



TRAVAILS & TRIBULATIONS OF SAROJINI NAIDU OVER THE QUESTION OF INDIAN INDENTURED LABOUR IN SOUTH AND EAST AFRICA –A STUDY

Shaik Sunni

Research Scholar, Department of History, S.K. University, Anantapuramu.

Abstract

Sarojini Naidu, one of the foremost freedom fighters of the country, apart from striving for Indian independence, also waged a relentless struggle against the problem of Indian indentured labour in South Africa and East Africa. She was very much perturbed about the hassles and the problems that were being faced by the Indians in both South Africa and East Africa ever since Mahatma Gandhi paid a visit to those countries. She also made endeavors to mobilize not only the Indian settlers in the African countries but also the Colored of the South Africa and East Africa to ponder over the issue of indentured labor. She left no stone unturned to get abolished the problem of indentured labor that was being faced the Indians for a long time in South and East Africa. The present research study throws light on the preponderant role played by Sarojini Naidu with regard to the issues pertaining to the Indian settlers in South Africa and East Africa.

Key Words: *Indentured Labour, Colored people of South Africa, South Africa, East Africa, Class Area bill, Nightingale of India.*

Sarojini Naidu, born on 13 February, 1879, was an Indian political freedom fighter and a political activist. Besides that, she was also a renowned poet which had earned her a sobriquet, “the Nightingale of India”. She was called the ‘Bharat kokila ’ by Mahatma Gandhi for her lyrical, imagery and colorful poetry. It is worthy of mention that Sarojini Naidu made relentless and ceaseless efforts for the betterment of Indians not only within the country but also for those living overseas. She was very much worried and perturbed about the hassles and the problems that were being faced by the Indians in both South Africa and East Africa ever since Mahatma Gandhi paid a visit to those countries.¹ She also made endeavors to mobilize not only the Indian settlers in the African countries but also the Colored of the South Africa and East Africa to ponder over the issue of indentured labor. She spoke to them at length on some of the burning issues of the day like equal treatment for all, abolition of Class Area Bill, education for Indians, equal treatment for Indians and establishment of a university for Indians etc. It was in the year 1860 that indentured labor took its form in South Africa. As the Negroes in South Africa expressed their reluctance to work, the laborers from India were sent across the seas to South Africa to be employed as workers in coffee, tea and sugar plantations. These Indian laborers were employed for a time slot of five years. These laborers were treated as serfs during this time. Some of them stayed back, at times and worked as free workingmen for five extra years. It was incumbent upon the contractor to pay the travel fare for these laborers when they wished to return to India. The practice however was that most of the laborers settled down in South Africa itself. The White population of South Africa was very much perturbed and disturbed by the growing number of Indians in the country. As a result, the Whites of the country thought it safe to alter and tighten the rules of immigration further.¹ between the years 1860 and 1911 around 150000 indentured Indian laborers arrived in Natal. They were subsequently followed by further migrants from the year 1870.² though, as per the terms of contract, the indentured laborers were expected to return to India after the end of the contract period of five years, most of them stayed back in South Africa and were working as free workers. These laborers were made to pay an annual tax of 3 pounds for himself and for each of his dependent family members



so that he could remain in South Africa and worked as a free working man. This tax was highly exorbitant for the workers and most of them felt that returning to India was the only alternative left for them. Meanwhile, a number of free men from India visited South Africa with regard to trade or some other occupation like Mahatma Gandhi himself.³

