

Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture



SOUVENIR MAGAZINE **180th Anniversary** of the Arrival of **Indentured Labourers in Mauritius**

Indenture: from Prejudice to Pride



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COVER AND PAGE LAYOUT DESIGN:

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ISBN 978-99903-88-74-4



9 789990 388244

Editorial



2nd November 2014 marks the 180th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius. This year, it will be a milestone event that will be commemorated at the national and international levels and will long be remembered by Mauritians and by our hundreds of overseas guests. It provides us with a rare opportunity of pay homage to our predecessors, those who are the makers of our Mauritian history and who contributed in making our island a shining beacon to the rest of the world.

In 2002, the Government of Mauritius took the bold and laudable initiative of creating the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture. Ever since then, AGTF has made a major contribution in the strengthening our country's national identity and unity. Over the past decade, the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site has become a pillar of Mauritian cultural heritage and has placed our island on the map of international cultural tourism. The Aapravasi Ghat is the only indenture site to date to have been inscribed on UNESCO's prestigious World Heritage Site list and it belongs not only to the Mauritian nation, but to all of humanity.

This year has been a pivotal and progressive year for the AGTF and the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site with the opening of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre, the historic commemorations of 2nd November, the Indentured Labour Route International Conference, and the adoption of the Indentured Labour Route Project by the UNESCO Board. Furthermore, it is imperative to mention the launching of several publications related to indentured labour including the AGTF Coffee Table Book and the unveiling of a stel in memory of the 36 pioneer indentured Hill Coolies who first set foot on Mauritian soil on 2nd November 1834.

During the period of my chairmanship, AGTF has maintained its efficient track record of completing and moving progressively on its projects namely the Trianon Barracks Conservation Project and the multi-disciplinary study of the surviving stone structures at Bras d'Eau National Park linked with indentured labour. The other successful projects are the Bois Marchand Archaeological excavations, the multi-disciplinary study of Flat Island through a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, the Tamil Diaspora Exhibit, and the annual meeting of the AGTF Buffer Zone Consultative Committee. During the next three years, the study of our indenture sites such as at Trianon, Bois Marchand, and Flat Island will continue to enhance our understanding of the indenture experience in Mauritius.

On 15th September 2014, I was at Bhawanipore, Calcutta, India for the commemoration ceremony marking the 180th anniversary of the departure of the Atlas which carried the brave 36 Indian indentured workers to Mauritius. It was a historic, unique, and emotional event that reminded all those present of the arduous and perilous voyage that our ancestors made as they crossed the Kalapani. It is estimated that between the 1840s and early 1900s, more than 200,000 north Indian indentured workers passed through that site and came to Mauritius.

Between the 1826 and 1910, more than 1,400 ships left the ports of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay and transported more than 458,000 men, women, and children from the Indian Subcontinent to Mauritius. During these perilous voyages, 4,800 indentured immigrants lost their lives and more than 4,000 died in the quarantine stations of Mauritius such as at Flat Island.

In order to mark the departure of the Atlas in September 1834 and to remember the tragic deaths of thousands of these immigrants and the ship voyages of the hundreds of thousands who survived, I have submitted

a project proposal to Government of India for the creation of a 'Mauritius Immigration Depot Memorial Museum' at Bhawanipore, Kolkotta and for it to be inaugurated on 2nd November 2016. It will complement AGTF's Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and form an integral part of the forthcoming Indentured Labour Route Project.

In the near future, it is also being planned for a life-size replica model of the ship the Atlas to be created and permanently anchored near the emblematic sixteen steps of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. This ship will allow tourists and Mauritians to relive the indentured immigrant experience as they sailed into Port Louis harbor and arrived at the Aapravasi Ghat. This plan also calls for the fishing ships in Trou Fanfaron Bay to be relocated at Les Salines or on the other side of Port Louis harbor. The Governments of India, Mauritius, and other stakeholders will pull their financial resources and expertise together in order to make this dream a reality.

It is with great pleasure that I am announcing that in October 2014, the UNESCO Board adopted the proposals of Mauritius, as State-Party, for the establishment of an Indentured Labour Route Project. AGTF will act as the Secretariat and for the next several years will spearhead this international project of paramount importance. It will bring scholars, academic, institutions, cultural organizations, and descendants of contract workers from the indentured labour diaspora countries together and will form a strong and longlasting international network. I am pleased to inform that during the course of the next few years, the Indentured Labour Route will embrace more than 26 countries around the world.

Today, it is a matter of great pride and with a true sense of accomplishment for AGTF that Dr. the Honourable Navin Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, is inaugurating BRIC and launching the AGTF publications including the Coffee Table Book. On 3rd November 2014, our Prime Minister will be inaugurating AGTF's historic Indentured Labour Route Conference. During the course of the next few years, with the acquisition of the Cerne Docks, a 19th century warehouse, BRIC 2 will also be established and will form an integral part of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. At the same time, during the coming years, the Mahatma Gandhi Indian Immigration Archives, with government approval, will be gradually relocated from the MGI in Moka to BRIC 2 where it will form an integral part of the Visitor Experience and of the AGTF Documentation Centre just like at the Ellis Island Immigrant Museum in New York City Bay in the United States.

In the near future, as part of my forthcoming vision for AGTF, BRIC and the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site will form part of a multi-cultural heritage trail that will extend from the Blue Penny Museum to the Mauritius Postal Museum to the future National Art Gallery to our unique site. I would like to mention that it was during my tenure as Minister during the 1990s that the Postal Museum was established and then modernized and expanded. This urban cultural trail will illustrate the long, complex, and colorful urban history of our country between the 1730s and the early 1900s. It will provide Mauritians and tourists a unique insight into the settlement and architectural evolution of one of the great port-cities of the Indian Ocean.

I would like to thank the Honourable M. Choonee, the Minister of Arts and Culture, for this unwavering support for AGTF. At the same time, I would also like to thank Mrs. Mukherjee, former Ambassador of India to UNESCO, and Mr. Armoogum Parsuramen, the former Secretary of the UNESCO Board, for their indefatigable efforts in helping me and AGTF make the Indentured Labour Route Project a reality. Without a doubt, they are the true friends and well-wishers of AGTF and have the interest of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site at heart.

On a more personal note and as I conclude, I would like to pay tribute to my ancestors and to those 458,000 brave and valiant indentured men, women, and children who climbed up the emblematic sixteen steps of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. Today, we are their descendants, we carry their names, their blood flows through our veins, and our history is a continuation of their history. Therefore, it is appropriate and noteworthy that we carry out our devoir de memoire on this historic and special 2nd November 2014 by honoring the accomplishments, resistance, toils, and sacrifices of our ancestors.

I also take this rare opportunity to honor the memory and achievements of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi or more affectionately called Mahatma Gandhi. Between October and November 1901, he paid us a visit in Mauritius and visited Port Louis, Saint Pierre and Rivière du Rempart. It is interesting to note that the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site upholds those values of freedom and dignity of the individual and his soul or atma, which were very dear to the Mahatma. Faced with the challenge of fighting the crushing burden of imperialism and colonialism in his Homeland, a burden similar to those who came in those ships to Aapravasi Ghat, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1942:

"How can one be compelled to accept slavery?

I simply refuse to do the Master's bidding.

He may torture me,

break my bones into atoms

and even kill me.

He will then have my dead body,

not my obedience.

Ultimately, therefore, it is I,

who am the victor and not he,

for he has failed in getting me

to do what he wanted done."

Let me conclude with this stirring testimonial to the moral courage of our ancestors, who came here and despite against all odds, built this beautiful, multi racial nation that is Mauritius.



Mahen Utchanah
Chairman, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund
2nd November 2014

Message



The President of the Republic of Mauritius

Message from the President of the Republic



I am thankful to the President and Members of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for associating me with the publication of this Souvenir Magazine on the occasion of the 180th Anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

The arrival in Mauritius of the first batch of indentured labourers from India in the latter half of the 20th Century, no doubt constitutes an important landmark in the history of our country. Thousands of people from the Indian sub-continent were brought to this tiny island in this part of the world to work in the sugar cane fields following the abolition of slavery. They came from different parts of India to an unknown land, on the false hope that their future would be brighter than in their native land.

On their long voyage to that promised land, many of them unfortunately lost their lives. Those who made it realized that life was no better. They had to toil day and night, in inhumane conditions, under the scorching sun to make of Mauritius what it is to-day.

It's only fair that on this auspicious day of 02 November each year, we pay tribute in our own modest way to those thousands of descendants of indentured labourers from India who by the dint of their hard work, sweat and sacrifice have left an indelible mark in the history of a modern and prosperous Mauritius.

In this regard, the statement made by Sri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, during his recent visit to the United States, that consideration will be given by the Indian authorities to extend further facilities to PIO card holders, that is, the Indian diaspora, brings a glimmer of hope in the hearts of the millions of people of Indian origin scattered across the globe.

I seize this opportunity to commend the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for the various initiatives it has taken to commemorate the memory of the indentured labourers in Mauritius.

I wish you all well and good luck in your future endeavour.

H.E. Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK
President of the Republic

30 September 2014



Prime Minister
Republic of Mauritius

Message

This year marks the 180th Anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured labourers in Mauritius. It is quite apposite that this historic occasion is being marked by a series of events and the publication of a Souvenir magazine. I commend the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for its excellent initiative.

Almost half a million indentured men, women including children climbed up the sixteen emblematic steps of the Aapravasi Ghat as they set foot on the Mauritian soil. As the landing place of the ancestors of a large part of our population, the site will forever remain a major footprint in the history of our country.

Through their toil, sufferings and sacrifices, and thanks to a strict adherence to moral and religious values, those brave and valiant people played a key role in the shaping of our modern, multi-ethnic and peaceful society. It is on their shoulders that we are so proudly standing today.

The Aapravasi Ghat is a "lieu de mémoire" and has been proclaimed as UNESCO's World Heritage Site since 2006. It also symbolises the noblest values of humanity which need to be continuously nurtured to keep society on the path of sustainability. The Aapravasi Ghat is indeed a cornerstone not only of our Mauritian cultural heritage but also of mankind at large.

I look forward to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund continuing in its lofty mission of preserving this World Heritage Site and of making it a shining beacon of inspiration for present and future generations. I wish it well in its future endeavours.

*Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP
Prime Minister*

26 September 2014

Message



Republic of Mauritius
Ministry of Arts and Culture
(Office of the Minister)



Message

I am pleased to convey my warm greetings to the AGTF on the issue of this souvenir magazine to mark the 180th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

The Aapravasi Ghat is a key symbol of our identity as the ancestors of the majority of the present-day Mauritian population landed at what was formerly known as the Immigrant Depot. As a vivid testimony of the tribulations of the builders of our nation, the Aapravasi Ghat has become a unique heritage site of humanity.

Government has always been pro-active in preserving and promoting our heritage. As in previous years, we are organizing a series of activities to highlight the crucial role of the Aapravasi Ghat as a *lieu de mémoire*. In addition, we are looking to this 180th commemoration as a further opportunity to strengthen national unity by bringing our common heritage to the fore.

We are hosting an international conference on indenture that will see the participation of several delegates from around the world who will discuss the legacies of the unique Great Experiment. Furthermore, this year's activities will be upbeat through the holding of a culinary festival, cultural programs with song and dance troupes as well as an exhibition thanks to the collaboration of the Republic of India and chutney music from the Caribbean regions. The Bhojpuri Maha-Utsav will raise awareness and promote a major legacy of indenture, namely, Bhojpuri language and culture. This international festival will constitute a platform for wider cultural exchanges, enhanced connectivity and networking opportunities among Bhojpuri speakers around the world.

Government continues to provide the AGTF with the means to continue its mission of preserving this World Heritage Site. On top of the continuing research work on oral, tangible and intangible heritage, AGTF finalized the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre, a unique exhibition to highlight the establishment and development of the indenture system. The AGTF also held consultations with stakeholders in respect of its Management Plan and submitted the dossier on the indentured labour project which relates to the twenty six countries implementing the project to UNESCO.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Chairman and members of the AGTF Board as well as all employees for their commitment.

M. Choonee, GOSK,
 Minister



Message from the Lord Mayor of Port Louis

We are commemorating this year the 180th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers at the Aapravasi Ghat. It is not only a tradition but a *devoir de mémoire* for all of us to continue to pay tribute to them. The ancestors of a great number of our compatriots have struggled and made enormous sacrifices in laying the foundations of the development of our country. We need to be grateful for their hard work as they have left such a strong legacy for us to remember, a legacy which has transformed us into an educated and successful nation.

As Lord Mayor, I am proud that the Aapravasi Ghat, located in the City of Port Louis, is listed as a World Heritage Site since 2006. The Aapravasi Ghat stands today as a monument of our cultural history and the forthcoming opening of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre will be a unique attraction for tourists who wish to discover more about the history of indentured labourers and for many of us who wish to go back to their roots and build up their family history.

The Aapravasi Ghat has now become a landmark for Mauritius and its capital city. All of us have therefore a duty towards its preservation as a unique heritage.

Marie Christiane Dorine CHUKOWRY
Lord Mayor

3 October 2014

The Aapravasi Ghat: The survey of a past and a challenge for the present and the future

Dear readers, in the preamble to my words of welcome to this Souvenir Magazine, let me quote these sentences relating to the Aapravasi Ghat (AG) on the official website of Unesco World Heritage:

“The buildings of Aapravasi Ghat are one of the first manifestations allowing us to grasp what was to become a global economic system. This site is a major historic testimony on the job under contract or “indenture” in the 19th century, and the only example remaining from this unique modern diaspora. It represents not only the development of the modern indentured labour system, but also memories, traditions and values of these men, women and children who left their country of origin to work abroad and which have passed to their millions of descendants, for whom the site has great symbolic significance”.

This reminder is of tremendous value because it brings to mind the heritage importance of this site of 1640 sq. mt, and above all, its human, cultural and aesthetic values, as well as its symbolic significance, which has been a determinant factor in the ranking of the AG by Unesco in 2006. Therefore, I would like to make a critical assessment of what we have achieved during these 8 years, and I will venture to articulate a vision for Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site.

Eight years later, a sound vision

8 years after the classification of Unesco, one thing is well established in the memory and human landscape of Mauritius, the island that became the hub of indenture in the world during the first third of the 18th century. And, such, for its specific function in the coolie trade: to accommodate workers hired with a contract of five years for this country and to ensure transit of other contractual workers to other lands requiring this new type of labour, within the framework of what was known at that time as the ‘Great Experiment’. In Chief Executive position for several years, I was able to witness a slow but sure evolution of the perception of

our role - and that of the public - in this mission that had been entrusted to us. An innovative mission, as it is, because no country in the Mascarene region had such a responsibility, nor such an honour, and we had to learn, innovate, explore and propose...



During these years, we were able to organize seminars, workshops and conference, exhibitions and lectures, archaeological excavations, theatrical and choreographic, developed the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) which will be inaugurated on 2nd November 2014 by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius in the presence of Her Excellency Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, Indian Minister of External and Indian overseas Affairs. We have negotiated legislations for the respect of the buffer zone established by Unesco, undertaken work of classification and conservation of other sites related to indenture in our country. A national ensemble of signage indicating the location of the Aapravasi Ghat is now well rooted in the landscape of the country. Today, many blogs and tourist attraction sites report our presence and cultural tourism is densified with our presence at the gates of the capital, not far from the Central Market, a few steps away from our gates opening onto Trou Fanfaron.

We encourage the audiovisual recording of the aged witnesses of the sugar industry, keep an oral and archetypal heritage of those times... And the AG Trust Fund hosted the publications of researchers, historians, sociologists, but not only of academic work. Last year, according to the wish of our Prime Minister, we initiated publications under the angle of a creativity inspired by this paradigm of our history.

We published with much pride the poetic book of our countryman Dr. Khal Torabully, *Voices from the Aapravasi Ghat-Indentured imaginaries*, which was launched by the Prime Minister. His Excellency the President of the Republic of Mauritius has called it a masterpiece, in his forward to the book.

This year, the author, recognized as pioneer of coolitude, this aesthetics of migration linked to indenture will present the very first global tribute to cane cutters, in his masterly *Coupeuses d’Azur*, which, I trust, will

find its place in international literary history. We are equally publishing the research works of the Peerthum tandem on the struggle of indentured labour. Besides these we are coming forward with an A3 Coffee Table Book on Indenture at the laudable initiative of Mr Mahen Uchanah, the Chairman of AGTF. The launching of the above publications will be this November 2 in front of Her Excellency Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, our invited Minister from India and our Prime Minister, eager to promote this creative vector so that history can also inform the imagination of the citizens, writers and artists and not remain as an element of an abstract past, enclosed in a jar of formaldehyde.

It is obvious that the AG has given us a point of strength, a place of multiple resonances, to think and give content to a place once left abandoned, despite

its potent historic and cultural value. In this same vein, we wanted to ensure that the future Museum of the Aapravasi Ghat, or BRIC, reveals our history in a lively manner, through a scenography designed to capture the attention of the visitor, with input from touch screens, which, somehow, will make our history closer to us. Of course, apart from this tool of proximity, more distant visitors can visit our wikipedia page and our official website.

The Aapravasi Ghat, a linchpin for the country

As I said earlier, our mission offers us challenges, and this is precisely where its interest lies. We have undertaken that the AG stands as the common heritage of all, here in Mauritius, and elsewhere, in the region and beyond. Thus, work was conducted to explain that



*Aerial View of Aapravasi Ghat
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

approximately 3% of the coolies were Chinese, African and European. Even if this percentage seems low, it is not to be minimized. It resolutely marks the fact that the indenture is a transnational phenomenon which has affected various countries. It enabled other migrations, like those of the Italians, the Irish, the Poles... And that it must be comprehended as part of the history of any human being.

It is following this desire for sharing memories that Sino-Mauritians, for example, celebrate also, on 2nd November, the day of indenture in Mauritius, and we welcome this heartily. This spirit presides also over our relationship with Le Morne, the other Mauritian site ranked for its symbolic value of resistance to slavery. We are working to develop this wider scope, even if the indentured Indian were majority in the coolie trade on our shores. This diversity, celebrated in the humanism of diversity of indenture is a wealth for all, and the symbolic value of the AG is strengthened through it. This philosophy is in our vision. It is at the base of a transcultural vision of a better living together, able to contribute to the culture of peace that Unesco defends as one of its main objectives.

Therefore, in addition to the realization of the historical route (heritage trail) linked to the indenture, linking such places as Vagrant Depot and barracks of Trianon, we have just signed an agreement with the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, which granted us \$ 20,666 to undertake documentation and prepare conservation plan at Flat Island. This small island, let us remember, hosted the coolies in a quarantine station. Its remains are still visible and it is important to promote this site, to anchor it to our history.

At the end of these introductory remarks to this Souvenir Magazine, I have the great pleasure to inform you that, in the wake of the Route of the Slave of Unesco, the AGTF in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture is working for the creation of the Route of Indenture. Indeed, the AGTF has sought the co-operation of the 26 countries linked by the coolie trade. Mauritius will therefore welcome the representatives of these countries for its construction, which, undoubtedly, will give our country greater worldwide visibility.

Now that the Aapravasi Ghat is one of the best-known places in Mauritius, with emblematic spaces such as Pamplémousses garden or the Land of seven colors of Chamarel, our work continues, and your

confidence and cooperation for the years to come are valuable, very valuable indeed...

I wish you, right now, a nice discovery of the Aapravasi Ghat, of our history and of this magazine which solemnly marks the 180th anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers on this island, whose voice fits even more in the concert of the peoples of the world.

It is this peaceful, pluralistic voice which is in our hearts and our minds, in order to live up to the memory of this page of History. And the memory of all this is enlightening for humanity, because as said the French writer Hervé Bazin: *"A life without a future is often a life without souvenirs"*.

Raju Mohit,
Director, AGTF
2nd Oct 2014



**Message from
Professor Armoogum Parsuramen**

I am very much honoured to have been invited to contribute to this commemorative magazine to be issued in the context of the history of Indian indentured labour in Mauritius.

While praising the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for its remarkable work to disseminate historical facts on not only the arrival of indentured labourers, but also various facets of their culture, language, religion, working and living conditions and their arduous struggle for justice and a better future, I must underline the importance of digging further into the archives and update ourselves.

Recently, Mauritius was proud to be the venue of the first International Conference on Tamil Diaspora (INTAD). The landmark conference organised by INTAD (Mauritius), a duly registered body, grouping the main Tamil organisations, and inaugurated by the Prime Minister on the 23rd July, 2014 at the MGI Auditorium, attracted some 75 foreign and 150 local researchers and academics from 20 countries of the Tamil diaspora.

The purpose of the conference is to maximize the collaboration with all countries of the Tamil diaspora in various fields through a structured network and share the fruits of the research undertaken by learned scholars of the Tamil diaspora with others. Research is an ongoing process. At the conference, we learned from a highly respected researcher that the national archives of Pondicherry contain a wealth of information on the departure of slaves and indentured labour to Mauritius.

One of the resolutions adopted by the conference is to request the government of Pondicherry to make its national archives accessible to our scholars. We are sure that new information will surface and we must be prepared to look at the emerging facts with objectivity.

INTAD will be pleased to work closely with the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and involve the Trust Fund in future conferences which will be held, in turn, in the fifty countries of the Tamil diaspora across the world.

**Armoogum Parsuramen
President
International Conference on Tamil Diaspora (INTAD)**



AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE

THE WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

The concept of World Heritage was developed by UNESCO to define cultural and natural heritage that is irreplaceable, unique and authentic, not only for the nation to which it belongs, but also for humanity as a whole. It is considered that the loss of this heritage through deterioration or disappearance would generate an impoverishment of heritage for all people of the world. As such, the significance of such World Heritage is defined as being of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

The Outstanding Universal Value determines World Heritage Status and is defined by the Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) of UNESCO and by the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2008).

Because the Aapravasi Ghat is of Outstanding Universal Value, it was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006. The Aapravasi Ghat is the symbol of the Great Experiment that made Mauritius the site of the first successful large-scale use of indentured labour. The Great Experiment was initiated by the British colonial government which sought to establish a system of contractual labour after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834.

Following UNESCO's World Heritage Convention, a Buffer Zone (BZ) was delimited around Aapravasi Ghat (AG) World Heritage Property (WHP) to allow the full expression of its outstanding significance. UNESCO explains that the Buffer Zone is important as it represents the context in which the World Heritage Property has evolved through time. As such, it supports the outstanding cultural significance at the national and international level. This is the reason why appropriate measures are enforced in the Buffer Zone to protect, preserve, enhance and promote the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage Property. The ultimate objective is to create a suitable environment supporting the retention of the heritage in the Buffer Zone and to ensure its sustainable development.

The changes brought by the establishment of legal boundaries for the Buffer Zone led to the review of the Management Plan adopted in 2006. The Management Plan is required by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention to ensure the preservation and sustainability of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property. The Management Plan describes the World Heritage Property, its Outstanding Universal Value and related significances, and analyses the issues affecting the conservation and management of the World Heritage Property.

The Management Plan has an essential role: it is a key document that guides all the stakeholders involved in the conservation, management and promotion of the World Heritage Property. It is directed by a Vision for the World Heritage Property and addresses key principles and objectives that will guide the implementation of this Vision.



AAPRAVASI GHAT
World Heritage Site

2014 World Heritage Committee Decision

During the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee meeting held between 15 and 25 June 2014, the Committee “took note with satisfaction of the measures taken by the State Party to address its previous requests to mitigate the threats on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Aapravasi Ghat” and “encouraged the State Party to pursue its efforts

to ensure the conservation of the Aapravasi Ghat". The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies considered that the recent concerns of the World Heritage committee in relation to the management and protection of the Aapravasi Ghat have been appropriately addressed by Mauritius.

They are therefore of the view that no further reporting to the World Heritage Committee is currently required. Mauritius is encouraged to fully implement all relevant measures in order to prevent any threats to the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity and integrity of property. The Aapravasi Ghat is therefore no longer considered under threat. Eight years after the Aapravasi Ghat's inscription, the World Heritage Committee considers that the actions of the Mauritian Government, in particular with the reinforcement of the legislative framework, have met the requirements of UNESCO.



THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE OF THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Located on the bay of Trou Fanfaron, in the capital of Port-Louis, the Aapravasi Ghat is the remains of an immigration depot, the site from where modern indentured labour Diaspora emerged. The Depot was built in 1849 to receive indentured labourers from India, Eastern Africa, Madagascar, China and Southeast Asia to work on the island's sugar estates as part of the 'Great Experiment'. This experiment was initiated by the British Government, after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834, to replace slave labour by indentured labour in its plantation colonies. The success of the 'Great Experiment' in Mauritius led to its adoption by other colonial powers from the 1840s, resulting in a world-wide migration of more than two million indentured labourers, of which Mauritius received almost half a million.

