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## THE EMIGRATION AND STATUS OF INDIANS<sup>1</sup> IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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THE emigration and status of Indians in foreign countries in general and in the regions within the British Empire in particular have attained a significance in India far greater than their numbers may warrant. No question has given rise to so much bitter criticism as this, and the very mention of the subject of "Indians abroad" raises in India a unique resentment, for it affects the self-respect and dignity of India as a nation.

Before we inquire into the genesis, growth, the present position, and disabilities of the numerous "little Indias" abroad, the basis of the present resent-complex in India must be explained briefly. The explanation lies largely in three historical factors. India is not a sovereign nation. Perhaps this is the most galling of all the factors that hurt the nationals of India. India is, as well known, neither a Colony nor a Dominion. Her constitutional status is as yet unknown though officially she is often described as a semi-Dominion or a quasi-Dominion. She has a large measure of internal autonomy but her external status as a dependent country has not changed, and it is this dependent status that counts when an Indian goes abroad. He is not a citizen of a free republic but the subject of Britain. India's long, bitter, and vain struggle for her own constitutional independence has shown that she cannot expect any equality of treatment or status for her children abroad when her nationals are not free even on her own native soil. Naturally the British Government which is unprepared to concede Indians freedom in their own country can hardly be expected to champion the rights of Indians in foreign countries, even if some of those countries are

<sup>1</sup>By Indians is meant nationals of India. Sometimes, as in the United States, they are called Hindus, irrespective of their religion, apparently to distinguish them from American Indians. In Canada, they are called British Indians to distinguish them from indigenous Canadian Indians. In the West Indies they are called East Indians to distinguish them from West Indians who are Negroes. Throughout this article the correct term—Indians—is used, and whenever necessary the term has been qualified to distinguish them from other ethnic groups.

within the British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations. This has been demonstrated frequently in recent years. Whenever a conflict arises on any particular issue of rights of citizenship between the India Office and the Colonial Office, both in London, the latter has always gained the point.

The second factor is the charge that is often levelled against the Indian immigrants by the receiving countries, or rather the countries that once received them. It is that Indian immigrants as a whole are of a low class and social status, being laborers, and as such they cannot expect to be accorded the same reception and status as accorded to Indian visitors of social dignity, intellectual worth, or economic consequence. This charge is only partially true, for Indian emigration had its origins in the demands of the Colonial Government and private colonial estate owners for Indian indentured labor to develop certain of those undeveloped regions. But once the emigration of indentured labor ceased, there was free emigration of people who were not laborers but who belonged to the merchant and other commercial classes. The charge that the original Indian immigrants were not men of learning or decent bank balances can be levelled against practically every other immigrant community. It is not the successful intellectual or the economically stable individual that seeks to emigrate from one country to another. Emigration implies a desire to better one's economic position or social status or escape some undesirable feature of the home country, be it religious intolerance, racial persecution, or economic disinheritance. The purpose of voluntary emigration being, therefore, some form of betterment, the Government of India must satisfy itself that betterment is likely to result when it assumes the power of permitting emigration. Emigration, unlike water, flows from a country of low level of living to a country of high level of living. So the charge levelled against Indian immigrants can be said against the nationals of any European country, who have sought to emigrate to the United States. The British that went to Australia, the Dutch that went to South Africa, and all the nationalities that came

to the United States fall in the same category. Above all, it is irrational to maintain that because the original Indian immigrants were of a laboring class, and hence of a low standard of living, no emigration of the people of a higher standard can be permitted today.

Thirdly, India's nationals are not "white" to the man in the street or even to the minister in the Cabinet, irrespective of the anthropological view that India's nationals belong to the "Caucasian race" and are the only people in Asia, barring the Soviet Union, who came closest to the European ethnically. Naturally, India resents strongly any act of any country that may be interpreted as evidence of color prejudice. This question is not something peculiar to the nationals of India, for it affects other non-"white" peoples, not only within the British Empire but without it. The immigration laws and the quota system of the United States, for instance, take a peculiar stand in refusing an immigration quota to the Indians. The reason for this refusal is that the Indians are neither "white" nor "colored." This simple and irrational dichotomy of dividing mankind into "white" and "colored" has been effected right in this country which is aspiring for the leadership of the world.<sup>2</sup> Hence, in discussing the question of Indian emigration, these three factors should be constantly kept in mind, for they have played and continue to play a significant part in all that affects the status of Indians overseas.

