25]</sup> After having qualified as a doctor, she returned to South Africa only to be confronted with the politics of segregation when applying to work in various hospitals who refused her permission: "During the first three years of my practice, I was busy but suffered tremendous disadvantages being Black.....I applied to the black hospital, King Edward VIII for a post. I thought my chances were good since I was working at the Clearing Station relieving the hospital. Young white doctors recently out of medical school were being appointed to work in the black hospitals, as well as being taken on as Interns at the white hospitals, My application was turned down. The official reply explained "the policy of the country is that non-European doctors could not be admitted to Government hospitals as white nurses would not be prepared to take orders from black doctors!"<sup>[26]</sup>

Goonam's political activity and consciousness also stemmed from her own family's experience of racial discrimination. During the outbreak of the second world war, the Durban City Council gave the family notice of its intention to expropriate the family home which was situated in Umgeni hill, to make way for white housing. Goonam's mother made several pleas to the Council to no avail. Reverend Satchell of the St Aiden's Mission called a protest meeting against the expropriations. It was during this meeting that Goonam took to the platform and made her maiden speech. Thereafter she joined the neighbourhood in a march from Grey street to the city hall in protest

against the racial act. It was to no avail. The family home was eventually bulldozed. Goonam expresses her anger and heartache at what happened:

“We were robbed of our birthright, our happiness, our peace of mind, I felt I could take it no longer. I had not realised the full scope of calamities that could overtake a people simply on account of their blackness.”<sup>[271]</sup>

Zeinub Asvat, was also a medical student who at the time of her involvement was a third year medical student at the University of Witwaterand. Her father, a merchant, EI Asvat was an activist from Gandhi’s era, He was chairman of the Transvaal British Indian Association (forerunner to the Transvaal Indian Congress) and active in protest politics. Thus, as an Asvat there was a predisposition towards political activism. Her father had spent many hours with his children teaching them about Gandhi and passive resistance. She accompanied him to many political meetings and became fully conversant with the political situation in the country.

The act which sparked off the Passive Resistance movement was the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act 1946. This measure was applicable in the Transvaal and Natal. The Act consisted of two parts, dealing with land tenure and political rights. The first part of the act created two areas: Controlled and Uncontrolled. In the former Indians were restricted from making land purchases. In the Uncontrolled areas Indians were free to occupy and purchase land. These areas, in any event were predominantly Indian. Because of these provisions the Bill was dubbed the “Ghetto Act”. The Act was rejected by the NIC and TIC and they mobilized support and embarked on passive resistance.<sup>[281]</sup>

### **Passive Resistance begins**

Resistance took several forms. This involved defying of provincial barriers, occupation of municipal lands, trading, and hawking without licences. The aim of the campaign was to engage in passive resistance without the use of force and violence. Participation was on a voluntary basis.<sup>[291]</sup> Approximately 2000 people participated in the campaign, 300 were women. These women engaged in a multiplicity of jobs. A closer examination of the statistical report produced by the NIC on the occupational status of 1,744 resisters between 13 June 1946 to 13 May 1947, gives some insight into the economic status of women resisters: 233 were housewives, 13 dressmakers, 28 college students (boys and girls), 20 hawkers, 11 hairdressers, 16 machinists, 2 medical students, and 1 nurse.<sup>[301]</sup> In Natal, majority of the women resisters were predominantly Tamil and Telegu – speaking Hindus, mainly descendants of indentured labourers from South India. Clairwood, Merebank, Wentworth, Isipingo, Seaview, Bellair, Tongaat, Stanger, Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg were key areas for mobilisation and support. Very few Muslim women in Natal participated in the campaign. Their ages varied between 18 and 35. In the Transvaal, the Indian population was comparatively small and composed primarily of wealthy Muslim merchants. Thus the base of women’s support came primarily from the educated, wealthy and politically active families. They were predominantly Gujararti-speaking Hindus and Muslims.. Among the notable women were Miss Zainub Ebrahim Asvat, Mrs Amina Pahad, Miss Zohra Bhayat, Mrs Zubeida Patel, Miss Z.Badat, Mrs R.Jinn,