The buildings of Aapravasi Ghat are among the earliest explicit manifestations of what would become a global economic system. The Aapravasi Ghat site stands as a major historic testimony of indenture in the 19th century and is the sole surviving example of this unique modern diaspora. It represents not only the development of the modern system of contractual labour, but also the memories, traditions and values that these men, women and children carried with them when they left their countries of origin to work in foreign lands and subsequently bequeathed to their millions of descendants for whom the site holds great symbolic meaning.

Statement of significance for Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property Buffer Zone

Not only are the Buffer Zones of the Aapravasi Ghat the buffer or curtilage for the Core Zone containing the Immigration Depot; it is also an important historic urban landscape where the origins and memories of the evolution of the oldest portion of the city are recorded, alongside its port of Trou Fanfaron. As such, the remaining tangible and intangible heritage

that is contained in the Buffer Zone must be protected and managed in its own right, as well as to provide a context for the Core Zone.

The Statement of Significance provided for the Buffer Zone guides the type of development controls and guidelines attached to it. The Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property covers an area of cultural significance for the history of the Immigration Depot as nearly 70% of the Immigration Depot was located in this area before its destruction in the 20th century. Today, the visual and historical links are preserved between the Core Zone and its Buffer Zone as an evidence of common historical evolution. As from the late 1840s, the increasing immigration to Mauritius and expansion of port activities resulted in the development of commercial activities in the area providing materials and goods for the daily running of the Immigration Depot. As such, the surroundings of the Core Zone have been a centre of trade, commerce and other cultural expressions for more than two centuries, making it a place of strong interaction between people of various cultural backgrounds.

These traditions and practices have survived up to present: Merchant property owners have continued to operate in Buffer Zone 2 from the indenture period up to this date. The continuity in land use is also coupled with the continuity in the nature of commercial activities in the Buffer Zone stressing the existence of long commercial and ownership tradition evocative of the port activities and of the indenture period, together with cultural activities or intangible heritage that accompany this land use.

This intangible heritage is associated with several national monuments evocative of the French (1715-1810) and British (1810-1968) periods, the many remaining significant historic architectural examples of administrative and port buildings, shops, residences and religious places, as well as significant historic urban streetscapes, nodes and places. As such, the Buffer Zone presents significant examples of the evolution of Mauritian colonial architecture and urbanism which stand as the legacy of the colonial past and as places of shared history erected by slaves, convicts and indentured labourers during the colonial periods.

CHRONOLOGY ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE AAPRAVASI GHAT: FROM IMMIGRATION DEPOT TO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Satyendra Peerthum, Historian

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1829 | Around 1500 Indian and Chinese indentured workers were imported into Mauritius in what was part of an early labour experiment with indentured labour. The majority of the indentured workers were repatriated within a few months after their arrival |
| 1834 | Beginning of the indentured labour system under private auspices with the importation of the 36 Hill Coolies by George Arbuthnot on 2nd November |
| 1835 | Abolition of slavery in Mauritius |
| 1834-1839 | The Great Experiment got underway with the importation of more than 25000 indentured workers from India |
| 1839 | Suspension of Indian labour immigration by the British Government of India |
| 1842 | Resumption of Indian immigration under Government control |
| 1843 | The office of the Protector of Immigrants and laws regulating indentured were enacted. The system became state controlled and state sponsored |
| 1849 | The Aapravasi Ghat or Immigration Depot or the Immigration Department located at Trou Fanfaron became operational |
| 1856 | Flat Island and Gabriel Island were established as quarantine stations |
| 1864 | The Vagrant Depot became operational |
| 1864-1865 | The expansion of the Immigration Depot got underway and the Depot was divided into two sections in order to make way for the Northern Railway Line |
| 1867 | The Labour Law of 1867 was enacted |
| 1869 | The DePlevitz petition was drafted and it contained the signature of more than 9100 indentured workers and outlined their grievances with regards to the planters, local police and colonial administrators |
| 1875 | The report of the Royal Commission of 1875 which investigated the living, working and social condition of the indentured labourers and their descendants was published in London |
| 1909 | The report of the Royal Commission of 1909 was published in London which also partially looked at the social and economic conditions of the indentured labourers and recommended the termination of the indentured labour system |

1910	The Aapravasi Ghat received the last indentured labourers and the Sanderson Committee in London recommended the end of the indenture system in the British Empire
1923-1924	The last indentured labourers were brought to Mauritius on an experimental basis and immigration was suspended within less than a year
1925	The report of Maharaj Kunwar Singh was published which recommended the end of the indenture labour system in Mauritius
1938	The post of Protector of Immigrants was abolished
1950	The Public Assistance Department was established at the Aapravasi Ghat
1958	The Vagrant Depot was decreed National Monument
1970	Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, visited the site and Mr. Ramlallah started his campaign for the recognition and safeguarding of the Aapravasi Ghat Site
1974	The Old Labourers' Quarters of Trianon was decreed National Monument The Forbach windmill was decreed National Monument
1976	Immigration records were transferred to the Mahatma Gandhi Institute
1987-1989	The Coolie Ghat was declared a National Monument and renamed Aapravasi Ghat
1991	The MGI Indian Immigration Archives / Folk Museum was inaugurated
2001	Setting up of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund
2001	2nd November was declared a public holiday
2002	The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board was created
2002-2004	Archaeological excavation of the site
2004-2010	The Aapravasi Ghat Conservation Project
2005	Koïchiro Matsuura, the then Director General of UNESCO, visited the site
2005	Dossier nominating the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site was submitted to UNESCO
2006	The Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on the list of World Heritage Site on the 16th July

INTERNATIONAL INDENTURED LABOUR ROUTE PROJECT

Former Ambassador, Bhaswati Mukherjee

Background

In July 2006, Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. It was Mauritius's first site. Symbolic of Mauritian society's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic fabric, it represented the most significant surviving manifestation of the indentured labour system that existed in colonial times in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Established after the formal abolition of slavery in 1834, Aapravasi Ghat marks the point where the indentured labourers, drawn mainly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh provinces but also from Southern Provinces of colonial India, would pass through these gates either to stay on in Mauritius to work as indentured labourers in the sugar plantations or to sail on to further destinations, such as Guyana, Suriname and Reunion Island, to name a few.

Thus, during this period from 1834 i.e. after the abolition of slavery to the early 20th century, more than two million indentured labour travelled on this route, also known as 'Coolie Route', to Mauritius and other destinations. This route represents therefore not just the development of a new system of a contractual labour but also the conservation of the civilisational heritage, traditions and values that these people carried with them to far off destinations, including Mauritius. This resulted, a century later, in the evolution of multicultural societies in these new countries from where most often these indentured labour never returned to their homeland.

Inscription of Aapravasi Ghat

As Ambassador of India to UNESCO and India's Representative on the World Heritage Committee, I was privileged to argue the case for the African Group and for Mauritius at the Meeting of the Committee in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2006. Despite efforts by the Advisory Body to argue that there was no Indentured Route and that the Indian labour coming to Mauritius and other destinations were seeking a better future

through modern immigration, Mauritius and India convincingly made the case that indentured labour's passage to Aapravasi Ghat could not be compared with modern immigration as we understand it and that its OUV [Outstanding Universal Value] was intact and represented a significant historic memory to the world, similar to the Slave Route. Accordingly, and despite a negative recommendation given by the Advisory Body, this site was inscribed by acclamation, representing a great victory for India and Mauritius.

My visit to Mauritius and my Reflection on the Site

My visit to Mauritius in May 2014 thus marked a complete circle in my quest from seeking Aapravasi Ghat inscription in 2006 in Lithuania to its formal adoption and conferment of world heritage status by UNESCO. I was deeply moved by my first visit which seemed to bring alive the voices and memories of so many of my ancestors, who left their homeland behind and came to a new home in Mauritius, climbing the steps of the Ghat for the first time. There are many legends of the oral and intangible heritage they brought with them including the songs which are still sung in Bhojpuri in Mauritius, Guyana, Suriname and all over the Caribbean. These are songs that recall that while the days are full of work, the nights bring back memories of their motherland, India. In the book "Voices from the Aapravasi Ghat" by the great scholar Khal Torabully who symbolises the humanism of diversity, one poem states simply.

*"I keep in me the other culture
The counter culture.
The return to nature
I deeply nurture.
I am the fakir between territorialities
Set between multiple bodies.
Within me so many referents
Seem to marry the ants to the elephants."*

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund under the dynamic chairmanship of Mr Mahen Utchanah and with the full support of the Govt. of Mauritius, has brought to life the history of the Ghat and what it represents. Many exciting projects have been developed in the context of the 180th anniversary in 2014 of the arrival of the indentured labour in Mauritius. A major international conference is also being planned in November 2014. These activities will help to sensitise the international community about the indentured labour route which



Source: AGTF Photo Collection.

resulted in the migration of over two million people through Mauritius to the Caribbean through Indian Ocean and across the South Pacific to Latin America. It was the precursor of the global movement of populations as we know it now.

The Indentured Route Project: Some Reflections

The Government of Mauritius with the full support of Government of India and in accordance with the relevant decision of the World Heritage Committee in 2006, has decided to develop an International Indentured Labour Route Project for approval by the Executive Board of UNESCO at its meeting in September 2014. A draft project has been prepared and will be submitted after scrutiny, by the UNESCO Secretariat to the Executive Board. When approved by the Board, with the full support of Mauritius, India and other co-sponsors from the African, Asian and other regional groups, this project would represent a significant contribution to the Memory of the World Register, similar to the Slave Route.

What could be more appropriate than for Mauritius to develop this project. Mauritius whose history is unique as the only country in the world having a world heritage site for indentured labour and another site [Le Morne Cultural Landscape] which symbolises resistance to slavery. I congratulate the AGTF and the Govt. of Mauritius for developing this initiative, essential for commemorating this unique historical movement of populations, along with their culture and heritage resulting in the laying of the foundation of a modern and prosperous Mauritius, an island of democracy, pluralism and rule of law where multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity thrive. It would be a pleasure and honour to be involved in further development of this exciting project.

AGTF PROJECTS: 2003 TO 2014

Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit

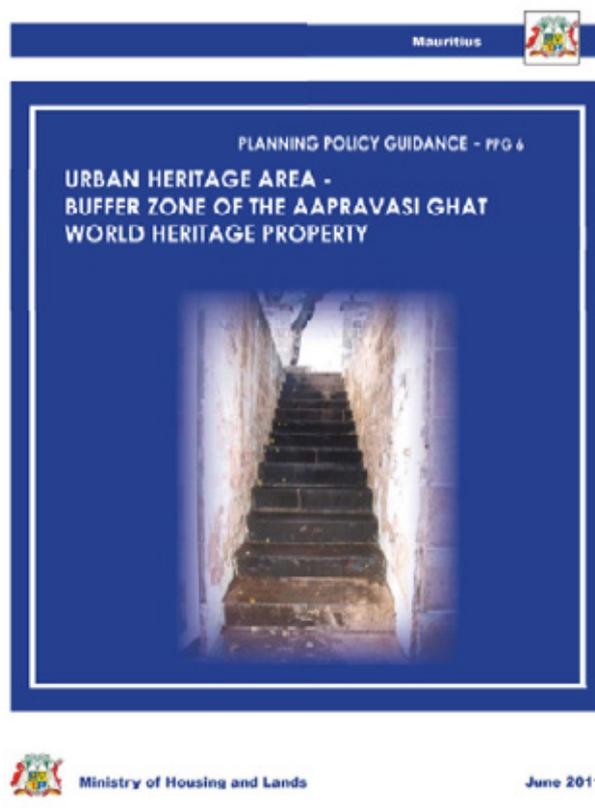
The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) was created in 2001 to preserve, manage and promote the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. The Aapravasi Ghat listed as a National Monument in 1987 was also identified as a potential World Heritage Site on the tentative list of UNESCO. In 2004, when the Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura visited Mauritius, the process for proposing the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List started.

Before the creation of the AGTF, historical documentation of the Aapravasi Ghat had been initiated by the team of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute based on the archives of the former Immigration Depot kept at the Institute. In 2002, a vast programme of archaeological excavations was set up to further document the Aapravasi Ghat. Archaeological evidence allowed a better understanding of the Immigration Depot and supported historical information in the interpretation of the site. The research programme launched by the AGTF in 2003 continued throughout the inscription process. The objective was to conduct holistic research for the preparation of the Nomination Dossier for the UNESCO's World Heritage Centre.

The Nomination Dossier was completed and submitted in February 2005 for consideration during the 30th session of the World Heritage Committee held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2006. Concurrently, the Management Plan for Aapravasi Ghat required by UNESCO was prepared by AGTF team. The purpose of this document was to establish the strategy and the projects to be implemented at World Heritage Site in the short, medium and long term. On the strength of the Nomination Dossier and given its outstanding significance in the history of indenture, the Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006.

The inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat led to the development of a framework to allow its preservation and promotion in line with the World Heritage status' requirements. The first step was the delimitation of a buffer zone around the Aapravasi Ghat. The UNESCO requires the delimitation of a buffer zone to preserve

and enhance the context of evolution of the property inscribed. The objective is to retain and support the historical significance of the World Heritage Site. To do so, the AGTF launched a research programme on the buffer zone including more than 200 buildings and places of interest. This programme aimed at documenting the history, the architectural style and the heritage value of each building. This data was used to define the heritage values existing in the buffer zone and to determine how these values relate to the World Heritage Site. The AGTF team and Dr Karel Bakker, Head of the Architecture Department at the University of Pretoria, proceeded to a close analysis of the buildings and streetscapes to determine landmarks and grade buildings according to their heritage value. This work undertaken from 2007 to 2011 led to the elaboration of the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG 6) with the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the City Council of Port Louis.





Source: AGTF Photo Collection.

This planning document issued in June 2011 is now enforced in the buffer zone extending from Duke of Edinburgh Street to Arsenal Street, and from Quay D to Royal Street. The PPG 6 encourages the development of the area into a vibrant historic city centre. This was a major achievement in the post-inscription process given that the buffer zone was not legally delimited at the time of inscription.

The work undertaken in the buffer zone is a good example of the methodology used in the implementation of the heritage projects conducted by the Trust Fund. The AGTF has relentlessly focused on the heritage related to indenture as per its mandate. The Trust has identified sites where indentured labourers stayed in quarantine such as Flat Island, where they were imprisoned such as the Vagrant Depot in Grand River North West and where they lived such as Trianon former Sugar Estate with the concern to better understand the scope and extent of indenture in Mauritius and in the world.

In these projects, the purpose is to document our past and to reintegrate heritage in the lives of the

Mauritians thus ensuring its preservation. To this end, historical, anthropological and archaeological research is essential to better appreciate the nature of this heritage and elaborate the most appropriate strategy for its conservation and promotion towards Mauritians and tourists. In a country where almost 70% of the population are the descendants of an indentured labourer, it seems essential to reconstitute the past to the population in the most accurate manner through projects that seek to share this heritage with everyone.

RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Research is an ongoing process and was defined as an objective of the Trust Fund in AGTF ACT and was also a recommendation made by UNESCO at the time of the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List in 2006:

“Undertake research on indentured labour to consider the extent, scope and impact of the indentured labour Diaspora around the world”.

(Decision WHC 30 COM 8B. 33)

It also responds to the objectives of the AG WHS Management Plan 2013-2018.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

The research undertaken was to address the following objectives:

1. Conduct research to document and further appreciate the extent and scope of indenture;
2. Relate the Mauritian indentured experience with the perspective of indenture in the world;
3. Encourage multi-disciplinary approach to better appreciate Mauritian experience;
4. Continue documenting the World Heritage Property as the symbol of indenture in the 19th and early 20th century;
5. Document the modalities and dynamics that led the British colonial power to choose Mauritius as a test case for the implementation of the indenture system; and
6. The impact of indenture system set up in Mauritius on Mauritian society and on indenture in the Indian Ocean region and in the world.

THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The research experience at the AGTF has focused on several research topics to document the Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot and substantiate further the World Heritage Property's cultural significance. The years 2004 -2008 concentrated

on research for the preparation of the Nomination Dossier for the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List. Since then, extensive research continued with the collaboration of other institutions and on a multi-disciplinary level.

The main topics of research are:

1. The history of Aapravasi Ghat

Documentation and interpretation of the historic features of the site as per the recommendations of the Conservation Plan (2006) ; Documentation of modalities and dynamics that led to its implantation in Trou Fanfaron, Port Louis; and The life at the Aapravasi Ghat;

2. The indenture experience in Mauritius and in the world

Explore the social, political and economic environment in 19th century Mauritius; Indenture in the world and the importance of the Mauritian experience; and the vagrancy system;

3. Indentured labourers' experiences

Explore the extent and scope of indenture in Mauritius through personal experience, genealogy and case studies; the origins of indentured labourers; the voyage experience; the working and living conditions on sugar estates; the sugar industry, the indentured labourers from countries such as Africa, China, Comoros islands and Madagascar; and the liberated Africans.

THE VAGRANTS' DATABASE

The research project was initiated in March 2008 to design and set up a database on the vagrants in Mauritius for the period 1877 to 1918. The services of the Computer Science Department of the University of Mauritius were hired to produce the Vagrants' Database. The database was launched on 30 April 2009 during the annual commemoration at Vagrant Depot Heritage Site. The launching marked the end of the project.

Research was undertaken in various institutions including the Mauritius National Archives, the National Library and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.

As part of the Management Plan 2013-2018, the technical and research unit is working on the preparation of a Research Plan presenting the strategy for research for the next five years. It also includes the preparation of a project proposal for the setting up of an Indentured Labour Route Project.

ORAL HISTORY

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund launched an Oral History Project entitled “From Indenture to VRS” after initial research started in 2003. This project was the opportunity to perform research on Oral History and Tradition to collect and therefore, preserve Intangible Heritage. Most cultural traditions and customs are handed on from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Following this project, the Oral History Unit was set up in 2005. The projects led by this unit have the objective to gather oral testimonies from elderly people living in sugar estates to collect insight experience of the life in sugar camps. These testimonies help us in our interpretation of history and enrich our views of the past.

From June 2009 to January 2010, an extensive oral history project was conducted in each district of Mauritius to collect testimonies of descendants of indentured labourers. As part of this project, the AGTF collected about 400 interviews. These interviews constitute an important research data to examine the legacy of indenture in the Mauritian society today when almost 70% of the current population are the descendants of indentured labourers.

The Oral History Project focused on interviews of descendants of indentured labourers, planters, of supervising officers, of merchants dealing with the daily activities of the indentured labourers. This project is of mere importance regarding our commitment to the Mauritian nation to preserve our heritage and promote intangible heritage as per the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage signed by Mauritius.

The Oral History Project also brings to life the relation of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site inscribed under criteria vi with the living traditions pertaining to the indenture experience:

“To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.”

(Criteria vi; Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention)

The oral history project is a key research programme to better appreciate the living memories related to indenture and provide a memorial perspective on other scientific data.

RESEARCH ON HERITAGE IN THE BUFFER ZONE

Since 2006, a research project was initiated in the buffer zone to substantiate the links existing between the World Heritage Property and its setting. Research included the following:

- Documentation of more than 200 buildings to allow heritage monitoring and interpretation;
- Oral history project to collect testimonies and analyse the values related to heritage and indenture in the buffer zone;
- Historical research on heritage in the buffer zone;



Source: AGTF Photo Collection.

- Study of urban dynamics between the port area, the Aapravasi Ghat and other key landmarks;
- Preliminary heritage mapping (to share data and monitor heritage).

The objective is to combine all inputs of disciplines to produce multi-disciplinary research on Trianon as per AGTF mandate.

Bois Marchand Cemetery

Dr Seetah, Assistant Professor at the University of Stanford, USA, and his team conducted archaeological research at Bois Marchand Cemetery. This project was first initiated by the Truth and Justice Commission in 2011. The research project at Bois Marchand, now in its fourth year, has investigated the indentured diaspora through the lens of archaeology. Last year, six graves were opened and eight skeletons were studied, all of which are currently under analysis.

Excavations retrieved human skeletal remains and funerary materials that allow the study of diet, lifestyle and origins of the buried individuals. This scientific study adds an important dimension to the study of indenture.

RESEARCH ON OTHER INDENTURE SITES

AGTF conducted research on:

- The history and archaeology of Trianon heritage site (a former sugar estate), Quatre Bornes, former dwellings and place of work of indentured labourers;
- The history and archaeology of Vagrant Depot in Grand River North West, former place of incarceration of indentured labourers;
- The History of Flat Island, Former quarantine station for indentured labourers;
- The History of Pointe aux Canoniers quarantine station for general population;
- History and archaeology of Union Vale, former sugar estate;
- History and archaeology of Forbach, former sugar estate.

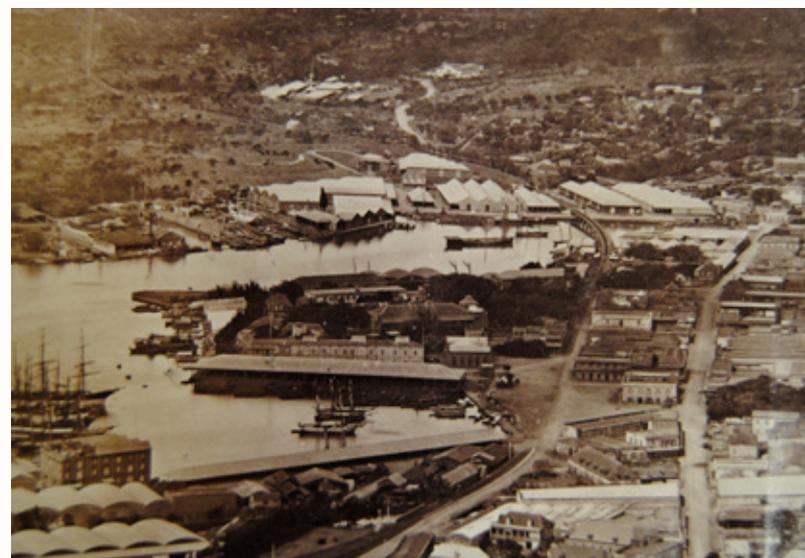
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Archaeological research at Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC)

From 2009 to 2011, archaeological research was initiated to document the remains located at the future interpretation centre. From November 2010 to January 2011, preventive archaeological research was undertaken to document the remains of a dock constructed in the French period and converted into a patent slip during the British period.

Trianon former Sugar Estate

In July 2011, archaeological excavations took place at Trianon Heritage Site under the supervision of Dr Seetah. The excavations aimed at collecting samples for analysis: the ultimate objective is to further study the dietary habits of the labourers working at Trianon Sugar Estate and to understand the occupation pattern before comparing archaeological data to historical and anthropological data.



*View of Port Louis harbour in the 1880s-1890s
Source: British National Archives.*

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF AGTF FROM NOVEMBER 2004 TO OCTOBER 2013

Babita Bahadoor, Research Assistant

I. Conservation and Management of the World Heritage Property

- Preparation and submission of the Aapravasi Ghat Nomination Dossier to UNESCO in 2005;
- Preparation and submission of the Management Plan to UNESCO in 2006;
- The Aapravasi Ghat Conservation Project July 2004 - May 2010;
- The Visitor Management Plan for Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site in 2008;
- The Risk Preparedness Plan for Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site in 2010;
- The Photographic Documentation Project (2008) of more than 250 buildings in the buffer zone;
- The Planning Policy Guidance for Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property Buffer Zone (PPG 6) issued in June 2011;
- The finalization of the Conservation Manual for the Buffer Zone;
- Review of the Risk Preparedness Plan for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site;
- In March 2012, the UNESCO sent a reactive monitoring mission to review the progress of work undertaken by the Trust Fund. Dr Muhammad Jumah congratulated AGTF for the improvements and projects achieved since inscription;
- Preparation and submission of the Management Plan 2013-2018 to the World Heritage Centre;

II. Heritage Projects

- Multi-disciplinary study of indenture sites such as Trianon, Flat Island, Vagrant Depot, Bois Marchand and Forbach between 2007 until present day;
- Survey of Flat Island (2005-2006);
- Photographic and historical documentation of more than 200 buildings in the buffer zone (2006-2011);
- Conservation of the Vagrant Depot Gateway, Pointe aux Sables (2011);
- Collaboration in the conservation of Forbach Sugar Estate (2011);
- Conservation of the Old Labourers' Barracks at Trianon, (2012-2014);
- Landscaping Project at the World Heritage Property (2013);
- Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (2010-2014).

III. Research Programme

- Several research projects on themes related to indenture since 2003;
- Setting up of a Documentation Centre on indenture in 2007;
- Research on Forbach, Trianon, Union Vale Sugar Estates (2003-2006);
- Several workshops and an International Conference on New Perspectives on Indentured Labour organized by the AGTF and the Ministry of Arts and Culture in collaboration with the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Research Council in December 2011;
- Contribution in the proposed inscription of the Indentured Immigration Archives of the Republic of Mauritius on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register (2011);
- Preparation of an inventory on Intangible Cultural Heritage related to indenture in 2011;
- Collaboration on the preparation of the Bhojpur

traditional songs dossier which was sent by the Ministry of Arts and Culture (MAC) to the UNESCO (2010-2011);

- Preparation of the Indenture Labour Route Project Proposal (2014-2015);
- Preparation of the research Plan for Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site (2014-2015).