#### GENESIS OF INDIAN EMIGRATION

Indian emigration has a long history, the origins of which are lost in antiquity. In ancient times Indian "emigration" was more of culture and civilization than of capital or labor. Buddhism in Ceylon, Burma, China, and Japan, and Hinduism in Bali and the Indies, and Indian sculpture and architecture in Borobodur and Cambodia bear testimony to ancient Hindu cultural penetration. Modern Indian emigration in the sixties of the

<sup>2</sup> Legislation placing India's nationals on a quota basis for purposes of immigration is now pending in the American Congress. Two bills in the Senate, S. 505, introduced by Arthur Kapper of Kansas, and S. 331, introduced by Joseph H. Ball of Minnesota; and two bills in the House, H. R. 173, introduced by Emmanuel Celler of New York, and H. R. 1584, introduced by Mrs. Clare Booth Luce of Connecticut, have recently been tabled unfortunately. Last year the Chinese were put on a quota basis, thus repealing anti-Chinese legislation nearly a century old.

last century, however, was induced from without. The abolition of Negro slavery in 1834 in the British Empire and subsequently in other European empires created a sudden demand for labor to replace the emancipated Negro. India and China were tapped for this purpose.

With the permission of the Government of India, unskilled Indian laborers were recruited from the Indian countryside among the under-employed Indian peasantry by organizations set up by foreign employers. Nominally the indenture was for five years after which the workers were to be repatriated to India. But often, when the indenture was over, the Colonial Government as well as the employers persuaded the laborers to reindenture or convert their passage money into a piece of land for free permanent settlement. It was the conversion of the return passage money into a piece of land that led to permanent settlement of Indian communities abroad.<sup>3</sup>

As long as emigration of labor from India continued, fresh blood was added to these tiny Indian communities, and distinction was often made between "colonial-born" and "home-born." With the cessation of the indenture system in 1917, the colonial-born element began to preponderate. And today, with the complete absence of emigration from India, an overwhelming majority of the Indians abroad were born in foreign countries. Their interests, therefore, are tied up with other elements of the local population, rather than with the people in India, though cultural, religious, and sentimental ties between the mother country and these scattered daughter communities persist.

When the indenture system was mooted, it was planned as a *temporary* migration of labor. In consequence the immigrants were all men. When the men began to reindenture after the expiration of their first term, and when some began to settle in foreign countries permanently, the want of a home and family life became apparent. Since only a handful married foreign women, Indian women emigrants were recruited to satisfy a particular prescribed ratio. But these women were totally unrelated to the men already overseas; and whatever the settlement of families that took place subsequently, it had no relation to the generally accepted concept of the "colonisation of

<sup>3</sup> Details concerning the methods of recruiting Indian labor and the conditions under which Indians emigrated can be found in the *International Labor Review* (July 1940), pp. 65-76; and (July 1941), pp. 75-76.

families." Introduction of women did not necessarily ensure happy home life, for some of the men abroad were already married and had left their wives and children behind in India. This disparity in the sex ratio led to sexual crimes and suicides, the latter feature almost unknown in India. After considerable agitation and negotiation, wives and minor children were finally permitted to join the men. Today the sex ratio among the Indian children born abroad tends to be normal.

At the beginning, Indian emigrants were occupationally homogeneous in the sense that they were all laborers. But in the last quarter of a century there has been a more normal occupational distribution of the population. The children and grandchildren of early immigrants have adopted varied professions—at any rate those professions that have come within their reach because of numerous discriminations. However, we find today among Indians abroad doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants, landlords, factory workers, peasants, clerks, unskilled laborers, and in some countries members of legislatures and even of Executive Councils. The present occupational diversification may sound as a great improvement since the days of early indentured-labor emigration. But it should not be forgotten, as has been observed earlier, Indian emigration was not confined to laborers alone. Merchants, teachers, lawyers, and doctors were among the free emigrants who went abroad to settle and serve the Indian communities that had already settled overseas; hence the present spectacle of normal economic diversification as well as class distinctions like rich, middle class, and poor among the overseas Indians today.

#### THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

India's population today is nearly 412 million. Her population according to the 1941 Census was 398 million and she adds five million a year under normal circumstances. But the total number of Indians outside India is only some four million of whom about three and a half million reside within the British Commonwealth and Empire. The total number of Indians abroad is less than the annual net increase of India's population within India. Numerically, therefore, the problem is negligible, and yet this question has assumed serious proportions in recent years. Table 1 gives a picture of the distribution of the overseas Indians in the Dominions and the numerical importance of the Indian community in each country.

This table might suggest that the problem of Indians abroad is a very minor one; and also that it should be most acute in places where there are comparatively many Indians—Mautitius, Fiji, British Guiana, Trinidad, Malaya, and Ceylon. Contrary to this impression, the problem is not a minor one, judging by the importance attached to this question in India; and the situation is not acute in the countries named above, but in the Union of South Africa and Kenya. Hence it would be misleading to evaluate the importance or the acuteness of the problem by reference to the numbers involved.

In all the dealings on the question of treatment of Indians abroad between India and other governments, the issue has been raised over certain principles and not numbers. These principles relate not only to the position of India in the British

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF OVERSEAS INDIANS IN THE DOMINIONS AND THE NUMERICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIAN COMMUNITY IN EACH COUNTRY

DOMINION	TOTAL POPULATION IN ROUND NUMBERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIANS
Canada.....	12,000,000	2,600
Australia.....	7,000,000	2,400
New Zealand.....	2,000,000	1,146
South Africa.....	10,000,000	238,400
United States.....	134,000,000	4,600

Commonwealth but also to her position vis à vis the British Government. These are principles of fundamental fairness, justice, and logic which do not always govern the relations between various countries.

#### THE DOMINIONS<sup>4</sup>

No detailed account of the problems in all the British Dominions and the Colonies can be given here; nor is it necessary, for considerations of space. And then the Indian problem in certain regions is neither acute nor unique. Among the Dominions, the situation is best in New Zealand and worst in

<sup>4</sup> As for the United Kingdom, there is no ban against the entry and permanent residence of Indians. There is a small Indian community in England. Cases are not wanting of Indians' becoming members of the House of Commons. As a rule Indians in the United Kingdom suffer from no legal disabilities.

the Union of South Africa, comparatively. Canada and Australia come in between these two extreme cases.

Before we discuss the tragic situation in South Africa, a brief reference may be made to the other Dominions. In the Dominion of New Zealand there were only 1,146 Indians out of a total population of 1,626,486 according to the 1940 Census. Most of these Indians went to New Zealand from Fiji before the beginning of this century after the completion of their indenture in those Islands. Then a few Indian merchants and professionals joined this tiny community of their fellow countrymen. Indians in New Zealand, it is pleasant to record, are on a par with the European population and are free from all legal disabilities. The Indians share the same political franchise and social security benefits like old age pensions, unemployment compensation, and so forth. Since fresh Indian immigration is not permitted, this small Indian community may either be absorbed or may die out as a distinct ethnic unit. As for immigration rights to the Dominions, the Imperial Conference of London in 1921 confirmed the autonomy of the Dominions to control the composition of their nationals. In theory, the Indians enjoy imperial citizenship, which means that as subjects of the King they can emigrate and settle in any part of the King's empire, but in practice they cannot do so.

The conflict between the Dominion and Indian points of view is significant. India questions the meaning of "British Commonwealth," if a British subject is not free to enter other parts of it. On the other hand, the Dominions ask what does their Dominion autonomous status mean if they cannot determine the character and composition of their own population.<sup>5</sup> In the reconciliation of these divergent points of view lies the solution of inter-imperial relations and migration rights within the Commonwealth. India, however, is also free to exclude the nationals of the Dominions and the nationals of England. But India's political subjection to Britain severely limits the use of this reciprocal retaliation.

In Australia out of a total population of nearly seven million, Indians totalled in 1941 only 2,400, or less than one percent of the entire population.