Miss Manibhen Nana, (who was the daughter of Mr Nana Sita, an active member of the Transvaal Resistance Council)<sup>[31]</sup>

The main resistance areas were Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Women were at the forefront of the struggle. Dr Goonam, together with Suriakala Patel, and other members of the NIC travelled extensively throughout Natal Midlands to canvass support for the movement and encouraged women to participate. She addressed platforms, citing the brave deeds of women in India and their role in the freedom struggle, the suffrage movement in Britain and closer home the African women's militant stand in the Industrial Council of Workers (ICU) under the leadership of Clements Kadalie.<sup>[32]</sup> In 1946 a Women's Action Committee was established. The Committee's primary aim was to raise funds and recruit support. Mrs Rathamoney Padyachee, a Tamil speaking Hindu was elected as secretary of the Women's Action Committee. Janaki Naidoo (a relative of Goonam) and Dr Ansuya Singh, both Hindus, from Natal, together with Padyachee and Goonam were the only four women to take up executive positions in the NIC. Naidoo was elected in October 1946 and was previously involved in the All India Congress Women's Association.<sup>[33]</sup> Nevertheless, the Committee organized fairs, dances, banquets, and beauty contests to raise funds. However, primary donations came largely from the merchants and professionals.<sup>[34]</sup> Committee branches were also set up in various Indian neighbourhoods to raise funds. In June 1947, the Bellair Women's Action Committee, organized a bazaar which collected and sold goods to the public. A sum of \$175 was collected during the fair.<sup>[35]</sup> Women resisters also distributed passive resistance leaflets and literature to help educate and inform the community about the course of events and to recruit new volunteers.<sup>[36]</sup> Festive and religious occasions were also opportune moments to canvass support. Moreover, the likes of Asvat and Goonam, young vibrant and enthusiastic activists, served as a role model to young women with similar aspirations.

In addition women volunteers like Asvat, Pather, Bhayat and Goonam regularly addressed women's meetings throughout Natal and the Transvaal. Speeches were made in Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Urdu and Telegu, since the vast majority were non-English speakers and fluent only in the vernacular languages. Thus, reflecting the extent to which the use of English as the medium of politics was very much a sign of modernity, education and a new form of political discourse. That discourse in turn described and reflected the emergence of a new political community.<sup>[37]</sup>

As in 1913, it was the women from the Transvaal who were among the first group of individuals to engage in acts of defiance. The first laws broken were the inter-provincial restrictions between Natal and the Transvaal when six women boarded the fast mail in June 1946 and arrived in Durban without permits. They were Mrs Meenatchie Sigamoney Nayagar, treasurer of the Indian Women's Service, Pretoria; Miss Zohra Bhayat (housewife) of the Transvaal Indian Volunteer Corps; Miss Zainab Asvat, a twenty-one year medical student from the University of Witwatersrand, who suspended her studies to actively participate in the movement, she was also chairman of the Indian Youth volunteer Corps of Johannesburg; Mrs

Amina Pahad (housewife), Johannesburg; Miss Zubeida Patel (housewife) and Mrs Chella Pillay also of Johannesburg. All were members of the Transvaal Indian Volunteer Corps, Women's Branch.

The Transvaal women were also among the first group of women to defy the Ghetto Act. Seventeen resisters comprising of six women, four Gujarati speaking Muslims and two Tamilians defied the Ghetto Act. Among them Asvat, Patel, Pahad, Bhayat, Mrs Lutchmee Govender (housewife) and Mrs Veerama Pather. Pather was a grandmother, sixty years old, who had participated with Gandhi in the 1913 resistance movement. Of the six, four were housewives. Women took up residence in tents which had been pitched on a piece of municipal land at the intersection of Umbilo Road and Gale street, about forty minutes walking distance from the city centre. A huge banner was also raised which read "*We shall Resist*". Not long thereafter the resisters were asked to leave but refused and were subsequently arrested. The imprisonment of the first batch of volunteers was followed by a second, lead by M.D.Naidoo, member of the NIC executive. However, the group comprising of 11 men and nine women, were attacked by approximately 100 white youths who tried to remove the tents. Three women, Asvat, Pahad and Pather sustained injury during the attack. After the raid, Dr Monty Naicker, chairman of the NIC, concerned about the safety of the women resisters asked them to leave. But the women were defiant.<sup>[38]</sup> Asvat reporting to the Passive Resistance Council on the raid by the white youths stated:

"We are in it now and we shall face it to the bitter end, no matter what happens. You have heard of what has happened, but this makes us all the more determined to carry on, and we shall carry on. If sacrifice we must, then sacrifice we shall, no matter what happens."<sup>[39]</sup>

A closer examination of the speeches made by Asvat, Goonam, Bhayat, and interviews conducted with participants, indicate that women felt justified in their actions and were committed to the struggle. Given the varied socio-economic status of women resisters, the nature of impact on families differed. Of the 300 women who participated, 233 were housewives, juggling roles between a mother, wife and activist. Fatima Seedat in 1945 married Dawood Seedat, a communist and trade unionist. She was pregnant with her first child at the start of the campaign. To her it seemed imperative to have her baby in jail while resisting. Fatima was fortunate to have the support of Dawood's parents who allowed her to be away from her usual responsibilities. Her in-laws support of Dawood's political career was extended to her. When her daughter was four months, Fatima purposely weaned her off the breast and courted arrest. For her, this was a necessary sacrifice. For many working class women, the absence of familial and financial support made their position a difficult one. For example, Salachie Khan, gave up her factory job as a machinist, earning £3 6s, as a volunteer, for the campaign. She had one daughter whom she entrusted to her sister during her activities and imprisonment. For many working class women there was no convenient care for their children when they were campaigning.<sup>[40]</sup>

## **Women in Prison**

Between 13 June 1946 to 13 May 1947, a total of 1 710 individuals, of whom 279 were women, served jail sentences, some as many as four times.<sup>[41]</sup> The largest number of resisters, 1,175, were between the ages of 20-25 years. Women were imprisoned in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Conditions were deplorable. Goonam and Asvat regularly challenged the prison authorities on the verbal and physical abuse meted out to women prisoners. Women were stripped and searched and made to walk naked in the courtyard. Women had to contend with poor sanitary facilities. They were provided with a small latrine bucket with no lid or sanitary paper. In addition there was no cleanliness in the preparation of the meals and the food dishes were always dirty.<sup>[42]</sup> Despite these conditions, prison sentences were a trial these women felt they had to endure and overcome.

Despite women's sterling contribution in the movement, it did not envisage any radical rearrangement of male and female roles. In the post 1948 period, the vast majority of women returned to their traditional roles as wives and mothers. No attempt was made by the NIC or the TIC to sustain the political momentum of 1946. Amina Cachalia, one of the most prominent women in Indian politics and who was to play an active role within the Federation of South African Women after 1954, tried to establish a self-help society among Indian women in Johannesburg. Attempts to start the organization met with numerous problems, an indication of how resistant the Indian community was to anything that challenged the supremacy of women's filial duty. For many, within the Indian community, women's political participation was an extension of their familial roles. For the women concerned, participation did not mark a serious departure from their own orthodox view of women's role in general. The image of the sacrificing and forgiving woman remained the ultimate ideal. Women had not yet begun to question the basis of their role or status as individuals. Participation generated in them a very limited degree of awareness of these issues. Women participated within the framework of their traditional roles and with the consent of their male relatives. To a very large extent they were tradition bound. The influence and effect of their participation was very temporary on their overall status.<sup>[43]</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

The participation of Indian women in the passive resistance movement is all the more remarkable in view of the strict social restrictions placed on women at the time. Societal norms and values did not permit free spatial mobility – women's movement were restricted, irrespective of age. To participate in processions, address mass meetings, lead volunteers would have been unthinkable. However, it is also evident that women at leadership levels came from enlightened and politically active families and were supported and encouraged by their fathers and husband's to enter the movement. Even though participation did not alter the gender hierarchy in Indian society, their commitment, courage and determination must not be under-estimated.