IV. Outreach Programme

- In 2005, the AGTF team set up a public programme including activities for the public including:
 1. Guided visit of the World Heritage Site;
 2. Heritage trails;
 3. Educational activities for children (3 to 14 years old) such as: Storytelling; Archaeological excavations; Technique of construction.

It also included the publication of an education kit for Teachers launched in 2009. This kit is available for download on our website: www.aapravasighat.org

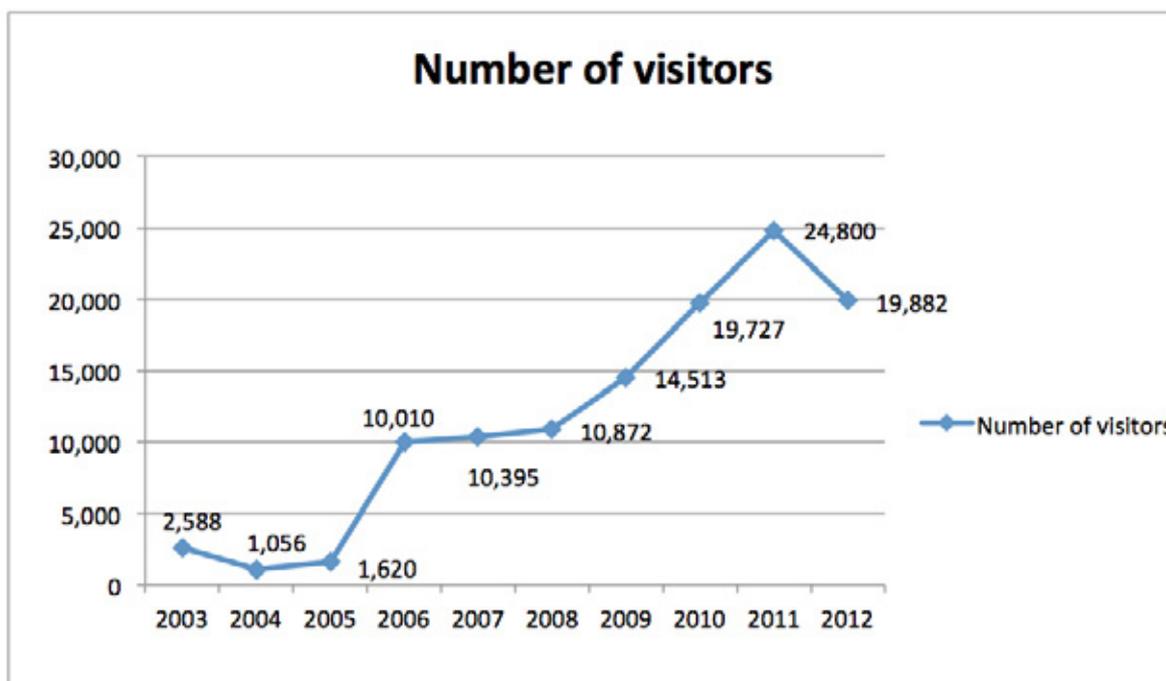
- The number of visitors has increased significantly as a result of media exposure after its inscription on the World Heritage List. A survey conducted

by the AGTF in 2005 showed that 67% of Mauritian people interviewed did not know the Aapravasi Ghat Site and hardly any tourist had heard of it. In 2011, a survey revealed that 95% Mauritians know the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site.

- After the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List in 2006, we noted that the number of visitors increased by 46%. This figure is in line with surveys asserting that the number of visitors doubles when a site is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Note: since 2012, the World Heritage Site has been closed at various periods to undertake works for the setting up of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and landscaping works at World Heritage Site.

- Every year since 2006, the AGTF has celebrated the international day for monuments and sites created by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). On some occasions such as in 2006, more than 3,500 visitors came to visit the Aapravasi Ghat.
- The “Signage Project” was launched in 2007 to post directional signs throughout Mauritius. This project also contributed to bring more visitors to Aapravasi Ghat.





Indenture Village in November 2012
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.

- In the context of the 178th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius, an indenture village and exhibits on Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site were presented to the public from 2nd November to 31st December 2012. A total of 16,950 visitors came to the exhibitions.
- In November 2004 the AGTF launched the pamphlet entitled “*The Conservation of the Aapravasi Ghat Site*” prepared by Munish Pandit of ICOMOS India.
- In July 2004, the first AGTF Newsletter was launched. Every year on 2 November, the AGTF launches a newsletter to inform of projects and progress achieved at World Heritage Property.

V. Publications

- Two publications on research work and the archaeological excavation undertaken at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage site were launched on 2nd November 2003 namely:
 - Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, *Aapravasi Ghat, Past and Present: History* (AGTF and Ministry of Arts and Culture Port Louis, 2003).
 - Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, *Aapravasi Ghat, Past and Present: Archaeological investigations*, (AGTF and Ministry of Arts and Culture, Port Louis, 2003).
- Teelock V. et al. (ed.), *The Vagrant Depot and its Surroundings and Vagrancy in British Mauritius* (AGTF, Port Louis, 2004).
- Annasawmy B., *Aapravasi Ghat and its Surroundings* (AGTF, Port Louis, 2006).
- Annasawmy, B., *Beekrumsing Ramlallah: a man of principles* (AGTF, Port Louis, 2006).
- Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, *Indenture: a brief history of indenture in Mauritius and in the world*, (AGTF, 2007).
- Annasawmy B., *Rajah à l’Aapravasi Ghat* (AGTF, Port Louis, 2009).

- Boodhoo R., *Health, Disease and Indian Immigrants in Nineteenth Mauritius* (AGTF, 2010).
- Teelock V. et al. (ed.), *Angaje: the Early Years - Explorations into the history, society and culture of indentured immigrants and their descendants in Mauritius, Volume 1*, (AGTF, Port Louis, 2012).
- Teelock V. et al. (ed.), *Angaje: the Impact of Indenture - Explorations into the history, society and culture of indentured immigrants and their descendants in Mauritius, Volume 2*, (AGTF, Port Louis, 2012).
- Teelock V. et al. (ed.), *Angaje: Post-Indenture Mauritius - Explorations into the history, society and culture of indentured immigrants and their descendants in Mauritius, Volume 3*, (AGTF, Port Louis, 2012).
- Govinden V. and Carter M., *Gokoola – Family, Temple & Village: By the Banian Tree we stand*, (AGTF, Port Louis, 2012).
- Toorabully's K., *Voices from the Aapravasi Ghat*, (AGTF, Port Louis, 2013).

VI. Forthcoming AGTF Publications

- Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, *A Unique Place in Time and Space: A Pictorial Representation of the Aapravasi Ghat WHS and the Indenture Experience in Mauritius (1849 – 2014)*.
- Dr Satteeanund Peerthum and Satyendra Peerthum, *27th September 1943: A landmark date in the History of early modern Mauritius and the early Mauritian working class movement (1934-1945)*.
- Khal Torabully, *Coupeuses d'Azur: Hommage aux coupeuses de canne*.

THE AAPRAVASI GHAT CONSERVATION PROJECT

Lovehin Andiapen, World Heritage Site Manager

The Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot stands for the only remaining example of the “Great Experiment” initiated by the British Colonial Government in 1834 to evaluate the viability of a ‘free’ system of recruitment after the abolition of Slavery in 1833 in the British Empire. After the success of the experiment initiated in Mauritius, the indenture system was adopted as from 1840s by other colonial powers and other independent countries to recruit workforce. Today, tangible features of this historic event remain in Port Louis, the capital city of Mauritius. The Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot occupies a surface area of 1640 sq metres and it is located near the Port Louis harbour. It is protected by a buffer zone to retain its historical and cultural significance.

To preserve the Outstanding Universal Value of this World Heritage Site, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund initiated a Conservation Project in 2004 aiming at preserving the authenticity and the integrity of the remaining features of the site. The Conservation Project also included Technical Report for Conservation and a Conservation Plan for the Aapravasi Ghat Site submitted to the World Heritage Committee in 2006. These documents guided the conservation project under the supervision of two consultants from ICOMOS India. The project was completed in 2011 and a maintenance plan for the site has since been implemented.

The Hospital Block is the only remaining standing building of the former Immigration Depot. It was constructed in 1864 in basalt stones and aimed at receiving indentured labourers for minor treatment and for health check certifying their ability to work on sugar plantations. It also housed basic equipment for transport and the office of the gatekeeper.

An assessment of the building by consultants for the conservation project revealed that the building underwent major renovation works in the 1990s which were not in line with the techniques and materials used to erect the original hospital block. Hence, the

configuration of the main building was by a large degree altered and the use of modern construction materials such as cement mortar compromised the original fabric and presented a risk for the survival of these structures. During the renovation work in 1995-1996, a new roof made up with corrugated iron sheets was placed on the building, which unfortunately changed the hospital block’s facade. The use of modern construction materials such as concrete beams, metal sheets and tiles distorted the building’s authenticity.



*View of the Hospital Block in 2003 before restoration works.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

Hence, the restoration of the hospital block aimed to re-establish the aesthetic and historic value of what is now left of the immigration depot while the whole process of the restoration is being carried out after a deep study of 1865 plans of the building.



*The Hospital Block after restoration works.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*



Breaking of cement beam. Source: Photo Collection.



Dismantling of roof. Source: AGTF Photo Collection.



Restoration of the Guard room as per original plans. Source: Photo Collection.

The restoration of the Hospital Block began in the month of May 2005. During the stay of the consultants, the preparation for the making of a traditional roof began. The process of restoration of the hospital block includes the dismantling of the random rubble masonry walls and reconstruction of those walls as per the original state. This requires the reconstruction of the stable and the cart room as per the designs of 1865. The operations also included the restoration of wooden doors and windows according to original plans and also the removal of cement joints which were affecting the original basalt stone structure. Lime mortar, prepared in a traditional way, was used to replace the cement mortar and joints.



Restoration of doors and windows as per archival documentations available. Source: AGTF Photo Collection.



*The kitchen area before excavation works of 2003.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

Another important phase of the conservation works included the conservation of the Kitchen Area. The kitchen area refers to the main courtyard, the Sirdar Quarters, the boundary walls separating this area from the privies area, and to the remaining foundations of a kitchen erected in 1860s. In 1864, the construction of the railway separated the Depot in two parts leading to the construction of an additional

kitchen in the Depot's western section. Archaeological excavations carried out in 2003 unveiled the foundations of a kitchen used by immigrants. This exercise helped in understanding and documenting this area and conservation measures were enforced to consolidate the archaeological remains appearing on the courtyard surface.



*Consolidated original kitchen foundations in 2007
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

Another major area of concentration of the Conservation Project consisted of the restoration of the portside section of the immigration depot where the toilets and lavatories for immigrants were located during the immigration period. However, due to renovation works carried out in the late 20th century, most of this section was covered with dumped soil and macadam. Archaeological excavations which were carried out in 2003/2004 revealed a staircase leading to two chambers that served the purpose of women's lavatories and original tarfelt. A major portion of the side wall in the privies area in Sector P was damaged during the end of the 20th century after the construction of a septic tank. On completion of the excavation works in the area, decision was taken to undertake reconstruction of the wall so as to provide stability to the surroundings and prevent any further erosion.

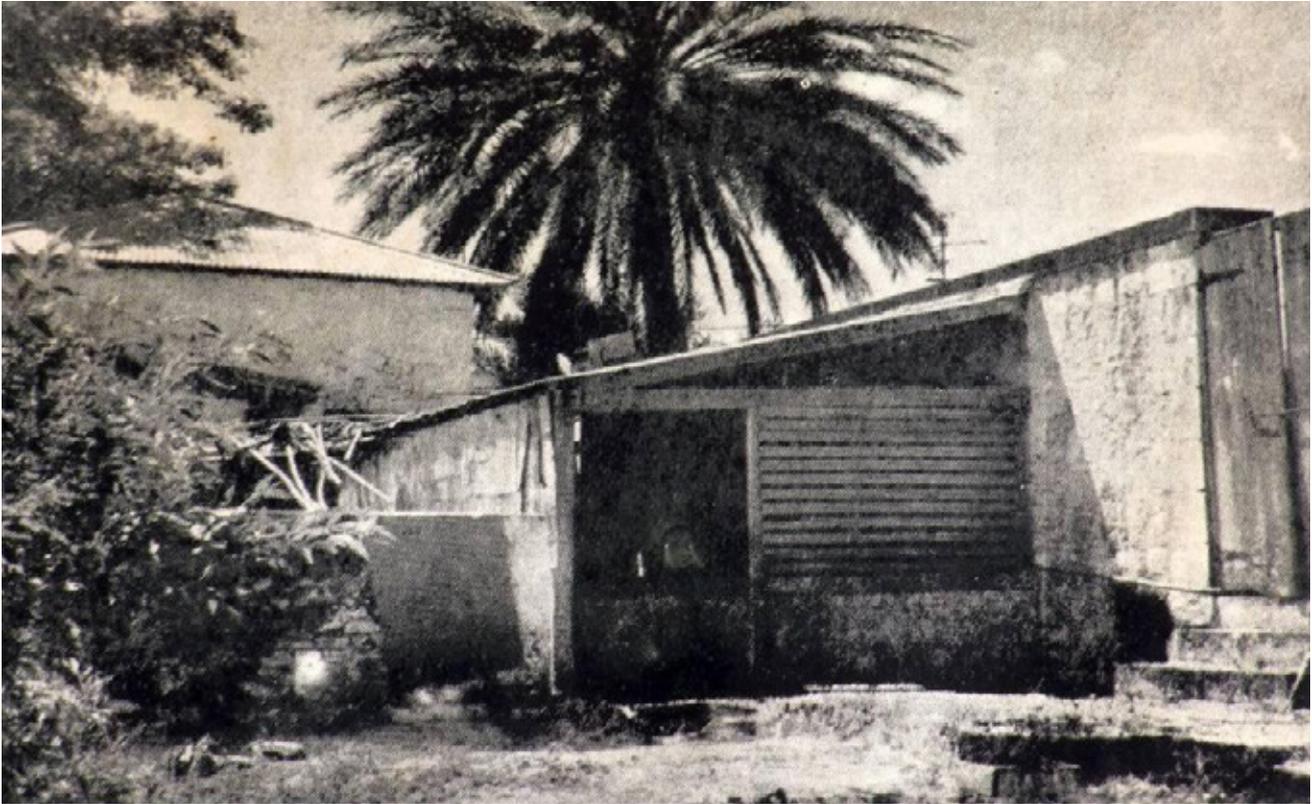


*View of privies area before archaeological excavations of 2003.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

The conservation works at this area also included the conservation of the original features such as the tarfelt and the washbasins. Moreover, the basalt blocks constituting the flooring in the privies was disturbed due to the pressure of debris and earth on it for nearly a century. Once exposed, the flooring required consolidation. The basalt blocks which were highly disturbed were removed, the joints were cleaned and the stones were placed back. All the joints in-between the basalt blocks were cleaned and grouting and pointing were undertaken on the flooring. The floor was further consolidated from beneath. Pointing with lime mortar mixed with red soil was used for the pointing from underneath.



*To the left, view of the washing shed after renovation works in the 1990's and to the right, photo showing washing shed after restoration works
Source: AGTF Photo Collection*



*Photo showing the bathing area.
Source: K. Hazareesingh, 1950.*

The Aapravasi Ghat conservation project followed the international standards of conservation and as such, the NARA, BURRA and VENICE charters of ICOMOS have provided guidelines for the principles for conservation, repair and maintenance of the archaeological and tangible features of the site. Hence, the main objective of the Conservation Project was to conserve and consolidate the authentic features and to remove disruptive/inappropriate features corresponding to additions performed in the 1990s. All documentation is based on accurate records dated 1865. The conservation project helped to reveal the aesthetic and historic values of the monument by retaining features identified in archival records and by resorting to documented traditional techniques.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE AND OTHER INDENTURED SITES

Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit

As a scientific discipline that examines evidence of the past, archaeology was the methodology used concurrently with history to conduct further research on the Aapravasi Ghat from 2002 to 2004. The purpose of this research was to use archaeological data in order to interpret the functioning of the former immigration depot. Archaeological data provided an insight into the life at the Depot while identifying the authentic features forming part of the Immigration Depot in operation from 1849 to 1920s.

When corroborated with the historical data, the AGTF team was able to identify the structures at site and retrace how these features interrelated with one another. This archaeological analysis was crucial to better document how the Depot functioned and how indentured immigrants were processed. It was also essential to confirm the capacity of the Depot where the historical records state that sometimes, more than 1,000 indentured immigrants were housed at the same time.

While allowing an understanding of the structures' function, archaeology also provided an understanding of the evolution of the site. The stratigraphy and material evidence established that the location of the Aapravasi Ghat was in use before it became an immigration depot. It clearly showed that the British reused small structures constructed during the French period (1721-1810) to establish the immigration depot. In 2010 and 2011, the material evidence uncovered showed that this area was used to receive and repair ships. It consequently confirmed the intense commercial activities taking place in the port of Port Louis from 1769 - when it became a free port - to 1815. Historical evidence indicates that shortly after the British took over the island in 1810, they enforced the Navigation laws restricting trade to the British market. This enforcement had a direct impact on the commercial activities that decreased because

of the market restriction. The economic actors then turned to agriculture. After 1815, the sugar industry slowly expanded to reach its peak in the mid-1840s and 1850s.

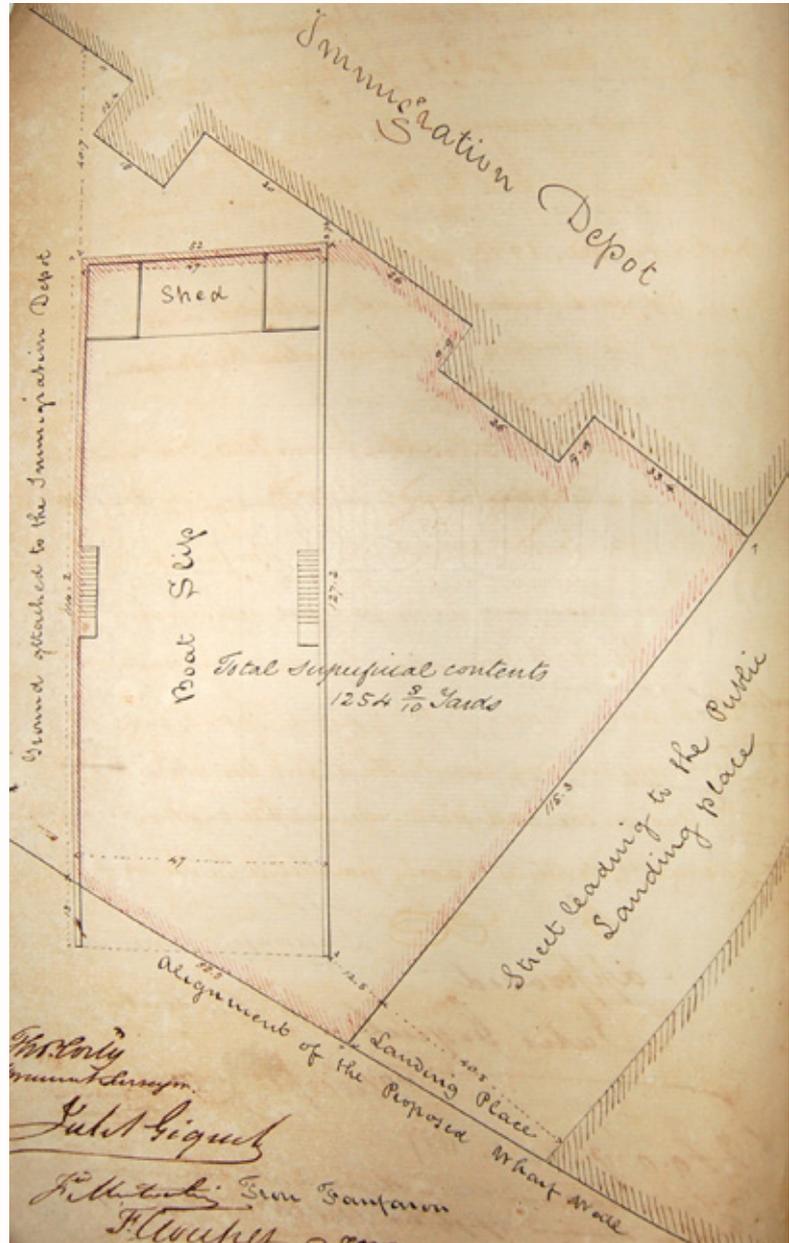
Archaeology confirms this fact: the findings reveal that Trou Fanfaron was reorganized to meet the needs of the sugar industry. The immigration depot bringing indentured labourers for the sugar industry was established at Trou Fanfaron known as a natural port offering safe shelter to ships. When the AGTF conducted preventive archaeological research in the future interpretation centre in 2010-2011, the data collected indicated that a patent slip was the place where most indentured ships were being repaired before leaving on high seas. These commercial ships also had the opportunity to optimize transportation cost when they left Mauritius with goods and in particular, sugar, on board.

The material evidence shows a complete reorganization of the Trou Fanfaron area in the 1850s at a time when Mauritius has become the most productive sugar colony in the British Empire. Trou Fanfaron was then developed to receive infrastructures, mainly warehouses, to store the sugar before exportation. Archaeology shows that the patent slip adjacent to the immigration depot was filled up to construct a sugar warehouse. Another warehouse called "Planters' dock" (Cerne Dock today) was constructed next to it in 1858. We notice that by the end of the 1850s, this side of Trou Fanfaron was entirely devoted to the sugar industry while the activities of ship repairs are relocated on the other side of Trou Fanfaron called Quay D today. The archaeological analysis gives a clear understanding of why the immigration depot was integrated in the Port area as a place receiving indentured labourers. This confirms that by the end of the 1850s, Trou Fanfaron had been transformed to meet the needs of the flourishing sugar industry.

Besides research on the evolution of the immigration depot in Trou Fanfaron, the AGTF focused on other indentured sites with the aim to document further the indenture experience in Mauritius. The immigration depot as a place of arrival is closely linked to the quarantine station in Flat Island where a survey was conducted in 2007 and with Trianon former Labourers' barracks. In this research programme, the objective is to conduct research with a global approach: archaeology allows the material

documentation of sites in order to better appreciate how these sites were related to one another and thus, determine their role in the functioning of the indentured system. This global approach allows a better appreciation of their heritage significance for the history of indenture in Mauritius and comparative studies with other indentured sites located beyond the national borders.

As the place where the Great Experiment took place, the Mauritian sites associated with indenture deserve further research to better appreciate the scope and extent of indenture in the nineteenth century. Archaeology plays a key role in this design: it can tell through material evidence what history cannot reveal. It opens a new avenue for understanding the history of indenture from a wider perspective and especially from the perspective of the indentured labourers themselves. This avenue of research is not only new in Mauritius but also in other countries where the archaeology of indenture is only just starting. With the precious collaboration of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Stanford in the USA, we therefore hope that the research undertaken at AGTF can largely contribute to the understanding of indenture on an international scale.



Source: Mauritius National Archives

THE “ARCHAEOLOGY OF INDENTURE”: MAURITIUS AS A CASE-STUDY FOR A GLOBAL INVESTIGATION

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³IDEAS, Ca'Foscari, Venice.

Since 2008, the Mauritian Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (MACH) project has been working with the AGTF on numerous research ventures focused on indentured sites. In more recent years, this collaboration has given birth to an appreciation for the extensive potential that archaeology could have for understanding the complexities of the indentured diaspora. What has become apparent is that the sites represent a collective of points within a theoretical framework that has stimulated a wholly new research agenda for the discipline: the “archaeology of indenture”. A range of important sites, marking the quarantining (Flat Island), disembarkation (Aapravasi Ghat), habitation (Trianon Barracks) and final resting place (Bois Marchand Cemetery) of incoming migrant workers offers unique potential for an assessment of labourer life-ways through bioarchaeological and material signatures.

A first view of the ‘Archaeology of indenture’

Mauritius’ archaeology has utility for a greater impact on the development of ‘global archaeological practice’ through investigations of indenture. Considered by one historian as ‘a new system of slavery’ (Tinker 1974), others have emphasised the considerable and nuanced differences (Allen 1999: 57-58). More so than slavery, this facet of the past has remained virtually untouched by archaeologists; to our knowledge, no program of excavation currently exists into this globally significant diaspora (as distinct from convict labour or movements of indentured Europeans). Though still very much in its infancy, the outcomes are already revealing. In essence,

indentured archaeology reflects social aspects of the difference between slaves and labourers. One of the most visible such facets are architectural features in the form of religious structures that dot the landscape. They represent the consequence of indentured labourers, in contrast to slavery, being allowed to keep their religions. Among other elements, regional and religious varieties of sacred structures helped immigrants to nurture their original identity. However, akin to slavery, there are few material signatures, even from sites that are tied closely to the indentured system (Calao, 2011).