<sup>5</sup> A. Berreidale Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* (London, 1935), chap. IV contains a full summary of the Dominions' anti-Indian legislation in a context of reproachful comment.

India's major grievance against Australia is her crude and offensive policy of "White Australia" which bans the entry of Indians, Chinese, and other Orientals for permanent settlement. Overcrowded Indians do not believe in the myth of the empty and open spaces of Australia.<sup>6</sup> However, it is possible that Australia may be only safeguarding its economic standards, despite its offensive language. As long as Australian sentiment is against the admission and assimilation of foreign elements in her population perhaps the ban is useful as it only avoids the creation of a future minority problem. But this dog-in-the-manger argument hardly satisfies an overcrowded India and China. Therefore, in Australia, apart from the question of immigration, there are only a few minor disabilities for the Indians already domiciled there. These disabilities relate to ownership and occupation of crown lands and employment in certain skilled occupations.

In Canada the problem of Indians relates only to the question of franchise. But behind this there is a bitter memory of the violent way in which the Dominion and provincial governments handled the entry of Indians to Canada during the first World War.<sup>7</sup> Of course, today Canada does not permit immigration of Indians, since that right is restricted only to "colorless" British subjects.

The bulk of Indian immigrants—most of them Sikhs from the province of the Punjab—have settled in British Columbia, and there are practically no Indians in the other provinces. They total 2,600 and form less than half of one percent of the total population of some twelve million Canadians. But here the Indians are not the only minorities, for there are Japanese, Chinese, and the native Indians. And Canada, before the present war, gave better treatment to the Japanese than to the Indians, for obvious reasons. The main Indian grievance today is that they are disfranchised. India has never been able to understand why the franchise should be withheld from such a microscopic minority as the Indians. This denial of provincial franchise implies the denial of Dominion franchise. Even though the Ottawa

<sup>6</sup> W. D. Forsyth, *The Myth of Open Spaces* (Melbourne, 1942), *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief history of Indian immigration to Canada see S. Chandrasekhar, "Indian Immigration in America," *Far Eastern Survey* (New York, July 26, 1944), pp. 138-42.

Government is ready to grant the Indian this privilege, the initiative has to come from the provincial government of British Columbia. In India, this has been a sore point for a quarter century, and the granting of this privilege will react on public opinion in India so favorably as to be out of proportion to the benefit achieved. It must be pointed out, however, that the denial of franchise leads to disabilities in seeking employment. The invariable question "Are you a Canadian citizen?" comes up whenever an Indian applies for a job. The Indian reply that he is a domiciled Canadian does not carry any weight, and he loses the fight for a decent job, though he may be entitled to it by virtue of his other qualifications. This lack of political franchise in British Columbia has prevented the Indian from obtaining positions in law, medicine, pharmacy, government, and other fields of employment. In other provinces of Canada such discriminations against Indians are absent, possibly because there are practically no Indians in the middle and eastern provinces.<sup>8</sup>

In the Dominion of Eire there is no Indian community just as there are no Irish in India. The relation between these two members of the Commonwealth is friendly, possibly because of their roughly comparable political history.

The Indian minority problem which has been acute in South Africa has become worse in the last few years. The plight of Indians in this Dominion is so tragic and helpless that a detailed reference is necessary to appreciate their present position.

The Indians in South Africa had their origin in the request of Natal sugar planters in 1860 for Indian labor. This emigration of indentured labor from India, which lasted from 1869 to 1911, through frequent stoppages and renewals and through incredibly bitter vicissitudes, has left South Africa with nearly 230,000 Indians, of whom more than eighty-five percent are South African born. From the time of the first indenture down to the present day, the planters then, and the South African Government now have reaped and are reaping the benefit that this community brought to them, and at the same time have debarred it from enjoying even the most elementary rights. The Government of India fought a lukewarm battle on behalf of these helpless Indians and abolished the indenture emigration system in 1911. It would have

<sup>8</sup> E. W. Morse, *Immigration and Status of British East Indians in Canada* (unpublished thesis), Library of Queens University (Kingston, Canada, 1938).

