

RAM SALOJEE



BIOGRAPHY
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LENASIA RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION
PEOPLES CANDIDATES PARTY
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INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS
YOUTH

R.A.M. SALOSEE

Address - Progressive Party - 5/II/73.

6p. 798/2

In the last 25 years South-Africa has witnessed significant changes on two specific fronts. In the sphere of economics there has been important strides, seriously dampened by an ideological compulsion, which is prejudicial to two-thirds of its population; whilst in the field of human relationship there has been a grave retrogression. The whole concept of mutual co-operation, interdependence and conciliation has been repeatedly sacrificed at the altar of base racial intolerance, force and power. Just as economic progress has kept at bay racial confrontation, so I believe it can continue to make massive inroads into the existence of apartheid as a way of life. I also believe that it is disastrous for multi-racial South-Africa to remain blind to the dangers of this deceptive racial security, based on segregation and inequality; this division only leads to increased intolerance, hatred and suspicion. A situation, which no group can afford to ignore and can only be maintained through the massive restrictive laws in existence. As racial barriers crumble before economic realities, new legislations will have to be devised to prop up this insult to human dignity. It is in order to breach this handicap in human contact that I consider meetings such as these of tremendous value.

As I was requested to deal with current issues confronting the Indian community of Johannesburg; I must confess that one must take the position of the Indian in South-Africa into consideration in order to understand our local problems and our local attitudes. Not until the Verwoerd Government realized that the old vote-catching cry of "coolie-uit-die-land" was not only doomed to failure, but served as a continued source of embarrassment to South-Africa at the international level did Indians cease to be crucified on party political platforms. Today we have "boerehaat", not long ago we had "cooliehaat"; today we hear of boycotts against South-Africa, then we had Nationalists preaching boycotts against the small and unprotected Indian retail traders. But for the economic upsurge in the country, I am certain, the lot of the Indian would have been far worse than it actually is. However, with the granting of second-grade citizenship, the Indians became a local South-African problem, because we still did not enjoy many of the basic rights or privileges that go with citizenship. Non-citizen, white residents of South-Africa enjoy all the opportunities and facilities denied us, which makes our citizenship a mockery. The restrictions of free movement, the ever forceful implementation of the Group Areas Acts, job reservation, inequality of education, lack of positive political and economic opportunities, are cold reminders of this reluctant acceptance. That we have progressed, to a limited extent, with the rest of South-Africa is primarily due to the shortage of white man power and the urgent economic demands

of a fast growing industrial state. The grudging acceptance of my people has been reinforced by the bureaucratic stranglehold, under which the lives of all black people are controlled and manipulated. However, despite continued pressure the Indians have achieved a measure of success mainly due to our spirit of determination, thrift and tenacity; designed to maintain our cultural, spiritual and social viability, with the emphasis on self-help. Many educational institutions, all religious places of worship, welfare associations and cultural programs were entirely financed by self-help. This was partly responsible for the envy and often false political capital extracted by racialistic politicians. The whole sordid idea of a parasitic foreign commercial group has been exploded by a number of recent economic and census surveys. There is irrefutable proof that the vast majority of the Indians fall in the low income category. The vice-like stranglehold of commerce by the Indians was a figment of the imagination of ignorant racial politicians. Most of the traders were and are small business-men, keeping above water, through low over-heads and the direct participation of the whole family in a single small business - the extended family system and residences adjacent to the trading units, helped to keep costs down. Incidentally, the bulk of the Indians are employees, chiefly in the manufacturing industries and commerce - thus dependant on employment as a source of survival and less than 30% of the total Indian population is economically active. A large percentage of these work for non-Indian employers. Needless to stress that the group areas acts have done much to change the lives of the small traders and much hardship has been created by the location of areas away from previous places of trade and employment. Notwithstanding, ^{these} ~~these~~ limitations and restrictions the Indian has always been conscious of their right to civil liberties and political awareness, we feel deeply with all the deprived groups in South-Africa - the passive resistance movements; the Indian question at U.N.O. and the non-racial Congress Alliance are proof of this struggle. That we have not been able to more forcibly stress our grievances and commitments is due to our powerless minority status and our parlous position in the wasteland of racial politics. On the one hand we are unacceptable to the ruling white minority and on the other hand regarded with suspicion by the black majority; because of our slightly better economic position and higher standards of living. This position has been made worse by the total elimination of social contact by the political sledge-hammer of Apartheid. The Indians basically peace-loving and law-abiding, are fully aware of the inroads already made on our dignity and self-respect. The bitterness is there, but utter helplessness makes positive expression that much more difficult. It is not only annoying but definitely degrading that people with power and privilege often refer to our rich cultural and traditional past,