Mahatma Gandhi's visit to South Africa

The Act of 1884 which was passed in South Africa had many negative repercussions for Indians in particular and Asians in general. According to the Act, many laws were passed which disenfranchised the Asians from the Natal legislature. Indians were treated as sub-humans and were ordered to carry passes if they roamed on the streets after 9 PM. In some States, the Indian laborers were prohibited to carry on farming. For the sake of residence permit, Indians were made to pay a tax of 3 pounds in Transvaal. Even then the Indians were allowed to live only in slums. They were not allowed to walk on streets in Cape Colony. On the request of an Indian merchant who was involved in a private litigation, Mahatma Gandhi visited South Africa in 1893.⁴ Mahatma Gandhi found himself to be the famous public face of Indians who were demanding for citizenship in South Africa.⁵ He discovered very soon that on the basis of race and creed, the Indians residing in South Africa were subject to all kinds of discrimination and harassment in spite of the fact that they were British subjects. He experienced this kind of discrimination when he was thrown out from the train at Pietermaritzburg in spite of the fact that he was travelling on a first-class ticket. It was a rule in the country that only Whites should be travelling in first-class compartments. It became abundantly clear to Mahatma Gandhi that Indians had absolutely no rights in South Africa.⁶

Gandhi felt that it was highly imperative to fight for equal rights for Indians in South Africa if he was aspiring for their betterment. As a result, he left no opportunity to draw the attention of the British to the humiliating treatment that was meted out to the Indians in South Africa. Mahatma Gandhi organized Indian Ambulance corps at the time of the Boer War in 1899. His intention was not only to help the British but also to make them aware about the commitment and loyalty of Indians.⁷ Apart from that, during the time of “Zulu” rebellion he also helped the British.⁸ Gandhi was with a firm belief that the help that he rendered to the British during the time of their wars in South Africa will be of great help to the Indians in future.⁹

However, the condition of the Indians further deteriorated and became awfully worse when the British won their victory over the Dutch settlers in the Boer War in 1902. As a consequence, Mahatma Gandhi, in 1906, started Satyagraha when the draft of an Act that was being made by the British rulers required Indian women, men and children over the age of 8 years to register their names with the government along with their fingerprints. If this law was ignored by the Indians, they were initially fined or imprisoned and were subsequently deported to India. The Indians in South Africa felt that it was a humiliation to them after Gandhi made them aware that this law was made to offend them, at one of the meetings at Johannesburg. As a result, the law was defied by around 3000 Indians in South Africa.¹⁰

In 1884, Mahatma Gandhi, on the lines of the Indian National Congress, formed the Natal Indian Congress which was primarily dominated by the trading community.¹¹ The Indian migrants identified themselves with the secular objectives of Natal Indian Congress. The Congress acted as a coalition of these various groups.¹²



Mahatma Gandhi, while he was in Durban, took up the challenge of resisting the Natal legislature's efforts to deny Indians their right to vote in the colony. He was staunchly supported by the merchant community that was residing there and as a result, he took the lead in fighting for the cause of Indians. In Pretoria, he explained the need to all the Indians to fight united to achieve their objectives.¹³

The Asiatic Registration Act was passed in 1907 which made it mandatory for the Indians to register their names along with the fingerprints. Many of the Indians refused to register and Mahatma Gandhi was one among them.¹⁴ After that, in 1908, about 2000 Indians threw their registration certificates or joined a passive resistance campaign in the Transvaal against the law which made it mandatory for the Indians to register their names with the government.¹⁵

Sarojini Naidu as an Emissary and Political Leader in South Africa

The problems of the indentured labor were taken up once again in the year 1923 by the Government of South Africa after much efforts of Gopalakrishna Gokhale and Mahatma Gandhi. The Class Area Bill was introduced by Sir Patrick Duncan, the Minister of Interior. ¹⁶ With an intention to segregate the Indians, very harsh laws were passed under the Bill and Indians were denied the normal human rights.