been infinitely better had the Government of India banned Indian emigration to Natal, for by 1911 the damage was done and the Indian minority problem was created. The magnitude of the sufferings of the South African Indians today is out of all proportion to their numerical strength. The intercensal estimate of the population of this least democratic British Dominion in 1940 was 10,521,700. The ethnic composition of these ten millions is as follows:

Natives (Bantus).....	7,250,700
Europeans (Boers and Britons)...	2,188,200
"Colored" (of Bantu and European origin).....	844,400
Asiatics (mostly India's nationals, a few Malays and Chinese) . . . .	238,400

Thus, within the Union of South Africa, as is only too well known, a small minority of European South Africans, constituting less than twenty percent of the country's population, rules and tyrannizes over a large majority of the population. The Bantus, the indigenous inhabitants of the land, enjoy not even the most elementary privileges of citizenship and have been in ignoble serfdom ever since the Boer and the Briton reached the region. However, it is the microscopic minority of Indians, less than 2.5 percent of the total population, that has been the special object of discrimination for the past eighty years. The question of equal rights for Indians has occasioned many violent displays of racial emotion. More South African Commissions and Select Committees have been appointed to deal with the Indian problem than with any other topic, and mass legislation affecting them includes more than sixty Acts of Parliament and Provincial Ordinances beginning with the Transvaal Law of 1885 down to the recently enacted Pegging Act.

Though the Indians went to South Africa at the request of the Natal Government to develop the region with their labor and not as voluntary immigrants, the South African European fear of Indian expansion expressed itself as early as 1880. In 1887 a Commission appointed by the Natal Government reported that "the majority of the white colonists are strongly opposed to the presence of the free Indian as a rival and competitor, either in agricultural or commercial pursuits."<sup>9</sup> As a result of the pressure of the European colonists

<sup>9</sup> Report of the Commission to enquire into the Status of the indentured Indians in Natal, Cmd., 1888.

(who were no more indigenous to South Africa than the Indian), the provision for free settlement of ex-indentured laborers was repealed, thus reversing the enactment of the Natal Government of 1874 that the Indian, on the expiration of his indenture, could convert his return passage to India to a parcel of land for free settlement.

The tragic struggle of Indians in South Africa for equal rights from 1893 to 1913 is now history—and history dear to India by reason of the work of Gandhi, whose ceaseless toil on behalf of his oppressed countrymen led to his first Passive Resistance Movement and laid the foundation of his future eminence as the Mahatma. Since Gandhi's departure from the South African political scene, the Indians have lost one after the other of their hard earned and natural citizenship rights. They have lost their franchise, have been debarred from ordinary and higher educational privileges, have been subjected to poll taxes, have been segregated in matters of residence and business, and have been denied the right of immigration and permanent residence. By passes, licenses, taxes, tests, and registration regarding property, trading, residence, and occupation, and by denying the elementary right of franchise to people born and bred in their country, the Government of South Africa has done its utmost to humiliate and hedge in its Indian population.<sup>10</sup> And now the recently enacted Pegging Act (the Asiatic Trading and Occupation of Land Restriction Act) deals a direct blow to the none too stable foundations of the Indian community.<sup>11</sup>

The British Government in London, it must be said to its credit, has often protested against the South African attitude, but these protests have become weaker and of no avail in recent years.<sup>12</sup> A British Government opposed to a free India cannot, of course, be expected to plead for equality of treatment for Indians abroad. As for the Government of India, even this inept and unrepresentative body has been moved to take action under

<sup>10</sup> A brilliant and objective account of inter-imperial relations in the British Commonwealth of Nations with special reference to the Indian immigrant in South Africa can be found in W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, v. 1 (Problem of Nationality) (London, 1937), pp. 166–250.

<sup>11</sup> S. Chandrasekhar, "Indians in South Africa," *Asia and the Americas* (February 1945), pp. 104–5.

<sup>12</sup> P. S. Joshi, *The Tyranny of Colour—A Study of the Indian Problem in South Africa* (Durban, 1942), passim.

the Reciprocity Act of 1943 by which South Africans in India have been put under the same disabilities as the Indians in South Africa suffer from. But the number of South Africans in India does not total even ten. Hence this is merely a matter of face-saving.