and heap praise on our moral and religious behaviour; yet when it comes to practical treatment we are no better than second-class citizens. Thus the problems facing my people stem from this policy of hypocrisy, discrimination and denial of an equal South-African citizenship. As most of us ^{are} aware that the group areas act was promulgated to drive out and dispossess the Indians of land, trading and residential rights from favourable and valuable centres in white areas and shunted onto unproductive and ill-developed land - no doubt the next "best" thing to expatriation and repatriation. Not only has this cut deep into the economic well-being of our people, but the social dislocation and loss of established facilities leave lasting scars of deprivation and frustration. On the local scene let us study some examples from Lenasia :-

1. A previously settled community has been uprooted and forced to settle 22 miles away, on undeveloped and unsuitable land. Even after 18 years of resettlement basic amenities are still lacking, with 40,000 people we are still fighting for civic amenities. To add insult to injury we are regarded as a financial burden to the local authority; an authority to which we paid rates and taxes for well over 3/4 of a century and get nothing in return. So now whatever they spend on us we regard as payment for the years of neglect.
2. Housing - whilst the Department of Community Development is hell-bent on resettling Indians from white areas, often from comparatively decent homes, hardly any provision is being made for the re-housing of people from Lenasia itself - the natural growth of the population and slums conditions in the area is disregarded. ^{For them} Ideology must supercede humanity. Thus we now have all the evils that flow from such inconsideration : slums, rent racketeering, crime, drugs, alcoholism and the break-up of the proud tradition of close family support. Conditions which the Indians previously managed to keep within check.
3. Land - An artificially created land shortage, with prolonged delay in proclamation of land for private ownership. Consequently, planning is poor and land for private home-ownership is non-existent. Land for religious, welfare and cultural development is in such short supply that community services and religious development has suffered. The price of cheaply bought land has been hiked by a staggering 3000%.
4. Lenasia is on dolomite land and yet no comprehensive geological survey has been done.
5. Re-establishment of religious, cultural and welfare amenities at economically prohibitive prices, whilst existing facilities in non-Indian areas go to waste.
6. Economic - viable traders from outside Lenasia have found themselves in dire straits, due to resettlement/ and displacement. Whilst non-displaced persons are denied the

the right of free enterprise. So we are not even free in our so-called "own" areas. We are merely being used as a reservoir for the labour pool of industrial South-Africa. The prestigious Oriental Plaza is cold comfort for over 1500 traders who have to share 350 units, which will be available for distribution. How this distribution will take place is anybody's guess and if the manner of allocation of houses in Lenasia is any yardstick, then many deserving cases will be left in the cold. There are many other factors that make this resettlement a costly and detrimental affair.

7. The present residents of Lenasia are also burdened with an unsatisfactory costly transport system; a poor local health service with the torture of a hospital which is 22 miles away; an inadequate police service with a non-existent police station.

Thus a totally unsatisfactory and unwholesome situation for a people who have been deprived of much, given much less and made to endure even more. It is indeed a sad commentary on a historically non-violent and a law-abiding community that helped pioneer the development of agriculture in Natal and brought commerce and essential provisions to many parts of rural S.A. Most platteland dorps and most other towns bear the stamp of the contributions made by the Indians in the progress of South-Africa. It is an undisputable fact that the Indians gave support and succour to untold number of Afrikaners, especially the farmers, with unrestricted amounts and unlimited periods of financial credits; based mainly on trust and good-will. Yet for all this our reward has been dispossession, expropriation and group-area - our efforts of self-denial, self-help, fortitude and service have been of no avail. Our legitimate acquisitions and pioneering contributions have been ceded to non-citizen immigrants, whose virtues in many cases are limited to their European origin and white skins. Is it any wonder that we weep with bitterness and view with scepticism the attitudes of many overbearing whites.