Sarojini Naidu's first visit to Kenya to preside over the East African Indian Congress

Keeping in view the existing situations in Africa, it became highly imperative for Sarojini Naidu to pay a visit to South Africa to find solutions to the problems that the Indian settlers were facing there. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi made a suggestion to Sarojini Naidu to visit South Africa to help the Indians there to resolve their problems. Sarojini Naidu, as emissary of Mahatma Gandhi, from the Indian Congress, visited Kenya on 19 January 1924 to preside over the East African Indian Congress in Mombasa.¹⁷

Sarojini Naidu was well aware of the kind of treatment that was meted out to the Indians in South Africa. She came to know of it with the help of a "white paper" that was released by the Government of South Africa which categorically denied all rights to the Indians living in South Africa. Sarojini Naidu, commenting on the "White Paper" that was released by the government stated that to be a 'black' document which denied all rights to the Indians who were living in South Africa and working for its betterment. She exhorted the Indians who were living in South Africa to rise against the injustice that was being meted out to them and told them that there was no power in South Africa that would dare to insult them through the policy of segregation. She made an urgent plea to the Indians who were living there to fight for the normal human rights and to the unity of Indian races.¹⁸ The main intention behind Sarojini Naidu paying a visit to South Africa was to help the Indians living there to resolve their problems and to assist them in the abolition of race discrimination that was being practiced against them by the white rulers of South Africa. ¹⁹

Sarojini Naidu, in her tour of three months, paid a visit to Cape Town, Johannesburg, Transvaal, Pretoria, Mombasa, Natal, Rhodesia and Durban. She was welcomed and honored by huge crowds with a lot of enthusiasm wherever she visited. People were eagerly waiting with rapt attention to listen to what she wanted to speak and they were inspired by her speeches and were ready to do her bidding.

Sarojini Naidu in Johannesburg

A newspaper in Johannesburg reported on 27 February 1924 that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the Indian nationalist had set her foot on the African continent to take up cudgels on behalf of the Indians who



were facing unmitigated suffering due the discrimination that was being practiced there. She had led a protest movement in Kenya and is on her way to Johannesburg from Lourenco Marques. She declared that General Smuts is a strong man and she is no weakling either and she has unflinching and unconditional support of her countrymen to fight for the cause of Indians in South Africa and the Class Area Bill that is being put in to implementation in South Africa is born of ignorance, arrogance and trade jealousy.²⁰

By the time Sarojini Naidu had reached South Africa, the anti-Indian agitation was gathering strength day by day. The Class Area Bill was the result of the Asiatic Commission. When compared to the 1885 law, the Class Area Bill was more draconian, destructive and inimical to the interests of the Indians who are residing in South Africa. It denied the opportunity to Asians to live in certain specific areas especially the places like Transvaal. Indians, through this new law were forced to live and trade in different locations which were created through segregation. When the bill was made and put into implementation, Gandhi was very much annoyed and he revealed in a statement that General Smuts had promised him that no anti-Indian legislation would be made in the future but he went back on his word and created the Class Area Bill with the full approval of the Imperial Government.²¹

Sarojini Naidu was deputed by Mahatma Gandhi to take up the cause of the Indians who were living in South Africa and Sarojini Naidu reached South Africa with full fervor to fight on behalf of the Indians and she was very much disturbed by the discrimination that was being practiced in South Africa. She spoke words of encouragement to the Indians residing in South Africa and spoke to them of their ultimate victory. She stated that she was standing before them with a message from all Indians that Indian nation is no longer disunited, asleep or in doubt as to its own destiny with his own borders and across the seas. She further stated that she had brought an assurance from the millions and millions of Indians that they would fight in support of the cause of Indians in South Africa. She further added that no nation, no government nor any authority, no matter how strong it is shall trample upon the birthright of equal status of individuals with impunity. She further added that the Class Area Bill would be a disaster and fatal legislation to the British Empire.²²

A great number of European and Indian people attended the meeting of Sarojini Naidu with a lot of enthusiasm. Sarojini Naidu, since then, became very popular and very famous as a woman who had come to South Africa to fight against the injustice that is inflicted on her countrymen and she would leave no stone unturned to see that the segregation laws were removed. Sarojini Naidu did not feel any kind of threat, fear or hesitation in South Africa because she knew that she was fighting for the cause of the truth she knew that no matter how tough it was she could achieve her objective.