#### BRITISH COLONIES

Indians have emigrated to almost every part of the British Colonial Empire. The origin of this emigration and the growth of the Indian communities in the Colonies present the same pattern as their movement to the Dominions. Among these Colonies, according to the latest available census returns and estimates the Indian population was as follows:

Burma.....	1,017,825
Ceylon.....	750,000
Fiji.....	98,113
British Guiana.....	142,978
Kenya.....	44,635
Malaya.....	748,829
Mauritius.....	269,885
Trinidad.....	151,076

All of these Colonies do not need detailed reference, for the problems faced by the Indians in some of them are not dissimilar to those faced by other nationalities and ethnic groups.

*Burma.* Burma presents a special problem. It is as big as Texas with a homogeneous Burmese population of some sixteen million, of whom more than a million are Indians. These Indians can hardly be called immigrants, for Burma until 1937 was a province of India. When the Government of India Act of 1935 (according to which India is largely governed today) came into force in April 1937, Burma ceased to be an Indian province and began to be governed not from New Delhi but from London, and in a small measure from Rangoon itself, as the British granted Burma semi-internal autonomy before the Japanese conquered the region. So the Indians in Burma in 1937 were constitutionally in their own country, not different from New Yorkers being found in California.

The Government of Burma Act of 1935 defined the status of the Indian minority in Burma by introducing certain statutory safeguards for their protection—safeguards that were and are regarded by the Indian nationalist opinion as unsatisfactory.

The Indians in Burma belong to two categories. A small minority are wealthy merchants who have exploited both the Burmese and Indian labor alike.

The great majority are laborers constituting for the most part a source of seasonal labor (as in rice-harvesting seasons) with a low standard of living. From the Burman point of view it must be said that they regard all Indians as menials ready to undertake any job at such low wages as to do the Burmans out of a job. But what the Burmese really object to is the commercial penetration and the sharp practices of the Indian merchants in Rangoon and other cities. This and the growing legitimate Burmese nationalism led to anti-foreign (in practice anti-Indian, for the British are few and have political power) riots. The Governments of India and Burma signed an agreement in 1940 settling the immigration question. But the Indian public opposition to the settlement was so great, that the Government consented to reopen the issue. The Japanese conquest and occupation interrupted these deliberations. Now that Burma has fallen to the Allies, Burma will soon reach its prewar status and the problem will soon present itself.

*Ceylon and Malaya.* In 1931 Malaya had a population of 4,385,340. The Malays constituted 44.7 percent, the Chinese 39 percent, and the Indians 14.7 percent. In Ceylon the Indians constituted in 1940 a much lower proportion, being only 700,000 out of a total population of six million. But the problem is not one of numbers.

Ceylon and Malaya present the problem of the treatment of Indian labor. Indian laborers with their families and children have been permitted by the Government of India to go to these two colonies to work mainly on rubber and tea estates and tin mines under specific conditions. They relate to wages, monthly and yearly contracts, housing and medical facilities, maternity benefits, schooling, repatriation, and so on. In both countries there are representatives of the Government of India to see that these conditions of contract are enforced. There are also Labor Departments of both the Ceylon and Malaya Governments that have powers to enforce the demands of the Government of India. Though the Colonial Government, the planters, and the mine owners are aware of the fact that a healthy and contented labor force is to their own advantage, they have often proved lax in enforcing minimum conditions till the Government of India interfered.

The disputes between the Government of India and both the Colonial Governments have centered around wages, living conditions, and medical facilities, but so far these disputes have often been

settled to the satisfaction of all the parties concerned. Only two important questions have been left unsolved. They pertain to the right to organize trade unions among the Indian workers and to political rights, such as franchise. In Ceylon in recent months the political question has become an issue of great controversy. Ceylon's reaction to the new constitution of 1939 was an extremely nationalistic and, therefore, anti-Indian one. While anti-Indian discrimination is prohibited by statute, certain Sinhalese ministers have imposed discriminations on Indians through executive fiat. In Malaya the question will soon come up now that the Japanese are driven out. It will present a more difficult problem, for there the relative rights of Malays, Chinese, Indians, and Javanese have to be settled.<sup>13</sup>