They established an important legacy for Indian women in politics in later years, and made a valuable contribution to the struggles of all South African women.<sup>[44]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> D.Chetty, ‘“Sammy” and “Mary” go to goal: Indian Women and South African politics in the 1940s’, unpublished paper presented at the Women and Gender in Southern Africa conference, University of Natal, 1991; L.Kasturi and V.Mazumdar (eds), *Women and Indian Nationalism* (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994).

<sup>[2]</sup> Kasturi and Mazumdar, *Women and Indian Nationalism*, pp.xxvi-xxxi.

<sup>[3]</sup> K.Hiralal, *Women and Resistance in South Africa: A Case Study of the 1913 Passive Resistance Campaign in Natal*, unpublished paper presented at the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual conference, African Studies Association, Washington, DC, USA, 5-8 December 2002, p.13.

<sup>[4]</sup> C.Walker, *Women and Resistance in south Africa*, (David Phillip Publishers, London 1982), pp.105-6.

<sup>[5]</sup> Chetty, *Indian Women and South African Politics*, pp.3-4

<sup>[6]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[7]</sup> Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, pp.69-71.

<sup>[8]</sup> Ibid; R.E.Lapchick and S.Urdang, *Oppression and Resistance – The Struggle of Women in Southern Africa* (Greenwood Press, London, 1982), p.67; Interview, Dr Phyllis Naidoo, 5 August 2003.

<sup>[9]</sup> *African Chronicle* 22 August 1908; *Natal Advertiser* 29 September 1929; Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg, Durban Mayor’s Minutes, Extracts of Town Council Meeting 3 December 1936, 3/376, 4/1/3/1738; Letter from Frank Acutt to Town Clerk 9 September 1921, 4/1/2/241. 15/53; Chief Constable to City and Water Engineer, 27 July 1948, 35/237G; Chief Constable to General Purposes Committee, 8 August 1927, 4/1/2/185, 25/376.

<sup>[10]</sup> Walker, *Women and Resistance*, pp.71-72; F.Ginwala, *Class, Consciousness and Control – Indian South Africans 1860-1946*, unpublished Phd thesis, Oxford University, 1974.

<sup>[11]</sup> Dr Goonam, *Coolie Doctor – An Autobiography* (Madiba Publishers, Durban , 1991), p.60.

<sup>[12]</sup> Walker, *Women and Resistance*, pp.74-75.

<sup>[13]</sup> Ibid, pp.54-55.

<sup>[14]</sup> Chetty, *Indian Women and South African Politics*, pp.7-8.

<sup>[15]</sup> Walker, *Women and Resistance*, pp.99-101; Chetty, *Indian Women and South African Politics*, p.9.

<sup>[16]</sup> Ibid, p.57

- [17] Ibid.
- [18] Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, p.100
- [19] Ibid, p.59.
- [20] Chetty, *Indian Women and South African Indian Politics*, p.14; Dr Monty Naicker was chairman of the NIC in 1946.
- [21] Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, p.99; K.Hiralal, *Indian Family Businesses in the Natal Economy 1890-1950*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Natal 2001, pp.123-125.
- [22] Chetty, *Indian Women and South African Indian Politics*, p.14.
- [23] Ibid. Walker, *Women and Resistance*, p.111; Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, pp.100-101; S.Bhana, *Gandhi's Legacy, The Natal Indian Congress 1894-1994* (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1997), pp.57-63.
- [24] Chetty, *Indian Women and South African Indian Politics*, p.7; Interview, Dr Phyllis Naidoo, 5 August 2003.
- [25] Ibid, p.11-12
- [26] Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, p.60.
- [27] Ibid, p.70.
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