Appeal for Indian Equality

Speaking on behalf of the Indians for equality, Sarojini Naidu delivered a speech at Pretoria where she made an earnest demand for equality of treatment for all, irrespective of the races that they belong to. The Indians in Pretoria were very much excited by the visit of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu to the city. Sarojini Naidu, speaking at a meeting which was organized there she said, “the Indians had suffered much in South Africa in the past. They thought that black past had gone and that a bright future awaits them, but today the Indian community was faced with greater difficulties than ever.”²³ She further added that the Indians were singled out as inferiors in the British Empire because of the Class Areas Bill. She said that the Indians would never ever submit to such kind of humiliating treatment. She further added that the Class Areas Bill, without giving a chance of consultation to the Indians was rushed into the “Gazette”



and it had brought about a lot of consternation among the Indians living in South Africa. Through her speeches, she made a strong appeal for granting of equal rights for everyone, be it Indians, Europeans or Africans.

Sarojini Naidu's Speech at the Town Hall (in Durban) and Appeal to Fight with Clean Hands

Sarojini Naidu, during her tour of South Africa, came to be known as a great peace maker from India. She delivered a speech on a March 1924 in the Town Hall in Durban. The hall was packed with Europeans as well as Indians. The meeting was presided by Mr. Norman and he introduced Sarojini Naidu, the visitor to South Africa, to the audience that had gathered there. Sarojini Naidu speaking on the occasion said that all humanity was interdependent of creed, race or colour and they were all the creatures of one God-the Almighty one.

She stated that Indians were the first settlers when the colony was first started in South Africa. Because of the antecedence of their presence in South Africa, they had better rights than the White man there. She was first among the Indians to highlight the rights that Indians had in South Africa. She told that when the colony was first started it was found by the White settlers that they could not use the limbs of the black man to advantage and so the Government of Natal had placed the request to the Government of India to send labor which was cheap and honest to help in building the beautiful colony. It was initially promised to them that after five years of labor, the laborers from India would become free citizens of South Africa. It was under such a promise that thousands and thousands of Indians were brought from India to Natal. Both Indian men and women strived hard for developing the country and since then the Indian progeny has grown and have become part and parcel of the South African country.

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Sarojini Naidu again at Town Hall in Durban

Sarojini Naidu, after hearing about the untiring efforts being made by General Smuts for the passage of Class Areas Bill, addressed a huge gathering of 4000 people at the Town Hall in Durban on 10th of March 1924. In her speech she again reminded the Indians present at the meeting the kind of injustice that is being heaped upon them with a storm of protest. Stating quite unequivocally she said, “she herself had no grievance of her own, but when she came to South Africa and saw that the children of the laborers who initially came to this country to make it their home and to till its soil, have lived like helots; lived like lepers of humanity, like outcasts.”²⁵

Reminding the audience of the first immigration that took place to South Africa from India and the promises that were made by the White community in order to make the laborers from India to stay back and work for the country, she criticized in no unsparing terms for not living up to the promises that were made to the Indian community in South Africa. She stated that like a river that could never flow backwards, the populations in South Africa could never be made to stand still and the different standard of living that the Indians were having in South Africa became the cynosure of the White community and they were treating these people as menace.²⁶

Sarojini Naidu, through her speeches in South Africa, made it explicitly clear that every person, irrespective of the fact, whether he's a common man or a 'coolie' should not be subjected to injustice and he shall have the power of spirit to fight against the injustice. At the meeting that was organised at the Natal Town Hall, Sarojini Naidu gave an example of the British Prime Minister Mr.Ramsay Macdonald and stated that he was a 'coolie'. Exhorting the power of a 'coolie' she told the people of



South Africa that “a coolie government” now ruled the British Empire. She was making reference to the background of the British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald who started his life as a laborer. She further added that Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Clynes and all other members of the British government were ‘coolies’. General Smuts along with other members of the British Government must take orders from a ‘coolie government’ and must implement the same. Here, we can witness not only the innate conservatism but also the caste prejudices which became quite evident between the lines of the reformer’s speech.²⁷