Today we are fed on the unchristian philosophy that racial association creates and fosters racial friction. As Indians we have unobtrusively disproved the fallacy of this prejudicial surmise - we have lived in comparative peace and harmony in many white areas. The only friction created was ~~that~~ ^{the} objections raised by the vote-catching, hate-filled racist politicians - they nurtured and fanned the flames of rabid racialism and spat venom at political rallies. Thus injecting and disseminating potions of prejudice and discrimination. Also, they are the ones that entrench and encourage double-standards; standards which cluster on South-Africa's statute books; standards which they accuse the rest of the world of practising. The Indians have also lived in amity with the Coloureds and Africans - the late

black areas of Saphiatown, Martindale and Newclare are good examples of these - there were mere faction fights and ethnic eruptions then inter-racial conflicts. So the traditional South African past is filled with the treasures of racial tolerance and dependance. Also, no degree of persuasion or coercion can alter the fact that apartheid can never be equal or considered morally just. Nor will we be convinced that political expression can be meaningful or fearless through ineffectual statutory bodies. Time without number their toothlessness and effectiveness have been exposed and reduced to farcical levels. Also, tribal institutions and educational systems cannot dupe us into accepting these as equal; even if their heads and rectors are black. Despite our participation on some of these institutions and bodies we are under no illusion that ~~that~~ ^{they} serve to deny us the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a common nationhood. As best our Management Committees can reach the level of town councils, and their powers, even in terms of white development, is nothing to crow about. In the absence of other avenues of free expression and legitimate protest many of us have accepted positions on these gutless bodies to keep alive our desire for justice and sharing. It has been a conscience ~~decision~~ ^{searing} decision to accept these doubtful platforms, even now many doubt our wisdom and question our motives. *We hope that the future will vindicate our intention & strategy - especially in the face of absent alternatives.*

We believe in contact for mutual enrichment and benefit. There is nothing we want from the white group, which we ourselves cannot achieve; but we need to be given the right to share in this responsibility, without restraints and without restrictions. The greatest insult to the underprivileged and the unfranchised masses is that we are not given the choice to decide our own future or fate. Every "solution" is an imposed one, regardless of the amount of material, spiritual and moral injury it causes the victims of this one-sided "consultation". Whilst we will accept every amenity or facility, which we knew to be due to us, but we will not succumb to being lulled into a false sense of gratitude or satisfaction. Also, no suggestions of a two-stream policy will receive our blessing, because this will still be unjust to millions of black non-citizens. Only the recognition of the inherent rights and freedoms of all groups to a full participation in the development and political system of our country will spell hope and security. No amount of suppressive legislative restrictions will kill our ^{burning} desire to equal rights. Whilst some of the older generation of Indians may have resigned themselves to continued subordination, we cannot and will not allow despair and lack of power to destroy our sense of social justice and the unshakeable belief that we bear no apology for our existence or our presence in South-Africa. We are committed to a united South-Africa and that excludes deprivation or denial of the right to freedom of association, choice of religion, maintenance of cultural values- provided these do not interfere with the basic rights

of other members of society. We believe in a mutually complementary and co-operative society, where diversity of culture and difference of religions should have an enriching effect. Our collective contributions must add to the life force towards the fulfilment of a common humanity, based on harmony, justice and fraternity. Thus the rights of an individual, within the society, must be respected; just as the individual must contribute his share and honour his responsibility towards society.

The Indians are often reminded that we should be grateful for the tiny mercies shown us; lest we suffer the same fate as Indians in other parts of Africa; but the South-African Indian is neither an expatriate, nor wishes to cling to a foreign citizenship, whilst enjoying a temporary local residence. Our opposition to repatriation is enough evidence and we belong with 22 million others to South-Africa. Our roots are deep in the soil of South-Africa and we will swim together in the turbulent sea of human misunderstanding, towards the shore of a common destiny, linking the hearts of all our peoples. We will take our chances and seek our salvation with the rest of South-Africa - we will have it this way and no other.

Finally, in the present context of our racial polarisation we see the Progressive Party as the only bridgehead across which the chasm of white intolerance and black frustration can be reduced, and a measure of sanity restored to the hopeless impasse in which we are wedged. I believe that the white electorate continue to reject them at their own peril and so bring nearer the day when black patience will have reached a point of no return. Our hope lies in preserving these life lines of communications between groups, forced into an anti-social and anti-human situation. The future of our children and the security of our values demand that we stand in the breach against the degradation of the human spirit and the denigration of the human personality. One cannot continue to live with unreality, and our misguided obsession with colour is incompatible with a peaceful solution. Tremendous reserves of goodwill and adaptability to reality is needed, if we to arrest this deterioration in human association. We hope and must strive for the cause of social justice and moral values to triumph over the blind prejudice of racial bigotry. If we agree on this, then tonight has been a veritable success.

Thank You,

R.A.M. SALOJEE.