In AD 1834, on the heels of abolition, Britain turned to south-Asia, and India in particular, to find workers to replace the labour void. The evident success of this system catalysed the displacement of over two million people from Asia, Africa and Melanesia (Carter et al, 2003) around the Indian Ocean, and to islands in the Pacific and Caribbean. The role played by Mauritius gained international recognition in 2006, with the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As the ‘laboratory’ where the system was initiated and implemented, few places are more appropriate for commencing an archaeological interrogation of the indentured labour diaspora. Above all else, why this transition was necessary may have underlying drivers that archaeology is well equipped to address. Economic factors, principally the removal of preferential tariffs for West Indian sugar, intensified production in Mauritius, ostensibly requiring more labour. However, a number of factors complicate the simplicity of this reasoning. A rife illegal slave trade continued well into the 1850s (Allen 2010). Coupled with the apprenticeship system, which required six years’ service by emancipated slaves, these should have provided a buffer, which they no doubt did to a certain extent.

Nonetheless, an archaeological viewpoint suggests that nuances existed and a range of issues were likely to have impacted on the need for labour. In this regards, Bois Marchand Cemetery may be pointing us in the right direction. Bois Marchand was some 400 acres when established in 1867 (Pike 183: 401), and was created to accommodate the massive death toll resulting from epidemics of malaria and cholera. In 1867, 41,000 people (ibid: 110), 10% of the entire population, died from these conditions. Thus, the

THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE



*Figure 1: Flat Island
Source: K. Seetah et Al*



*Figure 2: Aapravasi Ghat
Source: AGTF Photo Collection*

role of disease, while figuring strongly in Atlantic research on labour provision (Pearson et al. 2012: 155), has (with notable exceptions, see Arnold 1991, and more recently, Boodoo 2010) remained heavily understudied within an Indian Ocean context, and could prove highly relevant to our understanding of this particular labour diaspora.

Excavations at Bois Marchand have unearthed a unique snap-shot of the island's population at that time, and in combination with other sites, will help us draw a more complete picture in the future. Within the indentured paradigm, viewing the 'island as site' is proving particularly relevant. A landscape archaeological approach allows us to connect different nodes within the colonial administration. Connections and relations between Flat Island, a quarantine base complete with hospital and cemetery (Figure 1); Aapravasi Ghat, the landing point of immigrants (Figure 2), again, complete with hospital block and administrative centres; Trianon, a set of barracks situated on a plantation and likely



*Figure 3: Trianon Barrack
Source: K. Seetah et Al*



Figure 4: Bois Marchand Cemetery
Source: K. Seetah et Al

the dwelling of sirdars (Figure 3) (Calaon et al. 2012), the Vagrant Depot, a prison for labourers, and Bois Marchand (Figure 4), a cemetery with sections dedicated specifically to indentured workers, effectively encapsulate the entire trajectory of this labour diaspora within a geographically contained and highly relevant test case.

We can begin to tease out the details of administration, for example with dependence on quarantine and expansion of burial grounds to deal with disease, or the reaction to absenteeism, the development and expansion of the indenture religious networks, as well as more typical details of contract-labour-life: health, diet, and social practice. This also allows for an assessment of colonial mind-sets, e.g., how the process of accepting labour onto the island

changed from one administration to the next (Calaon 2011). On a greater scale, facets of indentured archaeology being discovered on the island serve as an exemplar for regions around the world, where similar systems of indenture were applied as widely as Trinidad and Guyana, South Africa and Fiji. In this way, Mauritius sets the precedent for what promises to be a fascinating new chapter in archaeological endeavour.

NB: This article is based on a journal manuscript currently under-review for *Antiquity*.

BEEKRUMSING RAMLALLAH INTERPRETATION CENTRE PROJECT

Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit

The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre project is the result of a long process initiated after the Independence of Mauritius by Beekrumsing Ramlallah who devoted constant efforts to recognize the Aapravasi Ghat as a key landmark for Mauritian history.

His efforts led to the listing of the Aapravasi Ghat as a National Monument in 1987. In August 1989, the name of the former Immigration Depot was changed from “Coolie Ghat” to “Aapravasi Ghat”. The reason for this change was the negative connotation attached to the word “Coolie”. The term “Aapravasi Ghat” has no exact translation in English. In Hindi, “aapravasi” means “immigrant” while the term “ghat” signifies the place where land meets water. As from the 1980s, the Aapravasi Ghat was recognized as the place where indentured labourers coming mainly from India were landed, housed and processed before being sent to work on the islands’ sugar estates.

At that point in time, a project was initiated to create infrastructure for the public and an exhibition space devoted to the history of indenture. This project partially materialized in 1996 when the Promenade project was inaugurated: this project was a major step in favour of the recognition of the Aapravasi Ghat at national level.



*The Promenade project, 1990s.
Source: Jaffar Sobha.*

The 1990s mark unprecedented research work on two major stages in our history: slavery and indenture. The development of research on these two themes led to a focus on the role and importance of the Aapravasi Ghat as a place where indentured labourers landed in Mauritius. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute initiated historical and archaeological research on the Aapravasi Ghat with the view to documenting the heritage site.

When the Aapravasi Ghat was included in the tentative list for potential inscription on the World Heritage List, the Government created a dedicated institution in 2001 called Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) to work on the nomination dossier to be submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre for consideration. The Act marking the establishment of the AGTF underlines the importance of creating a museum dedicated to indenture when mentioning as an object of the Fund “to set up a museum”.

As part of the inscription process, the creation of a “museum” became part of the projects listed in the Management Plan for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. The Interpretation Centre project formed part of the policies of the AGTF to fulfil the requirements stated in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention which stresses the need to promote World Heritages and their Outstanding Universal Value.

In 2006 when the Aapravasi Ghat was listed by UNESCO, the Interpretation Centre project took shape with the development of a detailed project proposal. During the commemoration of the 172th Anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers on 2 November 2006, the Interpretation Centre was named after Beekrumsing Ramlallah in homage to his efforts for the recognition of the site.

In 2010, the AGTF enlisted the services of a team to design the Interpretation Centre for the Aapravasi Ghat. Such project requires the combination of various competence including Museologists (AGTF), Architects (Morphos Architects Ltd and Land Concept Ltd), Engineers (Nuzeebun Project Consultant Ltd and Prodesign Engineering Consultant), Quantity Surveyors (Chuttur and Partners Ltd) and a Graphic Designer (Design Element Ltd). This team devoted more than a year to develop the Interpretation Centre’s exhibition concepts, the landscaping project’s



Source: AGTF Photo Collection

concepts and designs and the interior design including electrical and mechanical engineering issues.

On completion of the design phase, the procurement phase was initiated to enlist the services of a contractor to implement the designs. In May 2013, the interior and landscaping works conducted by Ramloll Bhooshan Renovation and Building Ltd started and were completed in December 2013. In January 2014, the final minor works and the mounting phase were initiated. This last phase included the conservation of archaeological features - integrated in the permanent exhibition - conducted by Dr Diego Calaon, Archaeologist from the University of Ca'Foscari in Venice, Italy.

The completion of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre project represents after the Aapravasi Ghat Conservation Project (2004-2010), a major achievement for the AGTF. Throughout the implementation of this project, the team had the constant concern to respond to key questions raised by the public on indenture: what is indenture and was it really free? Why Aapravasi Ghat is a World Heritage Site and what role did it play in the history of indenture in Mauritius and in the world?

The exhibition concept required the expertise of Historians (Dr V. Teelock, University of Mauritius, Dr Richard Allen, University of Framingham, USA), Archeologists (Dr Calaon, University of Ca'Foscari, Dr Geoffrey Summers, Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey) and other experts such as Mrs Saloni Deerpalsing to prepare the exhibition texts in line with the latest scientific research results. The AGTF research team composed of Satyendra Peerthum, Babita Bahadour, Christelle Miao Foh and Ashvin Nemchand relentlessly conducted research on designated themes to provide a scientific research background for the permanent exhibition.

Considering that such a project is about the restitution of the past to the nation, efforts focused on objectivity and accuracy with the concern to share the past with all Mauritians.

AAPRAVASI GHAT A PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS AND THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Madhukar Ramlallah, Editor at *Mauritius Times*

On 2 November 2014, the 180th anniversary of the arrival of Indian indentured labourers will be commemorated again. All of those who made the trip from India braved the perilous maritime voyage to the shores of the Aapravasi Ghat to face an uncertain future over here. Even though there are still a few reminders of the dreary conditions in which the original ancestors lived, it may be said that a long distance has been travelled since then by those we pay homage to on this occasion and their descendants.

Some 180 years ago they were known as Indians, an undivided entity, who had crossed the ocean to disembark in Port Louis harbour. It is known that the centenary celebrations of their arrival in Mauritius were celebrated at Taher Bagh, Champ de Mars. The memory of the shared belonging of this group was quickly fading when, in the context of the nascent political struggle then, it was revived thanks to considerable efforts by various leaders emerging from the community.

The persistent striving since 1970 of Beekrumsing Ramlallah, the founder and previous editor of the *Mauritius Times*, to bring up the Aapravasi Ghat as a memento of Indo-Mauritian history should, to my mind, be seen in that perspective. The seminal contribution of Beekrumsing Ramlallah was threefold:

- Retrieval (with Ramnarain Ramsaha) and archiving (with Dr K Hazareesingh) of the Indian immigration records;
- Uncovering of the immigration site and its listing as a National Monument of Mauritius;
- Establishing 2nd November as the definitive date for the commemoration.

Looking back, I believe that he felt very strongly that the struggle of our forefathers against exploitation and their significant contributions towards the construction

of modern Mauritius, should also be remembered and celebrated. He wanted this site to serve as a place of remembrance of the long battle waged patiently and honourably according to democratic norms by all those who had walked up the steps of the Aapravasi Ghat into an unknown future. His intention was not, as he himself wrote in the *Mauritius Times*, to remain fixed in the past nor to visit upon past masters' grievances of the Indenture period.

B. Ramlallah's involvement with the Aapravasi Ghat seemed to be pre-destined. It all started sometime in 1970 when the then Public Assistance Commissioner, late Ramnarain Ramsaha, called to inform him about the deplorable conditions in which the Immigrants' Registers had been kept at the Immigration Depot which then housed the Department of Public Assistance.

These registers were not considered as historical documents earlier, as recorded by Sada J. Reddi in his book '*Sir V. Ringadoo – An Opportunity to Serve*': "Later, when he (Ringadoo) became Minister of Education (before 1968) and asked the chief archivist, Auguste Toussaint, why historical records of the arrival of the Indian immigrants had not been transferred to the archives he was told that they were not 'historical documents'."

That same Euro-centric attitude had dominated public life in Mauritius in the past. During the centenary celebration of the arrival of Indian immigrants in 1935, Raoul Rivet, the then Mayor of Port Louis, had refused the demand of the organisers to put up a monument in the Jardin de la Compagnie. Finally, the organisers had to erect one on the premises of the Arya Sabha, near the Champ de Mars.

A very significant span of Mauritian history would therefore have gone into oblivion but for the concern expressed by late Ramnarain Ramsaha. Considerable efforts were put up thereafter by B. Ramlallah to convince the government to transfer those invaluable Immigrants' Registers to the National Archives. Finally, they were confined to the MGI's Folk Museum of Immigration for restoration and preservation.

In its issue of 1 June 1970, the *Mauritius Times* acknowledged the contribution of Ramnarain Ramsaha "who has preciousely kept the archives of the indentured labourers and the materials they used.

Without his intervention all these precious things would have been lost...”, and of Dr K. Hazareesingh “who by illustrating his book *‘History of Indians in Mauritius’* with the door and steps through which Indian immigrants used to land on the Mauritian soil has made the country aware of the existence of that historic spot.”

It was after his visit to the Immigration Depot upon late Ramnarain Ramsaha’s request in connection with the Immigrants’ Registers that he started working on the idea of rehabilitating the Immigration Depot, till then left to waste and abandon, into a memento of Indo-Mauritian history. The same issue of *Mauritius Times* (1 June 1970) carried an article under the title: ‘Immigration Square a public monument?’ Excerpts: “We have requested the Government to proclaim that place as a historical monument and to take care of the place. We have enlisted the support of some top ministers, including Hon Boolell’s. To consecrate it, a ceremony will be held there shortly. It should become one of the most important places of pilgrimage of Mauritians of Indian origin.”

He started writing articles in the *Mauritius Times* and petitioning the government as from 1970 itself to proclaim that place as a historical monument and to take care of the place. His efforts met with success in 1985 when the then government agreed to include the Coolie Ghat, renamed Aapravasi Ghat in 1987, on the list of National Monuments of Mauritius.

Earlier on, the visit of the then Indian Prime Minister, late Mrs Indira Gandhi, here in 1970 was to speed up matters, for B. Ramlallah decided that Mrs Gandhi should be convinced to pay her tribute to the memory of the Indian immigrants at the then Coolie Ghat. Armed with his characteristic enthusiasm, he immediately moved into action with the help of the Fourth Mauritius Hindu Scouts, family members and relatives to have the site which had been taken over by wilderness transformed into a respectable venue for a Prime Minister’s visit.



*Initial cleaning of Aapravasi Ghat.
Source: Ramlallah Collection.*

However, the convincing part proved more difficult. He had to summon all of his forthright manner of putting things across and the support of Dr K. Hazareesingh, and “some top ministers Hon Ringadoo, Boolell and Jagatsingh” (*Mauritius Times* – 1 June 1970) to bring Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam to include a visit by Mrs Gandhi to the Ghat in her official programme.

That solemn and historical visit by a distinguished Prime Minister of India, to be followed by those of successive Indian Prime Ministers over the years, was to pave the way for the Indian government’s recognition of the “symbolic importance of the Aapravasi Ghat in the foundation of overseas Indian diasporas” and its declaration as the first heritage site outside India alongside eight others on the subcontinent.

We could not understand then, at home and in the office of the *Mauritius Times*, his almost obstinate determination and personal efforts to celebrate Aapravasi Day by way of a religious function on 2nd November each year, from 1970 until ill-health confined him to bed in 1999. But he went on and on, unperturbed. No obstacle was strong enough to deter him from his purpose: neither the criticisms murmured in the conservative quarters of Place d’Armes in the initial years against that celebration nor the refusal of representatives of some other religious denominations, for reasons best known to themselves, to participate in a multi-religious ceremony in remembrance of our forefathers. This has to be put on record because Beekrumsing Ramlallah held the firm belief that the ‘*jahaji bhais*’ who had crossed the ocean to disembark in Port Louis harbour constituted an undivided entity and had a history of shared belonging.

Beekrumsing Ramlallah would no doubt have been particularly proud that the site, now housing the Aapravasi Ghat, saved from waste and abandon, has found its way to UNESCO World Heritage List thanks to the involvement of the authorities, the meticulous work of the board members and the dedicated management and staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund down the years. Thanks also to the institutional support provided by past Ministers of Education and of Arts and Culture namely Kher Jagatsingh, A. Parsuramen and M. Choonee during his 35-year association with the Aapravasi Ghat as well as from late Mathoorah Parsad Raghurur and Hossenjee Edoe, B.M. Bhagat and many childhood friends from

Montagne Longue and Crève Coeur, his close ones namely Sarita Boodhoo, Umrita, Nalini, Soodhakur, Sadhana, Karuna and from the staff of Nalanda Co Ltd and *Mauritius Times*. Thanks equally to the numerous and regular contributions to the newspaper, namely from Dr R Neerunjun Gopee, Sada Reddi, Vina Ballgobin and Anil Gujadhur. And above all, the unspoken but unwavering support of his lifelong companion, Saraswati Devi.

As we stand ready now after so many years of struggle to celebrate the arrival of Indian immigrants on 2nd November, let us cast back our mind for a while at least on those who have endured the greatest hardships of life to bestow upon us what we are today. Through great perseverance and by overcoming serious barriers to entry, the descendants of the Indian indentured labourers gained access to education and went on to show their mettle in numerous areas that would have been considered out of bounds for them originally.

After an enduring struggle, they gained access to the right to vote. They joined their forces together in the struggle for independence. In spite of the walls of prejudices erected against them, they proved to be capable of taking decisions in favour of all the components of the population once they managed to secure the levers of political power. Some of the leaders emerging from among the descendants of the Indo-Mauritians have contributed to significant defining decisions that shape the life of the nation.

A much needed reflection on the events and incidents surrounding this long march patiently carried out within the evolving democratic process may hopefully rekindle that sense of unity and solidarity which once constituted the foundation of our strength and the inspiration for our struggle. It is without doubt one of those enabling factors that gave to Mauritius the kind of balanced political direction the country needed for its development.

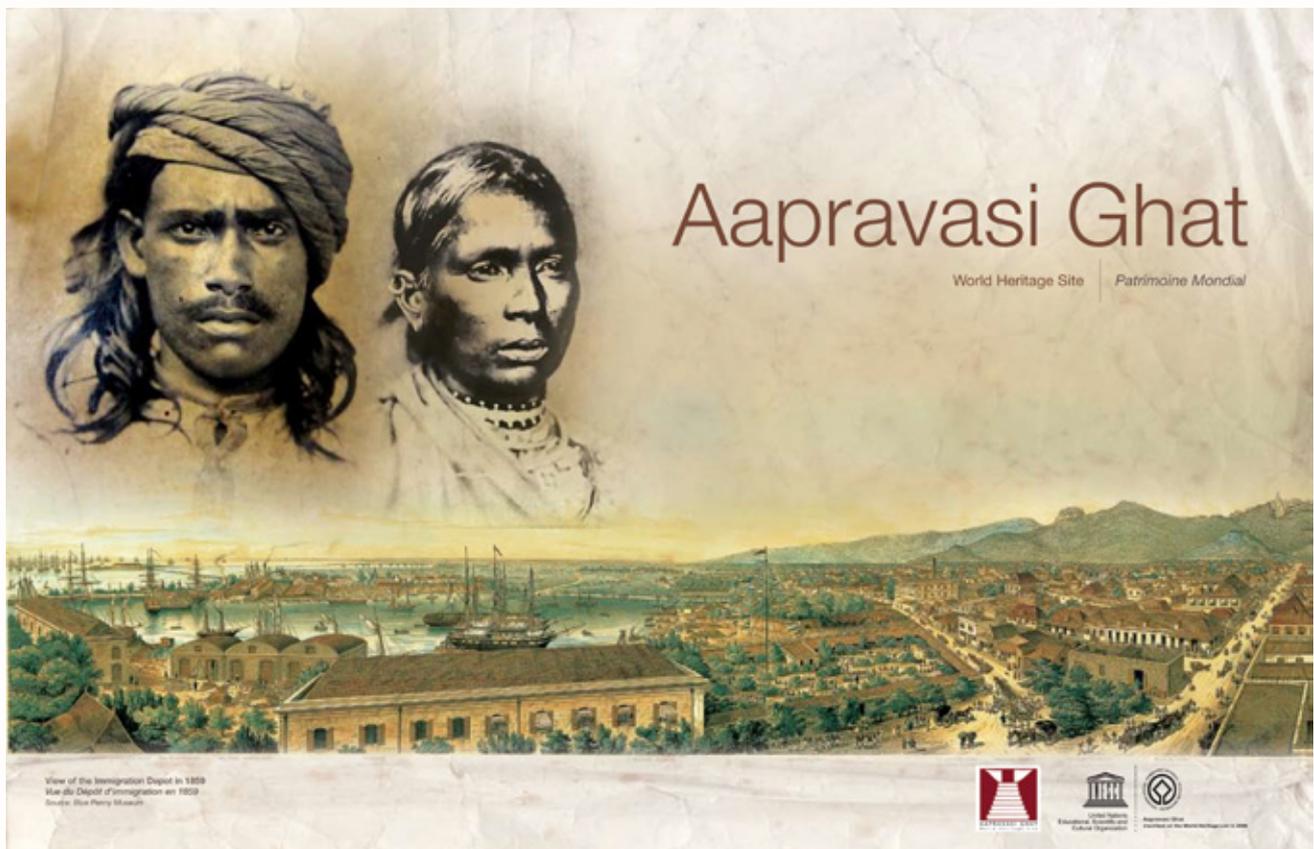
AAPRAVASI GHAT EXHIBITS AT 12TH PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS ATTRACTS THOUSANDS OF VISITORS

Dr Sarita Boodhoo
Chairperson, Bhojpuri Speaking Union
Chairperson of the International Women
Wing of the GOPIO International

This year, the presence of Aapravasi Ghat at the twelfth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was a unique element of the Diasporic celebration of the 1500 delegates of the Indian Diaspora, home coming of 30 millions strong *pravasis*. As it is well known, the annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas organised by the Government of India since 2003 from 7th to 9th January marks the historical return to India from South Africa of a great Pravasi, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, (then not Mahatma yet) which took place on January 9th 1915 .

In 2000, a High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora headed by Dr L.M Singhvi, a distinguished politician, eminent judge and former Indian High Commissioner to the UK, was set up by the Government of India to find the possibilities of connecting in a marked way the Indian diaspora to India. This through cultural exchange and other channels. It proposed to acquaint the Indian public of the depth, variety and achievements of the Indian Diaspora, and forge stronger ties between India and the peoples of Indian origin and the Non Resident Indians (NRIs). The Singhvi High Powered Committee toured the world to achieve this aim and visited Mauritius among others.

In 2002, in its Report on the Indian Diaspora, Dr Singhvi mentioned that "*Mauritius was a unique place*" among countries of the Indian diaspora due to the uniqueness of its historical experience with indentured labour.



It is this “*unique experience*” that the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund sought to highlight at the 12th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in January 2014 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The exhibition was unique in itself and historical. It was the first time that such an exhibition was held to remind the thousands of delegates of the historicity of indenture system. Normally, on the side line of the three day diasporic meet, there is an annual exhibition of trade fairs, banks, insurance companies and other business enterprises of various Indian states. But it is worth retaining that Mauritius was the only diasporic country which put up a magnificent historical exhibition that showcased the traumatic experience of the uprooting of thousands of Indians from their villages in what would be known as the Indentured Labour System.

This exhibition retraced the arrival of the *Girmityas*, the Indentured Immigrants to Mauritius as from 2nd November 1834 and their remarkable contribution to the moulding and development of the country. Thousands of visitors flooded the stand to take cognizance of the saga of Indian Indentures to Mauritius. More than words, the various exhibits mounted laboriously and singlehandedly by Mr Mahendra Utchanah, Chairman of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and the Director, Mr Raju Mohit, then OIC of AGTF, spoke the language of trauma and survival, why Mauritius stands out as the post of “*the great experiment*” and why it has been noted as a unique place in Time and Space by the Singhvi Report.

It is hoped that at the next PBD, there will be an exhibition of other diasporic countries besides Mauritius which would be more educative and creative and do more to bring connectivity of the diasporic peoples. The materiability and visibility of the Aapravasi Ghat showcase of the traumatic indenture experience at the PBD Mauritius stand definitely touched the hearts of the thousands of visitors and brought tears to their eyes.

Some of these exhibits highlighted among others

1. In the footsteps of an Indentured Immigrant at the Depot
2. The role of the Depot
3. The Aapravasi Ghat after Indenture
4. A typical working Day
5. The voyage to Mauritius
6. The estate camp
7. Photographs of some Indian Indentures

As well as the (8) visit to Mauritius of Mahatma Gandhi and Manilall Doctor, (9) the visit of eminent personalities to the Aapravasi Ghat, (10) its recognition as a World Heritage Site in 2006 by UNESCO and (11) the contribution of the Indentured labour to the socio-economic development of Mauritius among others (12) the phenomenal rise of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Father of the Nation and the dynamic contribution and upholding of the welfare state by Dr Navin Ramgoolam, Prime Minister.

At the PBD Session on People of Indian Origin and contribution of GOPIO International towards the cementing together and interaction of the diaspora, Mr Mahendra Utchanah also Chairperson of GOPIO International stressed on; (1) the need to have a session at the next PBD on the “PIOs in so far as the indenture Labour Route is concerned as well as their contribution towards their host countries and (2) appealed to the Government of India to extend the PIO CARD to the 5th and 6th generations of descendants of the Indentures.