Sarojini Naidu was appreciated by all women without an exception whatever be their nationality. It was due to the fact that she was a woman who was working tirelessly and wholeheartedly for making the lives of the people in South Africa especially, the Indians, better. She was trying to ameliorate the sufferings of the Asians who were subjected to all kinds of discriminations in South Africa. It was very strongly believed by all the women that her visit will do the people good. It was believed by them that if Mrs. Sarojini Naidu could help them to have better appreciation and understanding of each other’s problems then they shall have gone far towards salvation. They staunchly believed that she was earnest in her thoughts and actions and her idea is to help the humanity.²⁸

Sarojini Naidu at Cape Town and Her Interview with General Smuts and Mr. Patrick Duncan, the Minister of the Interior

Sarojini Naidu always championed the equality of all, irrespective of the creeds, communities and races that they belonged to. She believed that if equality were to be preached and practised crisis would never arise in the lives of the people and there would be no reason to foster bitterness with one another. When Sarojini Naidu reached Cape Town’s railway station named Wellington, on 17 March 1924, she was surrounded by both Muslim and Hindu ladies of Indian origin. She addressed a huge gathering at the Wellington station and appealed to both the men and women folk to maintain unity and told him that she had gone to South Africa on a great mission to bring about a better and wider understanding between all the communities residing there namely, native, white, coloured and the Indian. She told them in no uncertain terms that it is only by maintaining unity that they can have a better feeling towards one another and each community then would learn to give-and-take nobly and unselfishly.²⁹

The representative of the Cape Town had a meeting with Sarojini Naidu and in the interview she had with them, she explicitly expressed wish to have a meeting arranged with General Smuts. When she was asked by the representative of the Cape Town as to how she found the conditions in Transval, Sarojini Naidu replied that the conditions of the Indians in both Natal and Transvaal were abysmally bad and deplorable. She replied in the affirmative to the question if Class Area Bill was a bad measure saying that the Class Area Bill was not only bad but was also the most unjust measure.³⁰

After the interview at Cape Town with the representative of the government, she subsequently had an interview with Mr. Patrick Duncan, the Minister of the Interior of the South African Government. Sarojini Naidu got an opportunity to lay bare her views regarding the Asiatic question and the issue of segregation that was intended to be followed by the South African Government.³¹ She said that India is no more a traditional country that stood before the government with folded hands begging for justice and fair play for her people both within the country and abroad. She further added that India of today was very particular about taking cudgels on behalf of its people for their rights and would not allow citizens to be humiliated by the dominions and subjecting her people to differential treatment which is based on considerations of race. She told that she would go to any extent to provide material and moral help to her people in the struggle for survival and self-respect. Though the Minister did not concur with



the views expressed by Sarojini Naidu, he promised said that he would place her views before the members of the Cabinet also requested her to give a patient listening to the views expressed by the Cabinet.³²

Promise Broken by the Government

When Sarojini Naidu came to know about the developments that were taking place within the South African cabinet, she was very much annoyed and disturbed and through her speeches at Cape Town sent a message to General Smuts. She told that she had brought the message to the Union Government from Mahatma Gandhi. She further added that if they continued to harass and suppress the Indian people, they shall surely leave the Empire and if they do so where will the British Empire be.³³ She told that what she was asking was for neither concession nor kindness but only the rights and justice for which the people of India were very surely entitled to.

Speaking words of encouragement to the Indians in South Africa, she told them that in India, their own country, the British rulers have also been oppressing and putting the people down but Mahatma Gandhi had instilled courage and the spirit of fearlessness among these followers which could not be suppressed by the British. She further added that Mahatma Gandhi who had graduated in the “University of Oppression” in South Africa returned to India and taught the people of India both Muslims and Indians as to how to stand united against the oppressive policies followed by the British rulers.³⁴

