

Discuss the proactive involvement of Mahatma Gandhiji in abolishing the indentured labour system.

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With abolishing of slavery in 1834, the Britain government in the colony remodelled the slavery system into indentured/bonded labourers to meet their demands of work in colonies. Thus Indians were lured into this system and shipped off to colonies of Africa, Malaysia, West Indies. under GIRMIT ACT.

Racial discrimination and poor treatment caught the attention of Mahatma Gandhiji, who was residing in South Africa. Thus his quest for securing dignity and livelihood for indentured labourers started in South Africa.

Proactive involvement of Mahatma Gandhiji

1) Moderate struggle:-

Gandhiji started Natal Indian Congress and newspaper 'INDIAN OPINION' to unite different sections of Indians, mobilise their grievances and submit petitions to Britishers in Britain and South Africa.

2) Birth of Satyagraha:-

Satyagraha, a technique of resistance without violence was used against the law of carrying registered certificates by such labourers at all times. Passive Resistance Association was formed to defy the law.

3) Campaign against Transvaal Immigration Act:-

Indians defied the law by migrating from Natal into Transvaal. Mr Andrews, reported activities of Gandhiji, to enlighten Indian opinion. Thus Lord Hardinge also condemned the illtreatment and ordered for enquiry.

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4) Campaign against Poll tax and invalidation of Indian marriages

Poll tax was levied on ex-indentured Indians, whose family had settled in South Africa.

Further all marriages not registered by Registrar of marriages under Christian marriages were held invalid and children born out of such wedlock illegitimate.

Thus women in large numbers protested under Gandhiji's leadership due to indignity.

5) Setting up of Phoenix and Tolstoy farm:-

Gandhiji, in order to sustain Satyagrahi's need started the housing, education centres for the affected. They inculcated the value of social service and rights of individuals.

Such mass uprising brought Britain government at negotiating table. Agreements were made to undo injustices, finally resulting in abolishing indentured system in 1917.

Thus Mahatma Gandhi earned huge respect for his struggles that laid the foundation for him to become

'The father of India'