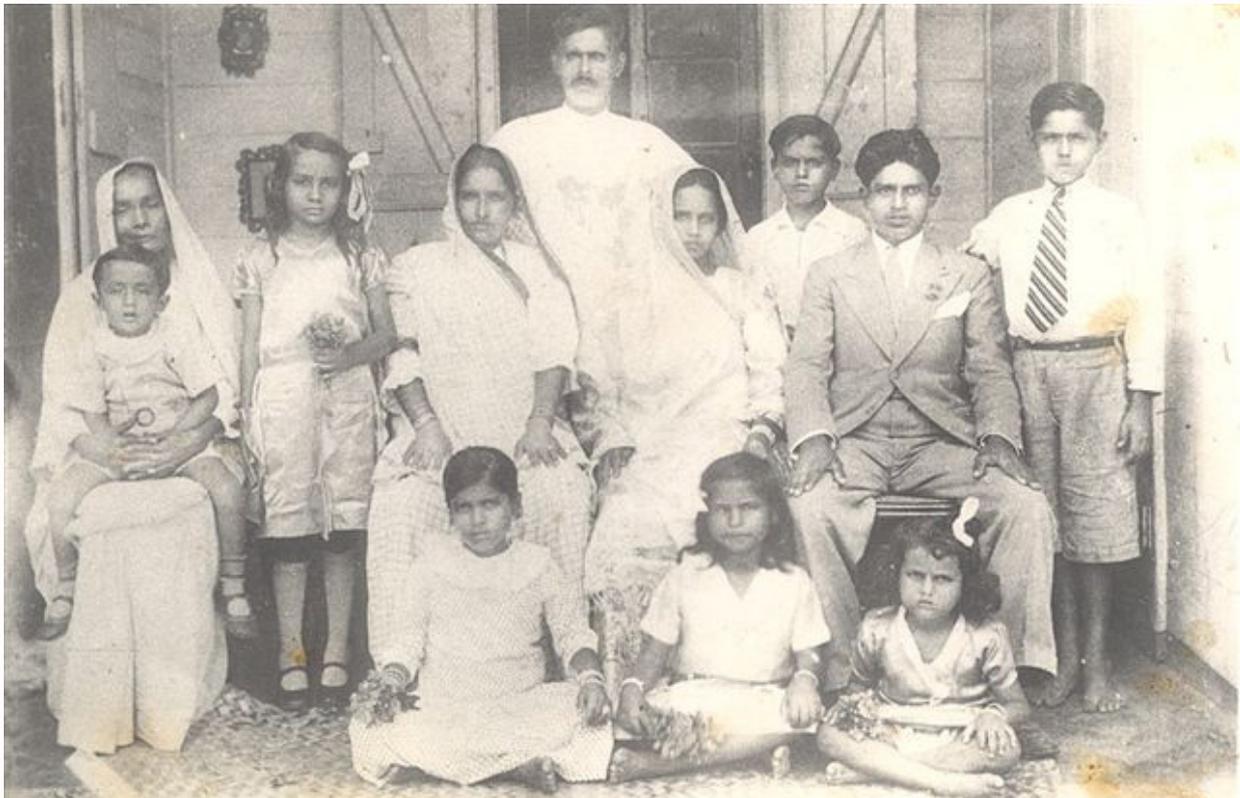
BEKRUMSING RAMLALLAH THE MAN BEHIND AAPRAVASI GHAT

Chit Dukhira, Mauritian writer

Introduction

What cannot be ignored are the first campaigns led between 1871 and 1911 in favour of Mauritian indentured labourers and their descendants by the French, Adolphe de Plevitz, as well as by three Indians: Vellyvoil R. Moodeliar, Manilal Doctor and Pandit Atmaram Vishwanath. Admittedly, the indentureds' foremost Indo-Mauritian champion was Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (SSR). He struggled on their behalf through his articles from London, then in Mauritius since 1935 and later in his political life (1940-1982).

Among others who contributed to this socio-economic uplift mention must be made of: Dookhee Gungah, national social worker, Dhunputh Lallah and Rajcoomar Gujadhur, the first Indo-Mauritian legislators elected in 1926, the local and national public man Goolam Mahomed Issac, Cashinath Kistoe, the first Mauritian jailed for public cause, Goolam Mohamed Dawjee Atchia, socialist promoter and SSR's political guide in Mauritius, the first Indo-Mauritian barrister Ramkhelawon (R.K.) Boodhun, the Bissoondoyal brothers – missionary Basdeo and politician Sookdeo - Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed, a champion of independence, multi-faceted patriot Jaynarain Roy, civil servant Dr Kissoonsingh Hazareesingh and barrister Renganaden Seeneevassen. In 1935, R. K Boodhun chaired the national voluntary committee, later named Indian Cultural Association (ICA), to mark the indentureds' arrival centenary. This first countrywide platform bringing together Indo-Mauritians of various cultures and faiths was also the first such event in the world. Rampersad Neerunjun (later Chief Justice and Sir) was its secretary, assisted by K. Hazareesingh. It is Beekrumsing Ramlallah who excelled in honouring the indentureds.



S. Ramlalh & family. Source: Ramlallah Collection

Background

Beekrumsing, intimately called Beekrum (1915-2000), was born at Long Mountain, where he received part of his primary schooling. Upon the death of his mother, née Jugwantee Ramdharry, his father Seenarain Ramlallah shifted to Port Louis where he completed his primary education. Financial constraints prevented him from studying further. He had to help his father sell vegetables at the Central Market in Port Louis. The love Beekrum felt for India, as revealed by his writings, lifestyle and other activities, makes him a symbol of Indianness in Mauritius.

This he had inherited from his paternal grandfather Ramlall Bundhun Rai, an orthodox Hindu and perhaps the first Indo-Mauritian scholar who had studied in his parents' native Ballia, UP, and from his father Seenarain, chairman and co-founder in the 1920s of what are now the national Arya Sabha and Hindu Maha Sabha. Ramlall's disciple Mohunlall Mohit too later chaired the Arya Sabha and became a famous Hindi writer. Beekrum's is a rare Mauritian family keeping ancestral ties with India from the start. He first advocated the creation in Delhi of the Ministry for Overseas Indians in the 1970s, today a reality.

After serving for three years the Mauritius Territorial Force, a voluntary para-military body set up to defend the country, when World War II broke out in 1939, Beekrum compulsorily joined the Mauritius (British) Regiment. But soon, for refusing to serve this expeditionary force, he was expelled after being court-martialed. He then began teaching at Maheshwarnath Hindu Aided School, Triolet, from 1937. Further, he devoted himself to social activities, besides studying on his own. In 1940, he founded at Long Mountain the Mauritius Sewa Samithi (MSS), a youth non-military brigade whose members wore uniforms and underwent physical training including the use of *lathi* (a long, thick stick used as weapon, usually for self-defence) which his grandfather had mastered, besides being a top *khalifa* (wrestler) often winning prizes, in Ballia.

On 5 February 1942, Beekrum registered the MSS. Service, sound conduct and strength were its motto. Its members, mostly from Long Mountain and other villages, were vowed to serve society voluntarily. He later put the MSS under Prof. Basdeo Bissoondoyal's command for the latter's *Jan Andolan* (People's Movement), a unique peaceful campaign across the



*B. Ramlallah with librarian D. Bheenuck.
Source: Ramlallah Collection.*

country to revive ancestral values, Indian culture and Hinduism.

In 1944, Beekrum helped Hurryparsad Ramnarain to campaign against alcoholism and allow cow breeders to collect fodder on sugar estates, besides assisting him in his public life, including trade unionism in which he had the longest career in Mauritius.

Interest in Books

With the help of a few associates of Long Mountain, particularly the Mungur Bhagath brothers, in the 1940s Beekrum embarked upon the import from India of publications in Hindi and English. These were at first sold during festivals, weddings and pilgrimages. Then he began selling them from a stall rented at the Central Market. In 1946, supported by the Bhagaths and others, Beekrum founded in Port Louis the Nalanda bookshop, named after the most ancient Indian university. He then started a corollary press service, providing printing work in Hindi and English.



*With Boolell at Grand Bassin.
Source: Ramlallah Collection.*

At Nalanda were available, at competitive prices, all types of publications from abroad, especially India.

This selling library was the country's sole distributor of UNESCO's magazines and the publications of the *Times of India*. It also sold India-imported gramophones and music discs. Nalanda became the country's literary hub where people of all age-groups used to flock to make purchases.

Open Hindu

Like his father, Beekrum was an *Arya Samajist*, but open to *Sanatan Dharma* which his grandfather Ramlall cherished. As a longstanding committee member of the Hindu Maha Sabha, which he chaired for indeed several periods, Beekrum obtained under its control, with the blessings of Satcam Boolell, Minister of Agriculture, the State land around the *Ganga Talao (Grand Bassin)*.

He professionally advised the founders of many Indo-Mauritian organisations and enterprises. Upon his initiative, the Mauritius Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation, formed in 1957, was registered by 1960. For the four-day Maha Shivaratree Festival, celebrated annually in February-March, Beekrum provided logistic support to Manilall Ramdin's *Jai Hind Samaj* to receive pilgrims pouring in from across the

country. Mr Ramdin, of Nouvelle France, was the first to host them. He stayed there with his collaborators for a week - from the early 1950s until his death in 1962.

Journalism

After returning from his first visit to the UK where he stayed for nine months (April-December 1953), Beekrum decided, with the help of 15 young friends who were mostly government employees, to launch an independent militant paper. Having resigned as teacher after 16 years, he courageously took up the challenge of being the founder-editor of the weekly *Mauritius Times (MT)*, the country's first solely English paper of the time, and which he headed from 1954 to 2000. It was meant to be, as he wrote in its first issue (of 14 August 1954), "*the instructor, the educator and the moulder of public opinion.*"

In 1956, Beekrum held public meetings in villages for the admission of all children of primary school-going age. He led, mainly through his MT, another successful campaign - 'Down with PR' against Proportional Representation, a demand of the Conservatives. From the very start the MT's articles reflected the country's socio-political history, His over 2,000 editorials addressed national burning issues. The MT also carried Dr B. M. Bhagat's weekly topical poem in Bhojpuri, in Roman script, a unique feature.

Later, Beekrum became the founder-director of Nav Jeevan (1962-1965), a Hindi fortnightly named after Mahatma Gandhi's paper in India, with Soorooj Mungur Bhagath as editor. A self-taught specialist in Hindi, Soorooj (1908-1976) was the national Hindi Pracharini Sabha's first teacher and general secretary from 1935 until his death. Founder-chairman of the then Mauritius Union of Journalists, Beekrum was the doyen of the local press for long. In 1984, he was arrested, along with 44 demonstrators-journalists. This march led by him thwarted the passage of the Newspapers and Periodicals (Amendment) Bill which was meant to impose on print media owners a security of Rs500, 000.

All the columnists of the MT were volunteers, as was Peter Ibbotson who contributed from the UK for 25 years. They included Major General B. Chatterjee, India's High Commissioner in Mauritius (1955-1958), as well as the ex-Head of Mauritian Civil Service who later became Governor-General, Sir Dayendranath Burrenchobay. Many a renowned Mauritian writer and journalist, of whom a few are now dead, are the products of his MT. It has throughout championed the Indo-Mauritian and Mother India's cause.

In Active Politics

Beekrum contributed to SSR's success and that of his team members Harilal Vaghjee and Aunuth Beejadhur in the 1948 and 1953 general elections in the North. For the 1959 elections, Beekrum and five of his collaborators of the MT (Kher Jagatsingh, Doojendranath Nepal, Premchand Dabee, Ramawad Sewgobind and Somduth Bhuckory) were Labour Party's candidates. All were elected, except Bhuckory who lost marginally. Beekrum's score of 80% votes remained for long a record in Mauritius. An MP for 18 years (1959-1976), he served as parliamentary secretary and held a brief stint as Minister.

In early September 1961, Beekrum convened a packed meeting at the seat of the Hindu Maha Sabha to prepare a worthy reception for SSR, who had been appointed Chief Minister in London, a vital constitutional step towards Independence. A national reception committee was set up, with Manilall Ramdin as chairman. Beekrum then revealed his acumen as the national organiser. When SSR landed on 18 September 1961, some 50, 000 people from across the



*With SSR at airport.
Source: Ramlallah Collection.*

country gave him an overwhelming welcome. This was the country's first such national political rally.

In early October 1961, Beekrum organised a night rally at Goodlands, his constituency, in SSR's honour. Upon this author's initiative, a similar mass reception was held in the afternoon of the following Sunday at Long Mountain. Both were the country's first such mass political/constitutional public functions. A week later, Beekrum organised in the yard of the Gymkhana, Port-Louis, an amicable party to thank all those who had helped in the rally at the airport. However, as a rebellious but sincere politician, Beekrum criticised, whenever necessary, the authorities and even Prime Minister SSR. Besides successfully pressing for the creation of the Police and Local Government Service Commissions, he advocated the setting up of then the Small Scale Industries Board, enabling fishermen to receive allowances when they were off work due to bad weather.

Parliamentary Secretary

As parliamentary secretary, Ministry of Health, Beekrum innovated in creating awareness among the masses about preventive measures taken for good health. Every week he was on the television, speaking on this subject. When shifted to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, having heard of the exorbitant prices traders made clients pay for cement, then in acute shortage, Beekrum decided to verify this fraud. Disguised as a poor, illiterate man, he entered a few shops to check for himself. Then he submitted a report which led to remedy the situation. For the 1976 general elections, Beekrum chose not to be a candidate but to continue his patriotic work through his *Mauritius Times*. SSR, after his electoral defeat of 1982, confided to Beekrum that he should have heeded his editorial criticisms meant, as he then agreed, for both the country's and his own (SSR's) good.

Homage to Emancipators Manilal Doctor and de Plevitz

Beekrum's MT came out in special, mournful edition on 3 February 1956 in homage to Manilal Doctor following his death a week earlier. He had battled for Indo-Mauritians' uplift on all fronts. It was the country's first tribute paid to him. By 1959, Beekrum convened a meeting at the Hindu Maha Sabha's seat to set up the Manilal Doctor Memorial Committee. He put Pandit Vanprasthi Dhurundhar and Motoocoramen Sangeelee as its chairman and secretary respectively. As its vice-chairman, he remained the mastermind. With funds voluntarily collected, Manilal Doctor's statue was, with the blessings of the Capital's then MLP-controlled council, put up in the Company Garden at a stone's throw across the road from the Hindu Maha Sabha's seat. Beekrum did not forget Adolphe de Plevitz's earlier emancipatory contribution. This Paris-born Polish, the first to struggle in the 1870s for the cause of Indian labourers, was victimised by reactionaries and later financially ruined. In 1998 Beekrum personally met the cost of the making and installation of his bust in the yard of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, at Moka.

Honouring Aapravasi Ghat

In 1970, Beekrum's attention was drawn by the then Public Assistance Commissioner Ramnarain Ramsaha to the state of neglect in which the archives, containing arrival records of Indo-Mauritians' ancestors, had been left at the premises then housing the offices of the public assistance department. Alert to the value and the symbolism that these archives represent, Beekrum immediately swung into action. Besides having these records saved, he assembled family members and other volunteers to clear the site where a century earlier hundreds of thousands of Indian immigrants had disembarked.

In 1970, for the second visit to Mauritius of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Beekrum convinced Prime Minister SSR to change her programme, so that she could consecrate the Coolie Ghat. In 1978, upon his suggestion, a memorial plaque with its new name was placed there. As from 1970, he was the first to hold a remembrance ceremony to honour the Indian immigrants every year on 2 November that has become a public holiday since 2001. This ceremony continues to this day.

Declared a historical site in 1987, the renamed Aapravasi Ghat was made a World Heritage Site in 2006. For his unique contribution to the preservation of this landing site, the world's only such spot, the Interpretation Centre of Aapravasi Ghat is called after him. This unique museum of its kind will retrace the history of the site, with focus on its location, including the workers' initial two-night immigration depot. On 2 November 2006, Government exclusively launched at its annual ceremony the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund's first biographical publication, 'Beekrumsing Ramlallah: A Man of Principles,' highlighting his pioneering efforts in heritage preservation.



INDENTURE SITES

THE VAGRANT DEPOT ENTRANCE GATEWAY

Lovehin Andiapen, World Heritage Site Manager

The Entrance Gateway of the Vagrant Depot is located on the Pointe aux Sables Road at Grand River North West. It is among the most important indenture sites in Mauritius as it is intimately associated with the history of indentured labourers in the island.

Between 1816 and 1853, hundreds of Indian convicts were kept at the Convict Barracks or Convict Headquarters of Grand River. In 1864, the Convict Barracks was converted into the Vagrant Depot of Grand River. Between 1864 and 1886, tens of thousands of Indian and non-Indian vagrants were imprisoned at the Grand River Depot. A vagrant according to colonial laws was someone who did not possess a 'valid pass' (or ticket) as well as someone who did not have a permanent place of residence and not working under a labour contract. At the same time, a vagrant was also considered to be a deserter or a labourer who had escaped from his master's employment, usually on a sugar estate.

The Vagrant Depot was closed in the early 1886 as there were numerous problems affecting the site. Vagrants escaping from captivity, unhealthy living and working conditions and overcrowding were some of the problems which afflicted the depot during its twenty two years of operation. After its closure, the prisoners of the Vagrant Depot were transferred to the Port Louis Prison and the newly built Beau Bassin Central Prison. As such, the site is the only surviving testimony of the convicts and indentured workers who were kept there. The Vagrant Depot was decreed National Monument in 1958 by Governor Sir Robert Scott through Government Notice No. 614.

The entrance gateway of the Vagrant Depot was relentlessly damaged during the riots of 1999. The rooftop and windows were wholly damaged. Since then, the building was left in a state of relinquishment. In order to avert further worsening and to extend the lifetime of this National Monument, the AGTF undertook the restoration and conservation of the building along with historical research.



*Entrance gateway of the Vagrant Depot in a state of abandonment.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*



*Restored Entrance Gateway.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection*

The conservation project of the entrance gateway of the Vagrant Depot was devised into two phases. The first phase consisted of restoring the roof and the main gate of the building while the second phase entails the consolidation of the walls of the gateway along with surviving structures of the depot. The initial phase of the conservation project was completed in 2011. While restoring and conserving historic buildings, it is essential to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the structure. As such, the guidelines adopted for the conservation of the building is based on international norms and framework of Heritage Conservation. The aim of the framework is developing and propagating good practice pertaining to the preservation of built heritage.

Before the restoration works, the conservation process necessitated the undertaking of an architectural documentation and a non-intrusive archeological survey of the site. Subsequently, the rooftop and the main gate of the entrance gateway was restored according to international norms of conservation and based on detailed archival plan. The first phase of the conservation of the entrance gateway of the Vagrant Depot which involved the restoration of the roof and the main gate was completed in April

2011. The newly restored gateway was inaugurated by Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee, Minister of Arts and Culture on the 21st of April 2011.

Moreover, the second phase of the Vagrant Depot Conservation project shall start in the near future. In a few years, a fully restored Vagrant Depot will form part of a local as well as an international *Indenture labour Route project* which include the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and the Trianon Barracks. Besides, a heritage development plan of the area will be developed on the long term to promote the Vagrant Depot as a major heritage site in Mauritius.

THE TRIANON CONSERVATION PROJECT

Ashvin Nemchand, Research Assistant

Introduction

The Trianon Barracks also known as the “Old Labourers’ Quarters” formed part of the Trianon Sugar Estate, which was established by Martin Monchamp in 1803. Trianon was a big estate comprising of the sugar mill, the owner’s house, the camp for the

rich cultural background of the indentured labourers who came to Mauritius.

The “Old Labourers’ Quarters” and surrounding chimneys, temple, and other buildings are vestiges of a bygone era; They provide insights into the day to day lives of the indentured labourers who lived and worked on the sugar estates of Mauritius. Moreover, they provide insights into the architectural knowledge of past artisans who constructed these buildings. As such, the Ancient Monuments Board decreed the Trianon Barracks as National Monument through Government notice No. 666 on the 22nd of July 1974.



*Trianon Barracks.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

labourers and sugar cane fields. Prior to indenture, the labour force on Trianon Sugar Estate consisted mainly of slaves. Following the abolition of slavery, indentured immigrants were introduced. By the 1870s, Trianon would become one of the most important sugar estates in the Plaines Wilhems employing up to 556 indentured labourers.

Sugar estates were a key and fundamental part of the indentured labour system. What are more significant are the way of life, hardship and the day to day undertakings of indentured labourers within the sugar estate. The “Old Labourers’ Quarters” reflect the knowledge, beliefs and traditions of the diverse and

Between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, this structure had played a central role in the daily lives of some of the Indian workers and their families who lived on Trianon Sugar Estate. It is therefore of foremost importance to conserve and restore this historic building as it is directly and tangibly linked with the way of life in the sugar camps.

Overview of the Trianon Barracks

The Old labourers’ Quarters were built sometime during the first half of the nineteenth century. It has often been called a barrack complex as it consists of 15 rectangular arched compartments.



They were constructed on a stone base out of basalt blocks available locally. The stones were sealed with lime mortar and the interior of the chambers were coated with lime wash.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the stone barracks or the Old Labourers' Quarters at Trianon were still used to house Indian labourers. The chambers are described as having low height doors and a slender split opening for aeration in each chamber. The door varied from 1.63 m to 1.72 m with an average width of 80cm. Stones steps were erected at the entrance of each chamber to facilitate accessibility. In the interior of the chambers, traces of wooden parti-tion suggest that the chambers were separated into two halves. Oral history reveals that each part was occupied by a family. In the 1960s, several modifications were carried out in the chambers. Kitchens were built at the rearmost portion of the eight chambers with cement and concrete blocks. Alterations were also carried out at the entrances and the ventilation.

State of conservation prior to the implementation of the Conservation Project

The Trianon barracks has been in a state of abandonment since the 1970s. Time, nature and human intervention, not always considerate of the conservation of the building, had further added to the degeneration of the structures. The growth of plants and the proliferation of roots above the vaults, walls and floor of the barracks have contributed in the major deterioration of the structures.

The spread of roots has led to the fractional crumbling of the structures in certain areas of the building. Structural cracks were highly visible in few chambers. Moreover, the accumulation of rain water in the closed apertures of the barracks is another cause of rapid structural weakening. It not only contributes to the fast growth of flora but also enfeebles the structure and the basement of the building. The water retention in the walls has accelerated surface algal and fungal development thus leading to the corrosion of the lime mortars and lime layers.



*Trianon Barracks prior to emergency interventions in 2010.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*



*Trianon Barracks after emergency interventions.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

The Conservation Project

The Trianon Conservation Project was initiated by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund in 2010. The main aim behind the implementation of the Conservation Project was to restore and conserve the barracks thus prolonging the life span of this National Monument for the benefit of the present and future generations. Between June and September 2010, the AGTF Technical Unit undertook emergency preventive measures to stop further degradation of the barracks. The thick vegetation in and around the barracks were removed. Thereafter, an architectural survey was carried out to document the preconservation state of the structure. Based on the architectural documentation, a Conservation Plan was devised by the Conservation Architect and consultant to the AGTF, Mr. Munish Pandit.

The Conservation Plan identifies the main elements affecting the site and makes provision for intervention measures, necessary to the restoration of the building to its original state. As such, while restoring and conserving historic buildings, it is essential to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the structure. The main principle in conservation is to respect the use of traditional technics and materials. The guidelines adopted for the conservation of this site are principally derived from worldwide acknowledged ICOMOS charters like the Venice Charter, the Burra Charter and the Nara document.

Preliminary interventions as per formulated by the Conservation Plan are underway. In April 2013, raking and repointing of the exterior and interior walls started. Raking consists of removing the decayed mortar from the joints of the stones to a minimum depth of 25 mm while repointing is undertaken as a part of the process to restore the ability of the masonry walls to control water ingress and preserve its historical significance. Besides, the algae growth on the inner walls were treated and removed before a photographic documentation of same was carried out. As at date, documentation, raking and pointing of both the exterior and interior walls has been completed.

It was noted that in some chambers of the barracks, the vaulted roof has collapsed due to the proliferation of roots and wild vegetation. As such, there is an urgent need to repair these roofs. However, the restoration of the roof is a long and complicated process as the latter is composed of only lime mortar and stone chips. This rare type of masonry required that load tests and structural analysis be carried out prior to intervention. Consequently, the services of an engineering firm was retained and the above tests were carried out on one vaulted roof by using the traditional technics and materials like lime concrete and organic ingredients. Upon a positive report from the engineering firm with regards to the tests, the AGTF has started the repair of the roofs of the barracks. Furthermore, the restoration of the vaulted



roof necessitated the dismantling of the stones found on the arches. All the fixed stones of the arches were properly documented and marked by giving numbers. As at date, two roofs have already been restored and the curing of the lime mortar is in progress.

The Conservation Project of the Old Labourers' Quarters is currently underway and it is expected to be completed in two years. In conserving and developing this site the AGTF aims at preserving the memories of those days of indenture for future generations. In a few years, a fully restored "Old Labourers' Quarters" may even form part of a local Mauritian Indenture Labour

Route Project which would include the Aapravasi Ghat and the Vagrant Depot. Upon completion of the Conservation Project of the Old Labourer' Quarters, the AGTF aims to implement a development project in the long term to allow access to the public. The objective is to propose activities to the public, develop cultural tourism in that region and create awareness on the importance of this heritage site as a component of the wider Mauritian Heritage. In order to achieve this objective, the AGTF aims at setting-up a visitor infrastructure, signage and an open-air museum.



*Raking and repointing of joints of the exterior walls.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

BRITISH POLICY, QUARANTINE AND COLONIAL MAURITIUS

Raj Boodhoo, Researcher in medical history

In previous issues of the AGTF newsletter, short articles on the quarantine system in Mauritius during the Indian immigration period have been presented to the general public. The response has been encouraging as readers have often emailed for more details. This is, therefore, another article on the same subject. It explains briefly the policy of British Parliament to terminate the quarantine system in England, but at the same time to approve the setting up of the same system to keep disease at bay in Mauritius.