*Fiji.* Out of Fiji's total population of 220,787 in 1940, Indians numbered 98,113, or nearly fifty percent. Of these more than seventy percent are Fiji born and Fiji is their homeland, and they consider themselves Fijian in that sense. The Indian population is mainly an agricultural community growing sugar cane for the influential Australian concern—The Colonial Sugar Refining Company. Since the Government is a typically colonial one there is really no question of political rights. Indian males have franchise, and two Indian elected members and three nominated ones sit in the Legislative Council. Their function is purely an advisory one, but they are a minority on the Council of thirty-one members (twenty-one are British and five are Fijian), and the British Governor seldom heeds their advice.<sup>14</sup>

In these islands Indian grievances relate primarily to land tenure and educational facilities for Indian children. In theory, all land in Fiji belongs to the natives—the Fijians. Indians (the majority of them are Fiji-born) hold land either in leases

<sup>13</sup> An objective discussion of the Indian problem in Malaya can be found in Rupert Emerson, *Malayasia, a Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (New York, 1937), pp. 31 et seq., and Virginia Thompson, *Post Mortem on Malaya* (New York, 1943), pp. 122 et seq. For an exposition of the British point of view see Lennox A. Mills, *British Rule in Eastern Asia* (London, 1942), pp. 218-37. An Indian point of view is given in K. A. N. Iyer, *Indian Problems in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, 1938), passim.

<sup>14</sup> For details of the political and economic status of Indians in Fiji, see J. W. Coulter, *Fiji, Little India of the Pacific* (Chicago, 1942), passim. Also, *Fiji Blue Book 1940* (Suva, 1941).

from the Native Chiefs or as tenants of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. While the foreign C. S. R. Company is able to own a considerable area of land, the Indian cannot own land. As leases expired the Native Chiefs raised rents or charged exorbitant sums for the renewals of the leases. Sometimes the situation became so bad that the Colonial Government had to step in and arbitrate.

Indian grievances in the field of education relate to the inadequacy of the number of Indian schools and the lack of provision for teaching Indian languages. The blame for not providing adequate educational facilities rests with the Colonial Government. It must not be too difficult to provide adequate educational facilities for a small community of 100,000, of which the school-going population is considerably less. As for the difficulty of teaching several Indian languages, the problem is a complex one. The Indians who were originally recruited to Fiji were drawn from different parts of India, and as such they spoke at least four provincial Indian languages. Their children and grandchildren, who have never visited India, have carried on the linguistic tradition. The result is that Indian parents today demand that their children should be taught their respective mother tongues. In this demand the Indians have been unrealistic, and the Colonial Government, with limited budgets, has to face the complex administrative problem in providing facilities to teach all these Indian languages.

*Mauritius.* In Mauritius the Indians constitute, as in Fiji, an agricultural-laboring population. Here again they are, in the main, descendants of the indentured laborers. There is no particular major problem except that of a low standard of living, which is not peculiar to Mauritius. While a few individual Indians have risen to positions of prominence and wealth, the majority are in a low level of living and constitute a poor advertisement for India. The purpose of emigration, namely, economic improvement, has not been fully achieved.

*The West Indies.* The problem of Indians in the West Indies (British Guiana, Trinidad, and Jamaica) are not fundamentally different from those of the Indians in Fiji or Mauritius. They present poor standards of living, agricultural bias, and backwardness in education. Recently these problems formed the subject of a Royal Commission before which both the Government of India and the leaders of the Indian communities in these

areas placed their points of view and grievances. The war interrupted the publication of the Report, Minutes of Evidence, and the Recommendations. This document is awaited, since the adoption of its recommendations may mean the progress of the community. The problem today is primarily economic, and secondarily political and social. Poor wages, long hours of work, bad housing conditions, bad employer-employee relations, inadequate educational facilities are some of the problems. These are not peculiarly Indian problems, but are problems of labor, and they have to be tackled as such. As for the political rights of Indians, there are really none so long as the administration is colonial and not responsible to the people. The pattern of the political set-up is on discredited colonial lines, and no major step in the direction of self-government has been taken.