Leaving a message to General Smuts, Sarojini Naidu cautioned he cannot deprive the Indians of their rights and cannot subjugate them for long without bad repercussions for the government.³⁵ She further stated that the White government in South Africa had oppressed all the classes-the native people, the Indian races and the colored. The British themselves were as much foreigners as are the Indians in South Africa and as a result, they have no right to subjugate and deprive the people-the natives and the Indians, of their rights. South Africa belonged to the native people and the coloured and the white government is oppressing them too.³⁶

Sarojini Naidu at Claremont Town Hall in Cape Town

Sarojini Naidu championed the cause of unity among the Asians and Africans for the abolition of the Class Area Bill in South Africa. She addressed the huge gathering at Claremont Town Hall in Cape Town. She told the gathering that the crowning climax of her mission in South Africa had arrived on the day when she had “a long meeting with General Smuts, the strongman of South Africa”.³⁷ Sarojini Naidu made it amply clear that her mission was not limited for striving for the benefit of her own people. According to her, her conscience did not permit her to strive for the betterment of our own people and the cause also included the natives and the colored people in South Africa. She told that because of the policies pursued by the government of South Africa hatred and prejudices prevailed between the colored people, the African natives and her own community.³⁸

She appealed to all the natives, the coloured and the Indian people in South Africa to be united and fight for their rights. She told them that all the mankind had only one common destiny today.³⁹ She wanted to bring unity and cohesion among all the people belonging Asia and Africa against the oppressive and subjugating policies that are being envisaged through the Class Area Bill.



Appeal for Conference

Sarojini Naidu was a woman who was endowed with conviction and strong faith. She never believed in giving up the cause for which was fighting and she never accepted defeat easily. She appealed for conference to be conducted for sorting out the problems that were being faced by the Indians in particular and the natives and the colored people in general. She asked for an interview with General Smuts where she got a patient, sympathetic and courteous hearing from him. During the course of the discussion that she had with General Smuts, which was a free frank and comprehensive discussion, she reviewed the legal and moral hardships that the Indians were facing because of the restrictions that are being imposed by the South African Government on the Indian masses who were living in South Africa.

Mrs Sarojini Naidu was intimidated by General Smuts that it was not his intention to curb the liberties or to impose any restrictions or disabilities on the Indian community which was living in South Africa or to treat them as inferior mortals. He said to her that there was a pressing need to relieve the tension and the prejudice that was prevailing in the country and it was going to help the Indians who, after all, had made South Africa their home and their future lies there. He said that he and his colleagues were bringing forward this legislation only as an experimental measure to allow each community to protect and promote their own interests along the lines perceived by them and according to their own traditions, without coming into friction or conflict with one another.⁴⁰

City Hall of Cape Town to give a farewell address

After meeting most of the leaders of South African Parliament and Government, Sarojini Naidu went to the City Hall of Cape Town with an intention to bid goodbye and give a farewell address to the colored and the Indian community that was residing in South Africa. The Chairman, Dr Abdul Rahaman praised the work of Sarojini Naidu to great lengths. Sarojini Naidu, addressing the gathering said, “This message I give you, do not try to ignore or exclude the Whiteman in this paradise called South Africa which you are going to build for yourselves in spite of the arrogance and ignorance of Whiteman. I want you to educate yourself well and build yourself up. Why did you want to have the generosity or the compassion of a government which does not care for you. Try to educate yourselves, build up your own universities, colleges and schools; send your children, women and men to the University of the World. O Indians, O Africans, O Englishmen, O Malays, O Dutchmen, O White and other communities of Africa, come together and make ceaseless endeavors to make a beautiful world with this new gospel, let hate be forgotten, bitterness cease and love triumph in the end.”⁴¹ She was a strong advocate of providing good education for both women and men. According to her, an educated person, be it woman or a man cannot be exploited by the world easily. Hence it is incumbent upon each person to give himself or herself the best education possible. There were also many white leaders in South Africa leaders like Mr. James Henderson, Piet Grobler, who believed that the true solution for the problem lies only in repatriation.⁴² Sarojini Naidu did not subscribe to the view and said that making legislation on those lines will only aggravate matters and will lead to deadly conflict and fiction. She instead suggested a Roundtable Conference as she had suggested to the Prime Minister of South Africa as the only solution to the problem. She strongly believed that it is only through deliberations and adjustment that one can get a solution and voluntary arrangement. She also believed that something has to be done to put an end to the dreadful friction and conflict that was prevailing in South Africa.⁴³