During the medieval times when plague, following commercial routes, invaded Europe by land and sea, many countries responded by setting up quarantine stations at the ports and different forms 'cordons sanitaires,' at the city gates. In the nineteenth century, the same old form of control was reintroduced when cholera pandemics invaded Europe. The first International Sanitary Conference held in Paris in 1851, (and several others in the course of the century), also recommended quarantine. It was also established that Asiatic cholera or cholera morbus originated from India and arrived in Europe following commercial and pilgrimage routes. However, quarantine could cause much suffering to crews, passengers and considerable damage to cargo. And then, the system having failed lamentably to stop the disease, successive waves of cholera swept the world.

In 1831, when England was first hit by cholera, carried by merchant ships, the old quarantine system was set up at its ports. Since the growing *Laissez faire* attitude upheld little interference in trading activities, quarantine control disturbed the flow of trade. When it was observed that epidemics broke out again in 1848 in spite of quarantine control, the system in England was discontinued. In the mid nineteenth century, two paradigms were commonly used to explain the cause of disease: contagion, i.e., disease could spread through contact from individual to individual, and miasma, a noxious form of 'bad air,' emanating from rotting organic matter, refuse or faeces. Those who held that miasma caused cholera urged sanitary improvements. Thus in

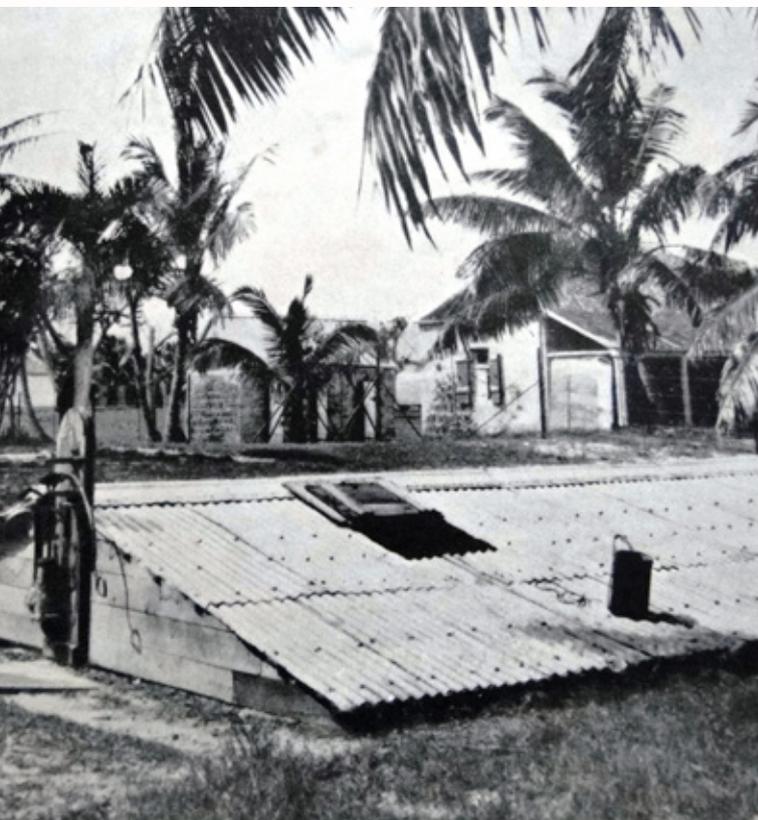
1850s, important works such as drains, sewerage and pipe water started in major cities.

In the meantime, an English physician Dr John Snow, who had been observing the disease since the first epidemic of 1831, published a report in 1849 and, again in 1854, stated that cholera was caused by contaminated water. In the same year, another researcher, Pacini in Florence described the bacteria, vibrio cholera, (comma bacillus) responsible for the disease. These discoveries were ignored by medical circles, critical reports were published in 'The Lancet'. (The bacteria was re-discovered by Robert Koch in 1883).

However, a similar policy, banning quarantine and improving sanitary services, was not at all applied in colonies such as Mauritius. The quarantine system which had been developed by the French at Ile de France in the eighteenth century was maintained. In the early years of Indian immigration, the islet at the entrance of the port, Ile aux Tonneliers, was used as a quarantine station for Indians arriving with smallpox and cholera infections. When the number of arrivals increased considerably in the early 1850s, and with it the number of cases infected by smallpox and cholera, the need for new stations was felt. Inhabitants of Port Louis, the press and the local elite pressed for a proper quarantine station far from Port Louis. The new municipality created in 1850 was also very vigilant and watched every suspect ship. The spectre of contagion was brandished with force. People believed that diseased Indians could spread disease if they landed. And keeping the infected at Tonneliers Island could create miasma and spread over the town by the wind. When that station was occupied, ships had to undergo quarantine in the harbour or they were sent as far as Ile aux Benitiers in the south west or to Flat Island. Indians who were not allowed to land from infected ships had to stay on board for a period of time. A guard ship was anchored in the port between land and a suspect ship to discourage any communication with the port. Food, water and medicine were sent on board until permission (pratique) was given to captains to land passengers and disembark cargo. This form of isolation of people who had already endured travelling in cramped conditions for three months caused more suffering. This was sometimes denounced by the British Indian Government, but in vain. Ship companies too disapproved delays to disembark perishable goods causing loss of profits, they often threatened to stop carrying Indians.



Quarantine Station at Flat Island
Source: Balfour medical report, 1921



In the 1840s, while Parliament in England was heading towards the termination of the old form of quarantine, the Colonial Office firmly urged the setting up of a permanent quarantine station in Mauritius. Again, it was neither smallpox nor any other disease but cholera epidemics in these countries that were shaping policies in different ways. In England, new measures proposed the setting up of hospitals on land near the ports to accommodate sick passengers, those who were in healthy conditions to be sent home. Cargoes were landed without delays. In Mauritius, cholera epidemic of 1854 hastened government decision to establish Flat Island quarantine station. The lease of both Flat and Gabriel Islands were terminated and an indemnity was paid to the lease holder who reared animals there.

It has to be noted that governors in Mauritius did not totally approve quarantine. Governor Higginson (1851-57) was quite reluctant as he stated in the Council that quarantine could not protect public health and it was more important for the municipality to improve sanitation in the town. Most governors were against, but conceded all the time to the local elite, including the *Société Médicale* and the press.

While the infrastructures were being set up, serious accidents occurred. In January 1856, a cyclone hit the islands while over five hundred Indians were isolated at Gabriel Island, accommodated under tents and huts. Cholera broke out at the same time and there were two hundred and eighty six casualties. When reports of the disaster reached India, immigration was immediately suspended. Moreover, at least two immigrant ships while arriving from India foundered on the rocks north of Flat Island causing more casualties. Immigration re-started when the Government of Mauritius was able to convince the Government of India that adequate accommodation was ready at Flat island and Gabriel Islands, and a new station was being planned at Canonniers Point on the northern mainland of the island. The Government of India, was never able to persuade either the Colonial Office or the Government of Mauritius to ban the quarantine system. More changes included the setting up of a lighthouse at Flat Island to guide ships from India, a semaphore to communicate between Flat Island and the mainland, conveyance of medical stores, food, water and clothing by government steamers and boats twice weekly and specially the appointment of a resident Superintendent Surgeon at Flat Island. While, the station at Cannoniers Point was used to mainly accommodate victims of smallpox and fever, where European patients were also admitted. In 1861 more outbreaks were recorded. Although the new stations were quite far from the town, petitioners from Port Louis claimed that the quarantine station for cholera, should be moved from Flat Island to Rodrigues, 350 miles away. This far-fetched request did not have the consideration of government.

The system continued to operate throughout the century as Indians continued to arrive. Major epidemics of cholera and smallpox did not occur after the 1870s. This security from disease has been attributed to the quarantine system. This can be true only to an extent. One important argument is that Indians in better health conditions arrived by ships that were better equipped. Moreover, depots in the Indian ports provided vaccines and clean pipe water thus reducing health risks. But the risk remained for those who were too closely involved in health care, those practitioners who volunteered to work at the stations risking their lives. In 1883, Dr H. Beaugeard died at Gabriel Island while caring smallpox patients from the Seychelles, also, Dr I. Goomany died on duty at Cannoniers Point.

The system continued to operate throughout the century, in spite of the advance of medical science and the discovery of the cause of cholera. Administrative changes brought little improvement to it. Even Governors such as Pope-Hennessy was not interested to bring any change or to stop this archaic establishment that had cost a large amount of money. Governor Napier Broome summed up the whole story of the quarantine system so closely linked to Indian immigration when he stated that there were three delicate issues in Mauritius to which governors had to pay attention when they dealt with the planter class: *'land, labour and quarantine.'*

Adapted from
Health Disease and Indian Immigrants in Nineteenth Century Mauritius. 2010. AGTF
Unpublished work by the author
on epidemics in Mauritius.
See also previous issues of AGTF newsletters.

OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF FLAT ISLAND

Satyendra Peerthum, Historian

Flat Island is located at a distance of around 12 kilometres to the north of Mauritius, it stretches over an area of more than 300 acres and it is the largest islet off the Mauritian coast. During the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, Flat Island was used as a quarantine station. Between 1856 and early 1900s, thousands of indentured and ex-indentured labourers were placed in quarantine there.

than 750 indentured labourers were sent to the island and more than 280 died within just a few weeks after their arrival. In 1879, dozens of indentured labourers, who had been imprisoned at the Port Louis Prisons on Maillard Street, were landed at Flat Island during a suspected cholera outbreak in the prison complex. Over a period of half a century, several hundred indentured and ex-indentured labourers perished during their stay on that island.

Between 1856 and 1870, numerous stone and wooden buildings and structures were built on Flat Island at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds sterling to the local colonial treasury. These buildings consisted of hospitals, living areas for individuals placed in quarantine, living quarters and working areas/offices for the medical, police, and immigration officials/

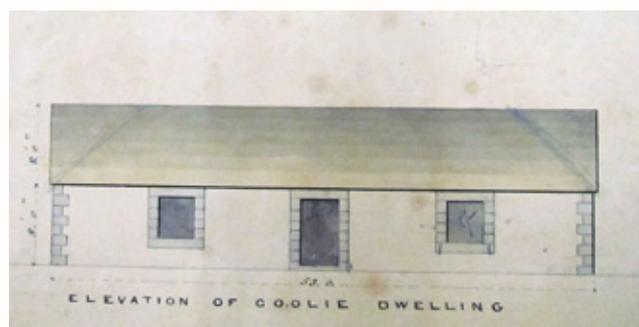


*Immigrants on Flat island.
Source: MGIIIA.*

During the course of the nineteenth century, Liberated Africans, some British soldiers and even some Chinese workers were forced to stay there for a period of anywhere between 1 to 3 months or more, just like the indentured Indian labourers. During a period of more than 50 years, individuals especially indentured labourers found on ships just arriving from India and who suffered from cholera, small pox and other illnesses were placed in quarantine on Flat Island. Ever since the 1850s, this strategy of the local British government was to prevent infectious diseases from entering Mauritius and infecting the local population.

As early as 1829, the local British colonial government considered in sending some of the recently introduced 1100 indentured labourers who were infected with cholera to Flat Island. In 1856, more

officers who were in charge of the quarantine station. They also consisted of cook houses and storage areas etc. Several wells were dug on the eastern, western and central parts of the island.



*Elevation plan of buildings for coolies on Flat Island.
Source: Mauritius National Archives.*

During the same period, a small jetty was built on the eastern side of the island as well as a long pier was erected on the western side of the island at Palissades Bay. Most of the stone structures and buildings were erected near Palissades Bay. Several pathways were also created. Almost all of the buildings and structures which were built on Flat Island between 1856 and 1870 were erected by ex-indentured labourers.

The most famous building located on the island is the lighthouse which stands on a 100-meter high hill and became operational in 1854 or during the mid-1850s. One of the most famous visitors to Flat Island was Nicholas Pike, the American Consul in Mauritius, who in 1870 visited the island. In his work on Mauritius entitled *Sub-Tropical Rambles in the Land of the Aphanateryx*, which was published in the mid-1870s, he provided an important description of the island.

The stone buildings and structures on Flat Island are intimately linked with the history of indenture and indentured labourers in Mauritius. Between the 1850s and early 1900s, thousands of indentured labourers and ex-indentured labourers were placed in quarantine

there. At the same time, several hundred indentured and ex-indentured labourers also perished during their stay on that island. The buildings which were erected on Flat Island between 1856 and 1870 were meant mainly to serve as a quarantine station for indentured labourers who recently arrived in Port Louis onboard ships from India and were suspected of being infected with contagious diseases. However, it was also a place where Liberated Africans, British soldiers and some Chinese labourers were also put in quarantine.

There are other places around the world which share an almost similar history with Flat Island such as Nelson Island, located off the coast of Trinidad, and Nukulau Island, located off the coast of Fiji. These two islands were also used as quarantine station for indentured labourers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



*The light House on Flat Island.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection*

CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY AT ILOT GABRIEL (1856)

Nivriti Sewtohol, Mauritian writer

In the mid-nineteenth century, the sugar industry was having its heyday with production and profit increasing by fits and starts. Cheap labour flowed in massively from India to boost up the industry to the distaste and hatred of the local inhabitants. The indentured labourers came to the country to cut down forests, remove rocks and stones and plant sugar canes. Others helped to build roads and sugar factories. The influx of people in Port Louis had made the town very dirty and the home for diseases of all sorts including pestilences through lack of care and hygiene. Cholera appeared in the 1850s. The people threw the blame on the Indian immigrants and pressed the authorities not to let them disembark in the harbour. The workers were generally put on quarantine before being allowed to enter the country.

It was during such an atmosphere of dread that two Coolie ships, the Hyderee with 272 and the Futtay Mubarack with 380 workers, from Calcutta, approached Port Louis on the 5th January, 1856. As soon as they hove in sight, the inhabitants raised a hue and cry against them requesting the prevention of landing the passengers in the harbour.

They feared there was cholera on board. In fact, the unhygienic conditions prevailing in the crammed ships gave fever and dysentery to the passengers and quite a few had already died. The Mauritian chief medical officer, Dr Ford, put the two ships on quarantine at Pavillon and declared there was no case of cholera.

The authorities wasted time in deciding whether to put the two ships on quarantine or not. They finally resolved to send both ships whose passengers were on land already to Ilot Gabriel and Flat Island. A lighthouse was under construction on the latter so that people were not authorized to go there.



*Map of Gabriel Island.
Source: Mauritius National Archives.*

At Ilot Gabriel, cholera arose suddenly. The passengers were contaminated before they left for the island at Pavillon due to its proximity to Port Louis. Besides, the Coolies had landed there and came in touch with infected people and objects. Dr Finnimore said that cholera cases had appeared at Pavillon

before the ships left for the island. The Coolies disembarked on Ilot Gabriel on 14th January, 1856, from Futtay Mubarrack, and the Hyderee on the 19th. Two cholera cases appeared on the latter on 19th January. It was as late as the 2nd of February that the yellow flag symbolizing the presence of the pestilence was raised on the island, shutting it out to the public.

When the 620 Coolies landed on Ilot Gabriel, which is a small island of 1333 yards by 766 yards, there were only three wooden buildings each 27 feet by 17 feet to give them shelter. Sheds covered with the sails of boats and tarpaulins were hastily put up to give them protection against the terrible heat of February, the hottest month of the year. At night, it was very cold. The unfortunate Indians started dying in great numbers, this time not only of fever and dysentery but of cholera, too. There was no water on the island. The only well found on Flat Island close by was blocked as work on the lighthouse under construction was in progress. The steamer that was bringing water from Port Louis capsized while trying to approach the island and lost the precious commodity so that the people had to do without it. The little water they got was so dirty that they refused to take it and preferred to collect dew in the early morning for use.

The Colonial Secretary blamed the employees for taking too much time to provide means of subsistence. Dr Finnimore came to the island and declared on the 26th February that the Coolies were in very bad state on Ilot Gabriel. Building materials were available there. It took time to fix them up to protect the Indians. In the meantime, the hardships suffered during the course of the voyage and the sufferings undergone on the island, were having a heavy toll on their lives. 125 persons died out of 650 within 40 days and 123 others within 68 days during the administration of Dr Finnimore. Only 83 of them died of cholera. In total, 298 perished officially. Their blanching bones strewn everywhere on the island were visible till the 1960s. Travellers called it Ile aux Morts and stayed clear of it through fear and superstition. The skull that Father Souchon saw as a child during a trip there was that of a Coolie and not of a pirate as he thought.

Governor J.M.Higginson set up a Commission of Enquiry in 1856 under the chairmanship of Honourable Henry Koenig to elucidate the existence of cholera in Mauritius and how to combat it. The Commission spoke about the slackness of the authorities to take

measures, negligence of the doctors and indifference of the Mauritian workers. All were to blame, and the more so, the inhabitants of Port Louis, because of whom the tragedy was played. Later historians like Reverend Patrick Beaton ("Five Years In Mauritius") spoke about the unhygienic conditions prevailing in the town of Port Louis, a home of eyesores. The summer heat of the months of January and February made the situation worse. Blaming others, especially helpless people on the look out for a better livelihood, spoke of nothing but indifference to the sufferings of others.

The rate of human mortality at Ilot Gabriel is a unique occurrence in the history of indentured labourers and Mauritius. It was a crime against humanity perpetrated on Mauritian territory by the fear of the local people. Nothing is known about measures, if any, taken to inform the relatives of the dead Coolies about their fate which was not natural but the outcome of colonial administrative flippancy. Historians and other writers play shy of that event putting it aside as a fait divers. Yet, it speaks about the true mentality prevailing in the colonies in those days concerning workers. Only profits mattered. The rest was dumped in the bin of history. Our ancestors played the game of death to bring prosperity to a few. May their souls rest in peace.



INDENTURE IN THE WORLD

DISCOVERING OUR HISTORY UNTOLD STORIES: THE EMERGENCE OF AN ENDOGENOUS¹ WORK FORCE & THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MAURITIAN INDENTURED WORKERS (1870-1910)

Satyendra Peerthum, Historian

"In recent years the number of Mauritian born Indians laboring on the sugar estates has increased considerably. It is becoming evident that the colony's laboring population is undergoing a period of prolonged change"

(Observation of Sir Henry Leclézio, Chairman of the Council of Government Committee on Indian Immigration and Mauritian Planter to Governor Sir Charles Bruce, 19th September 1901)

One of the largely unexplored themes of Mauritian indentured labour historiography is the emergence of an endogenous work force that played a crucial role in the survival and consolidation of the sugar industry and the economy of Mauritius during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between the 1870s and early 1900s, there were tens of thousands of Indo-Mauritians, or Mauritians of Indian origin, who served one-year written and oral labour contracts on the island's rural sugar estates. By the mid-1880s, they were taking part in a long, complex, and silent labour revolution where they at first supplemented and then gradually replaced the Indian indentured immigrants on the Mauritian sugar plantations.

The Genesis of a Mauritian Work Force

According to the *Annual Report of the Protector of Immigrants for 1859* and the papers of the Council of Government Committee on Immigration, a total of 20,209 individuals of Indian origin were born on the island since the large scale importation of indentured labourers in 1834. During the early 1860s, Indo-Mauritians consisted 10% of the local population of Indian origin. More than a decade later in 1871, the Indians and Indo-Mauritians together made up around two thirds of the local colonial population. By the 1870s, two generations of Indo-Mauritians had already emerged and became an integral part of the local colonial population. In 1873, the Indo-Mauritians made up more than 8% of the estate work force under short labour contracts which were renewed each year. During the same period, the Mauritian archival documents clearly indicate that the Indo-Mauritians were being referred to as "creole" or "creoles".

In 1881, there were 113,000 Indo-Mauritians and they consisted around 45% of the total number of individuals classified as Indian or of Indian descent. Even more importantly, they made up more than 28% of the work force on the island's sugar estates. Barely four years later, this figure increased to more than 33%. Between 1873 and 1885, there was a dramatic rise from 8% to 33% in the number of Indo-Mauritians who worked on the island's sugar plantations. The majority of the Mauritian estate workers were Hindus and Muslims with some Creoles who were Christians and descendants of the former Afro-Malagasy slaves and apprentices. During the 1880s and 1890s, Afro-Malagasy contract workers like Emilien Dureau, Willie Leonore, Francis Thara, and Henri Maugendre worked on 12-month contracts on a sugar estate in Pamplémousses district.

Almad Hoosen	332,526	Bygras Mauritian	O. Louis	11.12.74	1	20.4	75	R	332,526
Mohanah	372,778	Rosalie	Moka	8.2.75	-	7/4	23.7	75	R
			Camp	22.4.74	5		8.3	75	R

Allad Hoosen, an Indo-Mauritian, worked as a Job Contractor on Alma Sugar Estate in Moka District in 1875. Source: MGIIIA/PO Series.

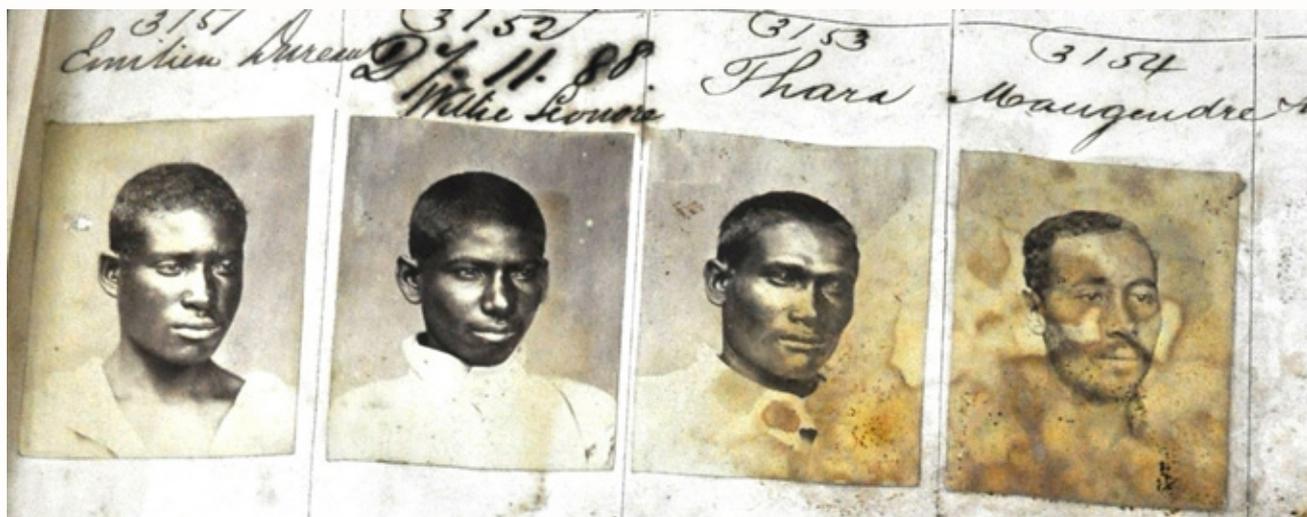
¹ Endogenous work force means a local-born or locally created labour force, it is a term occasionally used by historians of colonial labour history.

Yassamy	Creole	do	do	18.5	77	1	20.4	77
Trasen	do	do	do	14.5	77	1	24.10	77
Trasen	do	do	do	15.6	77	1	19.9	77
Trasen	do	do	do	14.5	77	1	13.9	77
Trasen	do	do	do	28.5	77	1	26.9	77
Trasen	do	do	do	8.8	77	2	16.8	77
Trasen	do	do	do	23.1	77	1	1.2	77
Trasen	do	do	do	10.3	73	5	14.10	77
Trasen	do	do	do	5			15.6	77
Trasen	do	do	do	3.5	77	1	1.7	77

Ayassamy, Armoogum and Abdool were three Indo-Mauritians or listed as "creole" who worked as labourers on Riche Mare, Belle Vue and Beau Bois Sugar Estates under 12 month contracts in different parts of Mauritius in 1877. Source: MGIIIA/PO Series.