Other minor problems that confront the Indians are the results of the Indians retaining their Hindu and Moslem ways of life. Despite the long and many years they have lived abroad, and though the majority were born in these regions, they have remained culturally loyal to the Indian way of life, and have resisted complete westernization. In dress, diet, customs, manners, and language they are still Indian. An appreciation of the problems arising out of this retention of the Indian mores has been lacking by the colonial governments, with the result that the Indians are needlessly penalized and humiliated. An instance in point is the case of British Guiana, where Hindu and Moslem priests have been denied legal status to perform marriages. The result is that most Indian children born in that country have been officially considered illegitimate, although the children were born in wedlock authorised by Hindu and Moslem priests. Recognition of marriages performed according to Indian rites will remove this unnecessary social affront. But these minor handicaps will disappear as the nationals of these colonial regions come into their own in the sense of becoming politically free.

*Kenya.* Another colony that needs to be referred to is that of Kenya, the British Crown Colony in East Africa. Out of a population of some three and a quarter million, Indians number less than 45,000, or less than two percent of the total population. Long before Britain took Kenya and began to colonize it, Indians had established themselves commercially in that region. So it is not a question of indentured laborers. The Indian in Kenya today has a vote on a communal roll.

Indians have seats in the Legislative Council, and there is also an Indian on the Executive Council, a position comparable to a member of a cabinet.

The major Indian grievance in Kenya is against the reservation of Kenya Highlands for Europeans, not necessarily British, as against the Indians. This reservation is not statutory, but the British Government invariably vetoes any transfer or sale of land to an Indian, irrespective of his social and economic position. Indians cannot understand why a wealthy German can buy a piece of land on the Highlands and an Indian millionaire cannot do the same, especially when the colony is British and the Indian is a British subject. There is no economic justification for excluding an Indian Maharaja, even as there was none in refusing the H. H. Aga Khan a piece of land in the Highlands because he was an Indian. It is not realized that economic problems need economic solutions and not "ethnic palliatives." The other Indian grievances in Kenya are minor and are not peculiar to that region. As in South Africa, there are numerous Jim Crow laws as rigorous as in the American South.

#### CONCLUSION

Whether India is overpopulated or not can be discussed as a theoretical question, and arguments and statistics can be advanced on both sides. But in relation to the whole set of facts there is a tremendous population pressure today.<sup>15</sup> India needs emigration outlets to real or seemingly thinly populated countries like Australia, Brazil, and Canada. India adds nearly five million to its population every year. Indians, of all the peoples of the world, are the most "stay-at-home." They

<sup>15</sup> See S. Chandrasekhar, "Population Pressure in India," *Pacific Affairs*, June 1943. Also, "India's Human Resources," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May 1944.

are generally very immobile and more than ninety percent of them are recorded in census returns in places where they are born. It would, therefore, be hard for some five million Indians to leave India every year, and it would be even harder, if not impossible, to induce people of any other region to receive them as permanent immigrants. Therefore, the problem today is not the question of asking for any large scale immigration rights, for that will have to await the postwar formulation of a healthy, international migration policy—a policy that will take into consideration the areas, the resources, and the legitimate basic needs of peoples of the world.<sup>16</sup>

But the problems faced by the Indian communities can be solved if the various countries would cooperate in a spirit of mutual tolerance. In a short article like this it is difficult to suggest solutions for even major problems. However, any successful solution must adequately define immigration laws within the British Commonwealth and Empire, assuring reciprocity in inter-Empire dealings. A code of basic and minimum rights for Indians domiciled beyond India's frontiers and within the Empire must be laid down. Franchise and equality of opportunity must be assured. Local needs may need local solutions, but broad and minimum demands have to be drawn up. With the cessation of all hostilities, India's political question will be reopened, and whatever the misgivings of the pessimists, India's political status is bound to improve. There is the solemn promise of His Majesty's Government to give Dominion Status to India. And once India comes into her own, she will demand, and, I am sure, obtain, justice for her now discriminated-against children abroad.

<sup>16</sup> A scholarly, comprehensive, and controversial discussion of this subject will be found in a forthcoming volume, W. S. Thompson, *Population and Peace in the Pacific* (Chicago, 1945).