Sarojini Naidu presides at the Fourth Session of the South African Indian Conference at Durban

The fourth section of the South African Indian conference which was held at the Durban Town Hall was presided over by Sarojini Naidu. A huge gathering, from places like Transvaal, Cape Town, and Natal assembled at the venue. Dr.C.A. Francois, Deputy-Mayor who was one of the speakers at the conference, congratulated the gathering for having Mrs. Sarojini Naidu as the President of the function. The name of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, as the President of the fourth section of the South African Indian Congress, was proposed by Mr. Sorabjee Rustomjee.⁴⁴

Sarojini Naidu presiding as the President of the Conference advised the Indians that “they had the highest duty of all the people in that country. Indians should be the Golden link between the White comedian on one hand and the colored and the African communities on the other. The Indians cannot afford to be exploiters, they must be the ambassadors in South Africa between the White people, the Colored and the Natives. The Indians must look up to Africa, not for what Africa could do for them but what they could do for Africa and then they should be true representatives of the veritable soul of India.”⁴⁵ The message that was given by Sarojini Naidu was a message of conciliation, understanding and cooperation, of the coming together in the spirit of aspiration, and common understanding achievement.

Victory at Rhodesia

Sarojini Naidu, at last, saw her dream of getting Indians equal rights with other citizens of the country in Rhodesia. The Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Mr. Charles Coghlan, welcoming Sarojini Naidu stated that the freedom that was exemplified by the British flag was granted fully to the Indian people as to the other people of different communities. The country stood for the Rhodes’ dictum of granting equal rights for all civilised people. The Prime Minister trusted that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu would take home the impression that Indians living in Rhodesia will not have any reason for giving complaints whatsoever because the country was as solicitous for the well-being, trade and freedom of the Indians as it was with the well-being of the people of other communities that were living in Rhodesia. Though differences prevailed in the country, he stated, that they did not touch the inherent rights of the people in the freedom loving British community. He hoped that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu would carry with her a message of goodwill from the people of Rhodesia to India, the great country from which she has come as a representative.⁴⁶

Sarojini Naidu made an eloquent speech in Rhodesia where she heaped praises on the Prime Minister, the government and the people of Rhodesia. She told in a speech that she had been branded as a dangerous woman because she had been advocating and fighting for the cause of peace and brotherhood. She stated that Kenya was the natural colony of the Indians and the natural outlet for Indians. Referring to the South African union, she told that she had absolutely no complaint to make regarding the way she has been received by the Prime Minister personally and the way she had been treated by the other officials and ministers in the Cabinet. She told in a meeting that they had all been nice to her. Subsequently, Sarojini Naidu proceeded to Johannesburg and Kenya and later she paid a return trip to her motherland.⁴⁷

Through the untiring efforts and the work that Sarojini Naidu had performed in the African continent, especially South Africa, she came to be known across the world as the Peacemaker who fought not for the Indians but also for the whole of Asia. Going as a representative of Indian National Congress, Sarojini Naidu worked relentlessly for the cause of Indians, native Africans and the colored people and



came to be known as an outstanding political leader who made a passionate plea to the Whites in South Africa to pay attention to the problem of Indian settlers and find solutions to them. She addressed the people of South Africa regarding equality of human beings, ill-treatment of Indians, Class Area Bill and equality for Indians along with other people residing in South Africa. She created an atmosphere of goodwill and enthusiasm through her speeches among all the settlers of Africa. Wherever she went, be it Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban or Cape Town she made a lasting impression on the people of those places by putting the demands in a very cooperative and friendly manner but very firmly.

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