The Life-Stories of the Mauritian Contract Workers

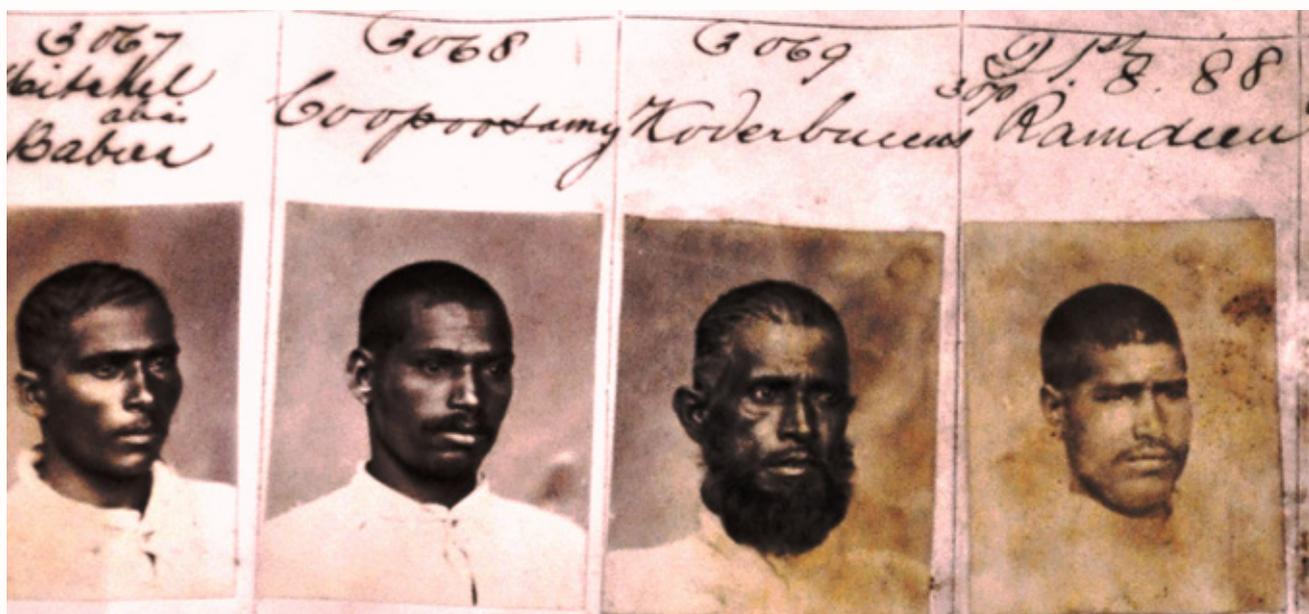
During the 1870s and 1880s, as there was a dramatic increase in the number of Indo-Mauritians who worked on the sugar plantations, it became very common for them to be arrested and convicted as deserters and vagrants. The Indo-Mauritians were treated almost like the Indian indentured labourers and the Liberated Africans under the labour and vagrancy laws. In accordance with the Labour Law of 1878, all Mauritian contract workers had to be registered, photographed, and issued a pass. Between the late 1870s and early 1900s, hundreds of these Mauritian workers were photographed.



Emilien Dureau, Willie Leonore, Francis Thara, and Henri Maugendre, four male Afro-Malagasy Creole Mauritian labourers who worked under 12-month labour contracts as labourers and semi-skilled workers on Beau Plan Sugar Estate in Pamplemousses District. They were photographed in 1888 at the Immigration Depot after they completed one of their labour contracts. Source: MGIIIA/PG, PF, and PO Series.

During this period, an increasing number of Mauritian labourers decided to get "engaged" for a period of 12 months because of poverty, difficulty of getting a stable job, proper housing, and the need to support their families. In addition, by the 1860s and after, many Indo-Mauritian workers were born and grew up in the estates camps and were then children and grandchildren of indentured Indian immigrants. As a result, they were familiar with life on the sugar estate and decided to work on the same plantation in order to be close to their family, friends, and the familiar places where they grew.

In the MGI Immigration Archives and the Mauritius National Archives, there are the stories and experiences of several Indo-Mauritians, or first generation sons and daughters of Indian indentured workers, that clearly stand out in the local archival records such as Ramalingum Andiapen and Ramsamy Ramen. These are some of the untold stories of the Indo-Mauritians during the indenture era.



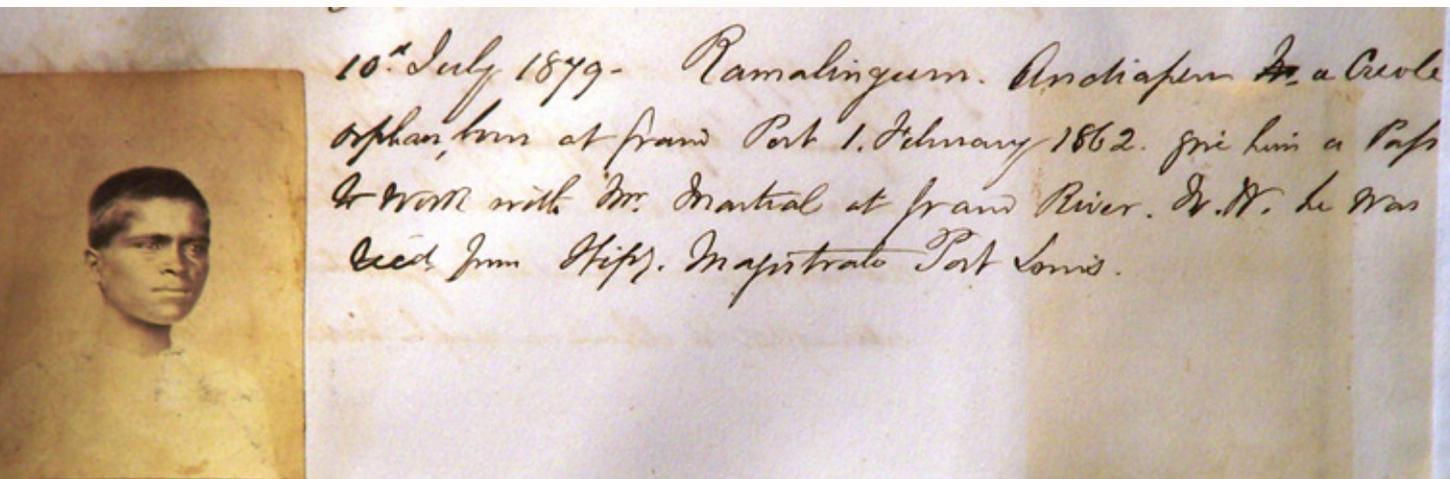
Babea, Coopoosamy, Koderboccus and Ramdeen, four male Mauritian Workers who worked under 12-month labour contracts as labourers and semi-skilled workers on Belle Mare Sugar Estate in Flacq. They were photographed in 1888 at the Immigration Depot. Source: MGIIIA/PG, PF, and PO Series.

Between the 1860s and the early 1900s, there was a trend among the Indo-Mauritians of leaving the sugar estates and gradually moving towards newly established villages, towns and Port Louis. In 1871, more than 33% of the Indo-Mauritians lived in the villages, towns and some in Port Louis. More than three decades later, the *Mauritius Census* of 1901, indicates that more than 60% of the Indo-Mauritians did not live on the sugar plantations, but still worked or had some economic links to the estates. During

early 20th century, the Indo-Mauritians consisted more than 50% of the work force and by now, it was this endogenous labour force that became the motor of the island's sugar producing economy.

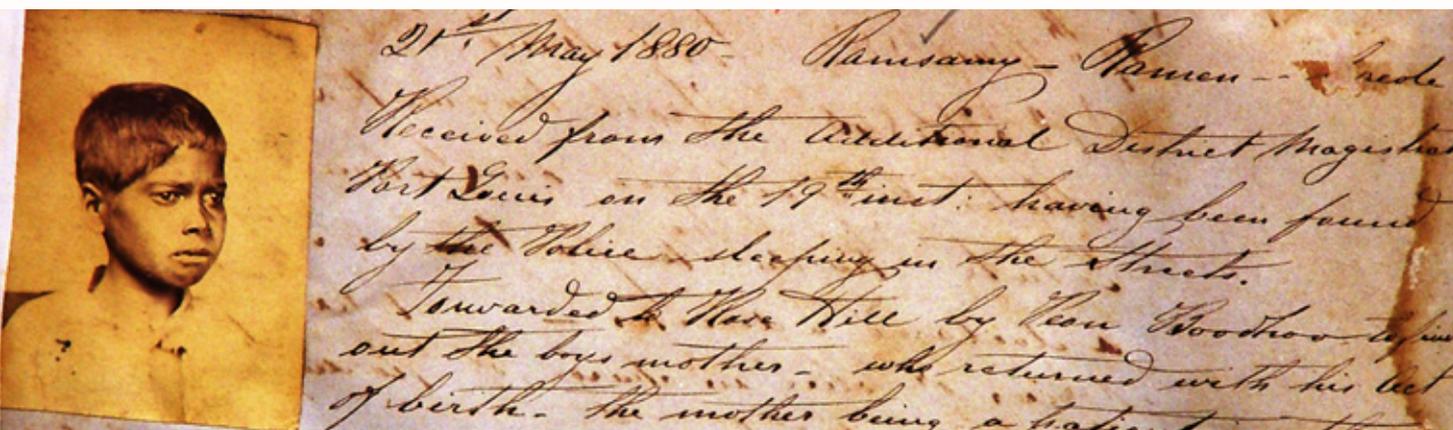


Periacooty, Jay Lamen, Ryamah and Rickareea. Four female Mauritian workers who worked under 12-month labour contracts and doing semi-skilled and light work on Labourdonnais Sugar Estate in Rivière du Rempart district. They were photographed in 1890 at the Immigration Depot. Source: MGIIIA/PG, PF, and PO Series.



Ramalingum Andiapen was an Indo-Mauritian and the son of Immigrant Andiapen. He was born in 1862 on Beau Vallon Sugar Estate in Grand Port district. During the 1870s, he worked as a labourer in Grand Port and Port Louis. In 1879, Ramalingum was arrested as a vagrant and sent to work as a labourer on the small estate of Mr. Martial at Grand River North West under a 12-month contract.

Source: MGIIIA/PH and PF Series.



Ramsamy Ramen was an Indo-Mauritian and the son of immigrant Ramen. He was born in 1868 on Labourdonnais Sugar Estate in Rivière du Rempart district. In 1880, Ramsamy was arrested as a vagrant in Port Louis and sent to the Orphan Asylum as an orphan. Five years later, he was sent to work on the sugar estate where he was born as a young skilled labourer under a 12-month contract.

Source: MGIIIA/PH and PF Series.

During the last decades of the indenture era, many of the Indo-Mauritians also left estate labour, they became semi-skilled and skilled workers and others purchased land. In addition, in his academic studies, Richard Allen, an American historian, has observed that the Indo-Mauritians gradually became vegetable cultivators and small sugar planters, engaged in trade and commerce and achieved some measure of social and economic mobility. In their own way, just like the free Indian immigrants or deck passengers, they participated fully in the *grand morcellement* movement, business, the evolution of politics, education, and intellectual life of the colony. Definitely, the Indo-Mauritians made an important contribution to the demographic, economic, political,

and cultural development of Mauritius. It is only now that the untold stories of this endogenous group of workers are being discovered, recorded, narrated, and preserved for posterity.

LES ENGAGÉS INDIENS DE L'ÎLE DE LA RÉUNION

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Située dans le sud-ouest de l'océan Indien, l'île de La Réunion, autrefois appelée île Bourbon est française depuis la première prise de possession en 1638 alors qu'elle est inhabitée. En 1946, la colonie choisit non pas l'indépendance mais l'intégration dans l'Etat français en devenant comme la Martinique, la Guadeloupe et la Guyane un département français d'outre-mer. Sa population largement métissée est issue d'ancêtres venus de tous les continents depuis le XVII^e siècle comme libres, esclaves ou engagés ; la majorité des personnes d'origine indienne présentes dans l'île descendent des travailleurs agricoles engagés au XIX^e siècle.

L'engagisme appelé dans les textes « travail libre » est aujourd'hui défini comme une forme de travail juridiquement contraint: en effet, si les engagés sont des hommes libres au moment de la signature du contrat en Inde, ce contrat les oblige à une durée de travail prédéterminée et non modifiable, avec un salaire non négociable et non évolutif. A Bourbon/ La Réunion, l'engagé n'a pas la possibilité de choisir son engagiste sauf en cas de réengagement et ce dernier peut vendre le contrat.

Les Indiens sont présents dès le début du peuplement de l'île : quinze femmes indo-portugaises débarquent en 1678 pour épouser les colons européens récemment installés ; des esclaves achetés sur les côtes de Malabar et de Coromandel travaillent dès la fin du XVII^e siècle et surtout au XVIII^e siècle dans les plantations ou comme esclaves à talents ; et au début du XVII^e siècle, quelques centaines d'artisans sont engagés par la Compagnie française des Indes orientales pour construire les bâtiments et les infrastructures nécessaires.

Le développement de l'engagisme au XIX^e siècle est étroitement lié à l'interdiction de la traite en 1817 et à l'abolition de l'esclavage en 1848 alors que l'industrie sucrière est en pleine expansion avec plus de 274 usines construites entre 1810 et 1848. Dès

1828, le gouverneur des établissements français de l'Inde envoie quinze Telingas recrutés à Yanaon pour trois ans et sept roupies par mois. Plus de 3 000 travailleurs engagés arrivent les années suivantes mais cette émigration est interdite en 1839, les Indiens étant traités comme les esclaves aux côtés desquels ils travaillent. Ce n'est qu'en 1848 que cette émigration reprend officiellement à partir des territoires français de l'Inde et surtout de Pondichéry: en décembre 1859, la colonie compte 65 000 travailleurs étrangers dont 423 Chinois, 26 000 Africains et 37 000 Indiens engagés pour cinq ans.

Si les grands pics d'émigration correspondent aux grandes périodes de famine qui mettent sur les routes des milliers de gens, tous les émigrants ne sont pas volontaires. Ainsi en 1853, la police de Karikal met au jour un trafic de jeunes garçons enlevés, drogués au hachisch et cachés chez des receleurs avant d'être embarqués. Le procès qui a lieu en 1853-54 condamne seulement les mestrys. Et à partir de 1855, cette émigration dite « des comptoirs » se tarit face à l'hostilité britannique.

A La Réunion, les conditions de vie des engagés indiens sont loin de celles annoncées dans les contrats d'autant que les Indiens travaillent aux côtés d'engagés africains qui sont pour la plupart des esclaves « préalablement libérés » sur les côtes africaines avant d'être introduits comme engagés. Il faut attendre la signature de la convention franco-britannique de 1860 dont le préalable est l'arrêt total de cet engagisme africain assimilé à la traite pour que des Indiens soient de nouveau envoyés à La Réunion. Cette convention définit les modalités de ce nouveau flux migratoire et installe dans l'île un Consul anglais chargé de veiller aux intérêts des engagés indiens. Ceux qui débarquent en 1860-61 proviennent de la présidence du Bengale par le port de Calcutta: ces « hill-coolies » supportent mal le voyage et arrivent en piteux état. Les planteurs exigent le retour à une immigration issue du sud de l'Inde : désormais, les engagés majoritairement sujets britanniques embarquent par les ports de Yanaon, Madras, Pondichéry ou Karikal.

Après un voyage d'environ un mois, leur premier contact avec l'île passe par les lazarets de quarantaine dont le dernier construit à partir de 1860 se trouve au lieu-dit La Grande Chaloupe dans une vallée étroite et est formé de deux structures distinctes dont l'une



*La Grande Chaloupe Station de Quarantaine
à l'île de la Réunion, 2006.*

Source: AGTF Photo Collection.

en bord de mer. Quatre dortoirs en pierre de 40 m de long permettent d'héberger deux ou trois convois, les femmes étant séparées des hommes. Considéré à l'instar d'Ellis Island comme la porte d'entrée de La Réunion, l'importance de ce lieu dans l'histoire du peuplement de l'île est reconnue aujourd'hui par les autorités locales et nationales qui ont mis en place un programme de restauration et de fouilles archéologiques. Dans cet univers isolé, fermé et gardé, les engagés se remettent des difficultés du voyage et attendent que leur état de santé soit considéré comme sans danger pour la colonie avant d'être envoyés vers les dépôts de Saint-Denis pour subir un ultime examen médical, recevoir un numéro matricule et être distribués aux engagistes qui ont acheté les contrats.

En 1877, la commission d'enquête franco-britannique conduite par Miot et Goldsmith montre que la majorité des Indiens engagés vivent dans des conditions misérables et peu hygiéniques, que leurs salaires ne sont pas toujours versés ou font l'objet de nombreuses retenues et que les retours en Inde sont très mal organisés. Les colons refusant l'ingérence du consul dans leurs affaires, en 1882 cette émigration

sous le régime de la Convention est suspendue même si des engagés arrivent encore en 1885. En 1882, les 30 643 engagés indiens forment les deux tiers des immigrants et le quart de la population locale ; à partir de 1889, leurs enfants nés sur le sol réunionnais peuvent prétendre à la nationalité française.

Sur les 117 813 Indiens officiellement recensés à La Réunion au XIX^e siècle, plus de 90% sont originaires de la moitié sud de l'Inde, en particulier des villages du pays tamoul. En dépit de la réglementation, peu de femmes ont accompagné les convois et il n'y a pas eu de politique en ce sens. De ce fait, le système de castes s'est atténué puis a disparu tandis qu'une partie des Indiens qui se sont installés dans l'île n'ont eu d'autre choix que de former des familles métisses dont l'indianité s'inscrit fortement dans l'espace culturel et religieux.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF INDENTURED LABOUR IN NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA (1860-1911)

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The annexation of the Colony of Natal by the British in 1843 led to an influx of settlers. By 1870 the white population numbered almost 20 000. Settlers on the coast successfully planted sugar, while upcountry farmers grew tea and wattle. Sugar accounted for just over 60 percent of the total gross value of arable farming in 1875. Planters were frustrated by a lack of capital and the absence of cheap and reliable labour. The indigenous Zulu had access to land and many flourished as farmers and refused to sell their labour to settlers. While overseas funds solved settlers' problem of capital, Natal had to turn to India for labour.

The arrival of the *Truro* on 16 November 1860 marked the culmination of a decade-long struggle for cheap labour. In all, 152,641 Indian workers arrived in Natal between 1860 and 1911. Approximately 70 percent were in the 18-30 age group; the average male: female ratio was 72:28; and just 20 percent comprised of families. The list of immigrants included several hundred castes, the majority being in the middle-to-low caste group. They were drawn primarily from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the south-east, and Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in the north-east of India. Madras was the point of departure from the south and Calcutta from the north. Migrants from south India spoke Tamil and Telegu; northerners spoke dialects of Hindi which came to form a South African Hindi.

The experience of indenture militated against caste maintenance. Recruitment as individuals made it difficult to maintain hierarchy and caste distinctions. The cramped journey made it impossible to preserve purity of diet and touch. During the journey to Natal passengers achieved "*Jahaji Bhai*" ("brotherhood of the boat") which reduced their fear of the unknown. The breakdown of caste accelerated on plantations where all workers did the same work at the same rate,

irrespective of caste status, taboos or specializations. They were also housed together in barracks, and subject to communal bathing with no regard to caste, religious and linguistic divisions. The maximum punishment for breaking caste rules is outcasting and



Recently landed Indian Immigrants at the immigration depot in Durban, SA in the 1860s.
Source: National archives of South Africa.

there was no organization in Natal with the authority to inflict this penalty. Although life was no longer regulated by caste structure, individual prejudices and biases would have persisted.

In terms of the contract which they signed, indentured workers agreed to work for five years for the employer to whom they were assigned. They had to perform all tasks allocated to them and were free, at the end of five years, to either reindenture or seek work elsewhere in Natal. Although they were entitled to a free return passage after ten years, almost 58 percent remained in the colony after indenture. Unlike most sugar producing colonies, just around 60 percent of indentured workers were allocated to sugar estates. Indentured workers were also placed on tea and wattle plantations, the municipalities, the railways and the coal mines in Northern Natal. In fact the Natal Government Railways was the largest single employer of Indians in the Colony. Emigration Agents also recruited Indians with special skills to work in hospitals, hotels, private clubs and dockyards. They were usually recruited in urban areas in India, could speak some English, and commanded a higher salary because of their specialist skills.

Indentured Indians faced numerous difficulties as their contract was abused in practice. In fact, when the



*Workers in South Africa.
Source: National Archives of South Africa.*

first group of indentured workers returned to India in 1870 and complained of ill-treatment, the Indian government insisted that work conditions be investigated. Based on the recommendations of the 1872 Coolie Commission, a “Protector of Indian Immigrants” was appointed. In practice, the Protector had little power as he was up against a strong and influential planter lobby. Indentured Indians had few ways of resisting their exploitation as a series of regulations maintained rigid control. Formal control included draconian laws which viewed all contractual offenses as criminal acts and sanctioned legal action against Indians for laziness and desertion. Indians could not go more than two miles from the estate without an employer’s written permission, even if they wanted to lay a charge against that employer. They could not live off the estate, refuse any work assigned to them, demand higher wages, or leave the employer. Most protest was consequently individualistic, and comprised of acts like absenteeism, desertion, suicide, feigning illness, and destruction of property.

The decision to import Indian labour to Natal had long-term consequences. Indentured migrants were followed by migrants from Gujarat on the west coast of India who came to Natal independently in search of opportunities as traders, retail employees, hawkers

and craftsmen. They were termed “passengers” because they came at their own expense and were subject to the ordinary laws of the Colony. They shaped relations in Natal in crucial ways when they emerged as competitors to white traders, whose hostility they consequently aroused, and provided credit and job opportunities for working class Indians.

Harry Escombe, future prime minister of Natal, told the 1885 Wragg Commission that Indian traders ‘entailed a competition which was simply impossible as far as Europeans were concerned, on account of the different habits of life.’ Whites became increasingly anxious about Indians and used their political clout to legally subdue and dominate them after Natal received self-government in 1893. Indian protest in the period from 1893 to 1914 was spearheaded by Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Natal Indian Congress that he helped form in 1894. The tendency of the state to treat Indians as homogenous should not mask the fact that they were heterogeneous with regard to class, caste, religion, language and experiences of migration. These differences form as much a part of the story as the conflict between Indians, Africans and whites.

SLAVERY AND INDENTURED LABOUR

Bhuruth Dinand, Board Member

It may be said that slavery and indentured labour are very closely related. The correspondences of the British consular offices on the treatment of indentured labourers from British India in the French and Dutch colonies were classified under the old heading 'Slave Trade'. In one of these correspondences the British consul in Paramaribo expressed what many observers had always thought about indentured labour: '...the Surinam planters ... found in the meek Hindu a ready substitution for the negro slave he had lost'.

It is my intention here to show that at least one aspect of indentured migration was quite different from the slave trade: the process of recruitment. There is little evidence indicating that fraud, deception and kidnapping existed during the process of recruitment of indentured labourers overseas. Irregular recruiting practices were prevented by both the Indian authorities and the recruiting agencies.

In spite of all these precautions and regulations, however, the recruitment system remained imperfect. It was simply impossible to imagine for the intending emigrant what his future employment overseas would be like. After the indentured emigrant had fulfilled his contract, a similar problem arose upon his return home: it was impossible for him or her to imagine how the reception would be back in India. The group of



Immigrants on plantation, 1870s
Source: Mauritius National Archives

'return coolies', who indentured themselves again to leave India after their return, were the real victims of the system. They had failed to settle overseas and, at the same time, they had become outcasts in India.

The drawbacks of the indenture system, however, do not make it comparable to the slave trade. The relatively low percentage of runaways between the moment of the first registration and embarkation indicated that indentured emigration was usually the result of a choice made by the intending immigrant himself, albeit not always based on rational grounds. In this respect, indentured emigration had more in common with the 'free' emigration out of Europe during the 19th century than with the slave trade during the preceding centuries.

The effects of colonial emigration on India were relatively small. Demographically it meant a loss of mainly young, unmarried males, but unlike the impact of slave trade in West Africa the consequences of this loss did not substantially affect the contemporary or the future population of India, since the emigration was very small in relation to the population of India.

A discussion of the economic and social consequences also yields an unclear result. Colonial emigration of Indian indentureds seemed to have had the same humanitarian basis as the movement against the slave trade. By taking a closer look, however, the situation turns out to be quite different. The slave trade was stopped against the wishes of most of the plantation owners, but probably with the full consent of the slaves, while the decision to end Indian Indentured emigration not only injured the planters overseas, but also the migrant workers themselves, since they continued to migrate in spite of the abolition and never staged any concerted action against emigration overseas. The abolition of overseas' indentured emigration was advocated by the Indian middle class, who had nothing to do with emigration themselves. Their feelings of national pride were hurt, however, because the colonies of white settlement had closed their border to Indian indentured emigrants in order to stop competition between low wage Indians and high wage Europeans. In order to justify their actions, Canada, Australia and South Africa resorted to blatantly racial arguments, and these aroused widespread indignation among the educated Indians.

Between 1842 and 1870, a total of 525,482 Indians emigrated to the British and French Colonies. Of these, 351,401 went to Mauritius, 76,691 went to Demerara, 42,519 went to Trinidad, 15,169 went to Jamaica, 6,448 went to Natal, 15,005 went to Réunion and 16,341 went to the other French colonies. This figure does not include the 30,000 who went to Mauritius earlier, labourers who went to Ceylon or Malaya and illegal recruitment to the French colonies. Thus by 1870 the indenture system, transporting Indian labour to the colonies, was an established system of providing labour for European colonial plantations and when, in 1879, Fiji became a recipient of Indian labour it was this same system with a few minor modifications. Uninterruptedly, Indian contractual labourers were introduced in Mauritius in small groups at the request of individual local planters.

The humanitarian movement among the Indian Nationalists might have been aided by the economic motives. The Indian landowners had always been opposed to emigration, and, around 1914, the rising interests of the Indian capitalists also clashed with the system of overseas indentured emigration, since it reduced the competition on the supply side of the Indian labour market both in agriculture and in the newly developed industrial sector.

The arrival of indentured labourers to Mauritius was beneficial to the agriculture sector and despite the hardships endured by them very few of them ran away. Most of them preferred to stay and they were right because they had a vision to create the 'Chota Bharat' as said by Mrs Indira Gandhi during her visit to Aapravasi Ghat.

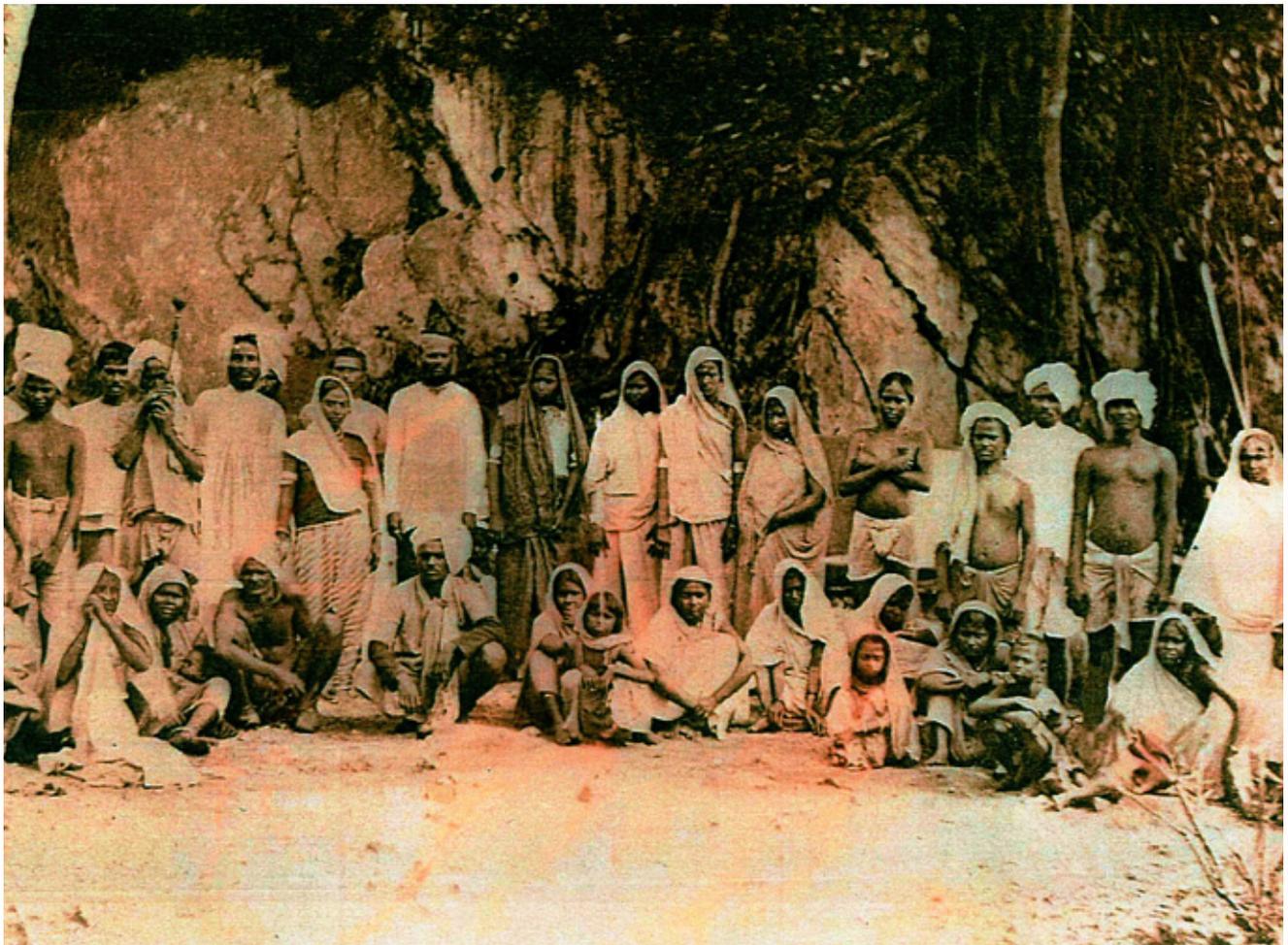
OVERVIEW OF INDIAN INDENTURESHIP SYSTEM IN TRINIDAD, 1845 TO 1920

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On Friday May 30th 1845, the Fath al Razack arrived in Trinidad with approximately 225 Indians, after sailing for 98 days from the port of Calcutta. This marked the beginning of a system of immigration that was to continue, until it became illegal in 1917, to ship Indians under the indentureship scheme. There was a short break from 1848, due to bankruptcy of the Trinidad Government, to 1851, when it resumed as

the colony received a guaranteed loan from Britain. Then there was a steady flow of immigrants every year, until all contracts were completely abolished on January 01, 1920. During its existence, approximately 147,600 labourers arrived in Trinidad. The majority were employed in the sugar cane estates, while a very small number was employed on cocoa, coconut and rubber plantations.

Trinidad became a British colony in 1797, after it was captured from the Spanish. Its potential as a sugar colony had long been recognized with the ongoing competition for supremacy in the world sugar market between Britain and France. Trinidad, the second largest West Indian island, after Jamaica, was considered the most fertile of any of the British West Indian colonies. The demand for indentured labour came, in the aftermath of the abolition of African



*Newly landed immigrants at the immigration depot in Trinidad.
Source: National Archives of Trinidad & Tobago.*

slavery in the British West Indies, in 1838. After emancipation, the sugar cane plantations in Trinidad were faced with a shortage of a regular and relatively cheap labour supply. As a result, various attempts were made to find an alternative source of labour. The Indian indentureship scheme had already been implemented in Mauritius (1834) and British Guiana (1838) and the Trinidadian planter class saw the system as an opportunity to procure an immediate labour force. The influx of a large amount of Indian labourers would flood the labour markets and keep wages depressed, while decreasing the bargaining power of the Afro-Trinidadians.

When Indian immigration to Trinidad commenced in 1845 it was regulated by Act XXII of 1844, passed by the British Government on 20 November 1837, to control the movement of labourers from British India to various parts of the world. The Trinidad planters would submit their requests for labourers to the Governor of Trinidad. This information was then forwarded to the Colonial Office / India Office in Britain. From there it was despatched to India and official licences were given out to recruiters who went into the districts and villages. The majority of the labourers who immigrated to Trinidad came from the United Provinces (48%), Oudh (27%), Bihar (14%), Bengal (19%) and Madras and Bombay (6%).

The Trinidad Emigration depot was located at Garden Reach Calcutta and the Protector of Emigrant was responsible for overlooking the logistics of the system on the Indian side. Recruiters were paid per head for every Indian they recruited for the labour system - 35 rupees for a female labourer and 25 rupees for a male labourer. The contract for the transportation of Indian labourers to the Caribbean was awarded to the James Nourse Shipping Company in 1875. The ships used were usually three-masted schooners around 500 tons. The stipulated length of time of the journey was 20 weeks for a sailing ship and 13 weeks for a steamer. The Nourse shipping line was paid £11 12s. 6d. per statute adult. From 1845 to 1865, the ships en route for Trinidad docked at Port of Spain where the Trinidad Immigration depot or the "Coolie depot" was located. Upon arrival and disembarkation the Indians were taken to the depot where they were accommodated until they were distributed to individual plantations.

In 1865 however, another depot was established at Nelson Island – a very small island located North West of Port of Spain, in the Gulf of Paria. On Nelson Island the immigrants as well as the ship, food and stores were inspected by the Protector of Immigrants and their bundles and blankets were fumigated. The immigrants were to be examined by a medical doctor



*Nelson Island, Trinidad.
Source: Photo courtesy of Mr. Manraj Ramphal.*

and those who only needed rest were kept at the Depot. Once the Indians were physically stable they were transported by small boats to Port of Spain and distributed to the island's plantations.

In Trinidad, the law stipulated that Indian indentured labourers would be engaged in the cultivation of the soil or the manufacture of produce on any plantation, every day except Sundays and authorized holidays. They were required to work for nine hours in each working day and were attached to the specific plantation for five years from the date of allotment. At the end of the five years, the labourers were to be given a certificate of exemption from labour and were permitted to return to India at their own cost after ten years residence in the colony. According to the contract, which the labourers signed prior to embarkation at the port of Calcutta, an able-bodied adult labourer over sixteen years of age was to be paid twelve annas or sixteen pies for each day's work, while a minor (between ten years and twelve years old) would receive eight annas per day. All wages would be paid fortnightly. Also included in the "package" were the provision of medical and maintenance during sickness free of charge; rent-free dwelling houses (to be kept in good repair by the employer, at his own cost) and full rations. These were provided for adults and minors by the employer according to the scale sanctioned by the government, at a cost of three annas daily. An infant under the age of ten years was to receive one third of the ration free of cost.

Labourers could not move out of the plantations unless they had obtained a pass from the owner/manager. While theoretically they were allowed to practise their culture, the colonial authorities would step in and stop any cultural activities which were seen as a threat to the peace of the colony, as occurred in 1884, with the Mohurram (Hosay) celebrations in Trinidad. Educational opportunities for the children of indentured labourers were provided within a controlled environment where schools were built for Indians only, or were located within a certain distance from the estates. By 1900, only 28 per cent of the total Indian population (both free and indentured) was attending schools. Under the commutation grant in 1859, Indians who had completed their five years contracts and seven years residence in the colony, opted for ten acres of land in lieu of a return passage. This scheme was modified in 1873, to offer a choice between ten acres of land or five acres of land and

£5 in cash. A total of 11,933 persons commuted their return passages. In total, about 25% of all those who came, returned to India while the majority settled here. While most of them may have opted to stay because the economic situation in Trinidad was seen as much better than what they had experienced in India, large numbers were forced to stay since they could not afford the return passage or ships were not readily available to take them back to their motherland.

Indian immigration into Trinidad ceased in 1917, and in 1920 the system was abolished completely. Those Indians who chose to remain in Trinidad made the island their home. By the 1930s, they had begun to organize themselves politically. Economically, there was a movement away from agriculture into the professions. This movement was stimulated by the prevalence of educational opportunities. Today almost half the population of Trinidad and Tobago is of Indian ancestry and Indo-Trinbagonians have impacted on all aspects of national life.

FIJI: THE GIRMIT EXPERIENCE

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Of the one million Indian indentured labourers who went to the 'King Sugar' colonies in the 19th and 20th centuries, 60,000 went to Fiji; Fiji was in fact the last major importer of Indian indentured labour. The terms of the Agreement –Girmit –under which the labourers left were similar for all the colonies, specifying the occupation and remuneration and the provision of facilities on the plantations, including a fully funded return passage to India at the end of ten years of 'industrial residence' in the colonies or at one's own expense at the end of five years. About a quarter of the indentured migrants from Fiji returned while the rest remained in the British colony. Their descendants today comprise the overwhelming majority of the Indian population.

As with other colonies with the exception of Natal, the majority of Fiji's Indian indentured migrants came from the Indo-Gangetic plains of North India, some from Bihar but most from the eastern districts of present-day Uttar Pradesh. They represented a fair cross section of rural North Indian society caught in the convulsion of change caused by British revenue policy and the calamities of nature. Eastern UP was already on the move as its peasant population looked for jobs and better opportunities in Calcutta, in the Assam Tea Gardens and other industrial centres. The migrants to Fiji came from this uprooted mass of humanity.

The indentured migrants reproduced, or tried to reproduce, in Fiji a version of the rural society they had left behind. It was a simpler world they created, inevitably shorn of the arcane rituals and protocols of village India. The caste system could not survive the crossing and the demanding rigours of the plantation economy and society which valued individual enterprise above social status. The paucity of women necessitated marriages across traditional social barriers and even across religious boundaries. The plantation was a great leveller of hierarchy.



*Female Indian immigrants on a Fijian Sugar Estate in 1900.
Source: National archives of Fiji.*

Most of the indentured labourers in Fiji were employed by the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR). The Company was a hard task master and its monopoly status gave it a powerful influence in the colony's affairs. Overseer violence was a common though not a universal phenomenon on the plantations and there were regular reports of overtasking. The justice system was skewed in favour of the evidence produced by the employer much to the distress of those who took great personal risks to report abuse to the authorities. Diseases such as dysentery and diarrhoea were the principal killers of

the indentured population. But in the end, indenture in Fiji was a limited detention of five or at most ten years and not a life sentence as it was in some other places. Indenture may have been slavery, as in some respects it was; but it was slavery with a definite sunset clause.

Indenture everywhere involved rupture, but in Fiji the link with the past was never completely severed. The fundamental texts of folk Hinduism, including the Ramayana, were circulating among the indentured labourers within a few years of their arrival in Fiji. Religious and other voluntary organisations



*Coolie children at breakfast.
Source: Lubbock, 1955.*

emerged early to provide people with a semblance of leadership. Visiting priests and missionaries from India, both Hindu and Muslim, kept ancestral links alive. Festivals such as Holi (or Phagua) and Mohurram (or Tazia) were widely celebrated from the very early days. Christian missions made little inroad among the indentured labourers. Their efforts were focused, with great success, on the indigenous Fijian population. There were hardly any conversions to Christianity during the indenture period.

Indian indentured labourers entered a colony already populated by an indigenous population whose interests and concerns were recognized at law. Indeed, it was for their preservation that Indian indentured labourers were brought to Fiji. The colonial government had prohibited their commercial employment for fear that it might lead to the disintegration of their communal lifestyle as it had done in other places. Contact between the two communities was virtually forbidden, with the result that they lived side by side but in complete ignorance of each other's values and way of life, with tragic consequences as Fiji's later history would show.

Enforced isolation from other communities had its perils but it also ensured that Indians would have to rely on their own cultural resources for their survival. For the majority Hindu population, the Ramayana remained the basic religious text. They found in its narrative a rendition of their own experience: forced exile from their homeland for no fault of their own but living in the hope of redemption. Muslims turned to the Koran for solace and sustenance. A new Hindustani-based lingua franca emerged, Fiji-Baat, incorporating aspects of Bhojpuri, Avadhi and other dialects of rural India. Upon the end of indenture in 1920, Hindustani was adopted by the colonial government as the official language of communication with the Indian community. The advent of Hindi newspapers, Hindi cinema from the 1930s onwards and radio after the 1950s ensured the survival of Hindi as one of the official languages of Fiji.

For many decades of the 20th century, Fiji Indians viewed the indenture experience, when they contemplated the past at all, as a blot on themselves. That past was consigned to the extreme margins of the community's collective consciousness. People had moved on and did not want to be reminded of the ordeals their forebears had endured. Indenture was a sight of embarrassing history. But in recent years, there has been a change in the community's attitude. There is now a greater appreciation of the hardships suffered by the girmityas and the way they survived the odds to lay the foundations of a new society. A group of men and women disregarded by history and by their own people now enjoy a place of honour and respect they so richly deserve.

INDIAN IMMIGRATION AND THEIR ROLE IN SURINAMESE SOCIETY 1873- 1913

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Suriname is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society with a large number of ethnic groups with their own cultures, languages and religions. It is also an immigration country, because all inhabitants, including the Indigenous people, are descendants of immigrants. The indigenous people or Amerindians are the first migrants. Since Columbus, we had the immigration and colonisation by different European people, the introduction of African slaves and after abolition of slavery, indentured labourers were introduced, first from the West Indian Islands, later from China, India and Indonesia. Since the 1980s, there was an influx of new migrants:

Guyanese who tried to escape the terrible situation under the Burnham regime, Haitian who were brought as labourers, Chinese (New Chinese) who are involved in trade, infrastructure and construction sector and last but not least about 40 000 Brazilians, who are mainly engaged in gold mining. To make the picture complete: Suriname experienced since about 1970 a mass emigration, as a consequence of which about 350 000 people from Surinamese origin are now living in the Netherlands, while smaller numbers are living in French Guyana, the USA, and the Dutch Antilles.

According to the 2012 census, the ethnic composition of the population is as follows:

Hindustani (Indians)	27.40%
Maroon	1.70%
Creoles	5.68%
Javanese (Indonesian)	13.65%
Mix	13.35%
Indigenous people	3.75%
Chinese	1.45%
Caucasian	0.30%
Afro-Surinamese	0.72%
Rest	1.32%
No Answer	0.29%

Although Hindustani are the largest group, they form just about a quarter of the total population. We have the unique situation that all ethno-cultural groups are numerical minorities. Although during long time western culture and values were the dominating one, the country enjoyed a development of peaceful coexistence with respect for all cultures.

The introduction of indentured immigrants was linked to the abolition of slavery. After the abolition of slavery in the British and French colonies, it was sure for the Dutch government that abolition of slavery in Suriname would come soon. Just as in the British Caribbean, they expected a shortage of cheap labour. The only means was the importation of labourers from overseas. Since 1853, they had some experiments with immigration of indentured labourers from Madeira (Portuguese) and China.

After long negotiations, the Dutch got permission from the British government to import labourers from India. From 1873 until the termination of the emigration of indentured labourers in 1916, a total of 64 ships departed from the port of Calcutta for Suriname, which transported 34 395 migrants, including children. On board there were deaths and births, reason why the number of immigrants arrived in Suriname from Calcutta is 34 122. From this number, a total of 11 663 (34%) returned to India, between 1878 and 1937. About 16% of the immigrants did not survive the indenture term, so only 50% settled permanently in Suriname.

Table: Number of indentured immigrants in Suriname 1853 – 1939

Chinese	853-1874	2 625
British West Indies	1864-1877	2 675
Portuguese (Madeira)	1853-1866	480
British Indians	(1873-1916)	34 122
Javanese (Indonesian)	(1890-1939)	32 956
Total		72 858

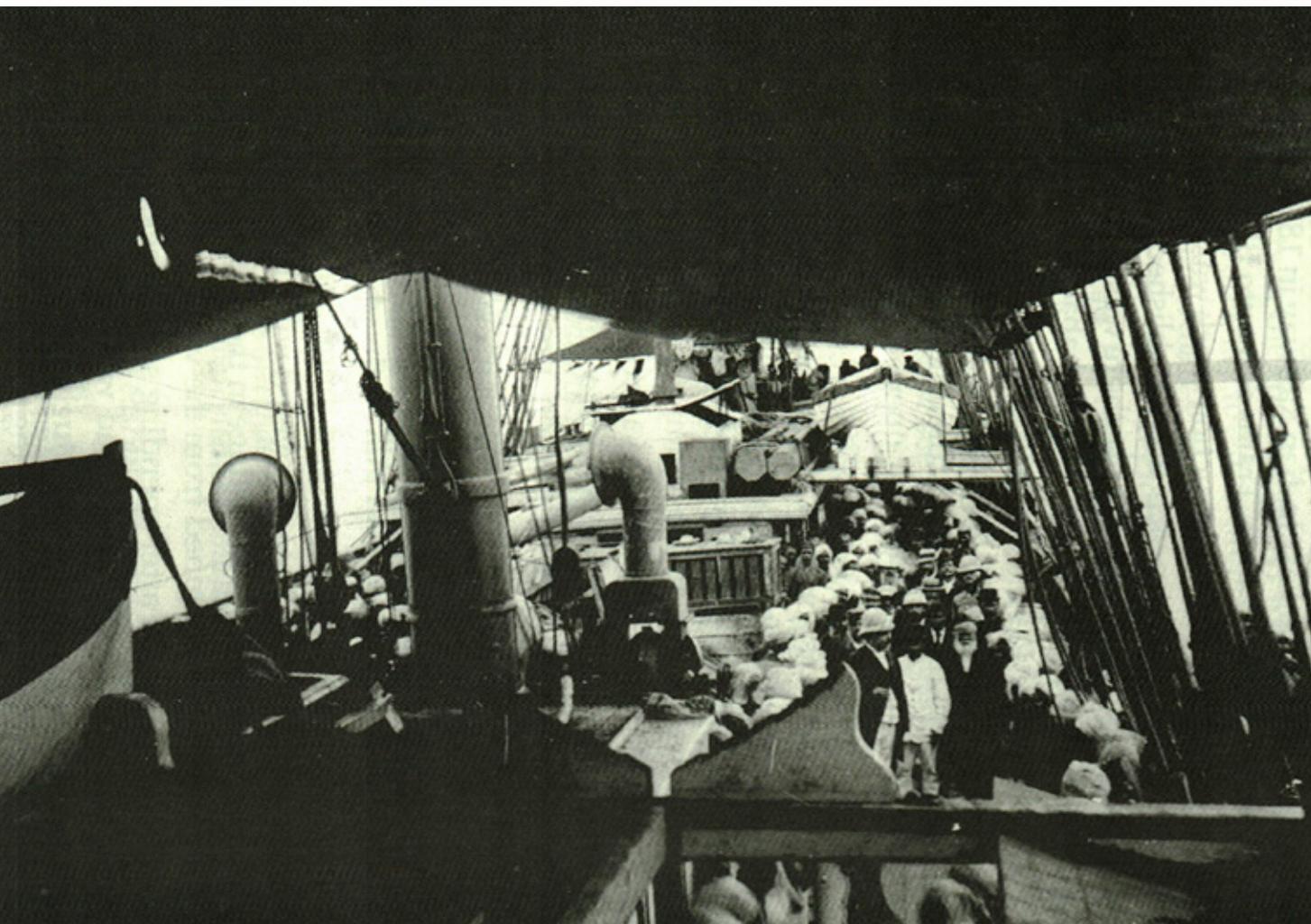
Although the first Indian immigrants arrived from Calcutta on June 5th, 1873, a small number of Indian immigrants came to Suriname before this date from Barbados and Guyana. Their number was about 125 and they arrived in May 1868. In the commemoration of Indian arrival in Suriname, the official date is June 5th, 1873. It is worth mentioning that at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century,

a number of approximate 2500 time-expired labourers from Guyana migrated to Suriname. In fact, we should say that the number of Indian immigrants in Suriname in the period of indenture is: 37 747. In all studies on Indian immigration, this group has been ignored.

They mixed with the rest of the Indian population and are totally integrated in the Indian community. Many descendants of Indians searching for their roots, encounter the problem that their original data on place of origin are not mentioned in the registers in Suriname. The connection with the immigration records in Guyana is the number of the immigration pass which has been recorded in the Suriname Register of Foreigners (Vreemdelingen register-VR).

The Indian immigrants in Suriname who decided to settle permanently, were induced to do this because since 1895, the colonial government adopted a policy

to attract Indian migrants to settle in Suriname. They could get a piece of land on attractive conditions. Many of them bought or rented a second plot, depending on their needs. To stimulate their settlement, the settlers received a bounty of 100 Dutch guilders (About \$ 40.-) in lieu of their free return passage. Many of the migrants received the bounty, which meant that they had decided to stay permanently in Suriname. Most of the migrants, who settled, became small farmers, although there were also traders, cart drivers, rice mill owners, money lenders, shop keepers etc. The main crop of the small farmers was rice, while almost all farmers kept also some livestock in order to produce milk, eggs and meat. These agriculturists were a mix form of farmers and peasants. In the beginning, the Indians were not prone to send their children to school, although in Suriname compulsory education was introduced already in 1876, that is ten years before its introduction in the Netherlands.



*An indenture ship from Calcutta recently arriving in Suriname in the early 1890s
Source: National Archives of Suriname*

The Indians preferred that their children helped earning more money for the subsistence of the family. The children were supposed to be productive in the family farm, while going to school meant less labour on the farm. Since the 1920s, but especially after the Second World War, the Indians discovered that education became the most important vehicle for upward mobilization. They started to send their children to school, first the boys and gradually also the girls. This process has been accelerated when during the 1960's agriculture was not any more attractive to them, because fluctuating prices and no guarantee for a reasonable living. Most people started to earn a living in other sectors, although they continued to keep producing agricultural products. Gradually, their second profession became the main profession and agriculture was abandoned by many of them, except in the most western district of Suriname, where modern

mechanized rice farming is still the backbone of the economy. In addition to this, there is a modern banana firm, which is producing for export and where many Indians are working.

Since 1945, the social, economic and cultural development of the Indians has been accelerated, because of decline of old plantation economy and the process of urbanization. Previously an overwhelming majority of the Indians were living in the rural districts, but gradually more and more Indians started to migrate to the capital city where they could send their children to school and where all government offices were located. Paramaribo was the centre of economic and political activities, while all government services, hospitals and schools were concentrated. As a consequence, we can say that Indians are integrated in the larger society.



*The immigration depot in Suriname in 1890.
Source: Courtesy of Dew Baboram*

In the cultural domain, they preserved their culture in almost all aspects. They were proud to preserve the culture which was brought to the new homeland by their ancestors. In this respect, they have been perhaps very conservative and traditional. They are very proud about their Indian culture, including their language and religion. Suriname is one of the girmitya countries where they can speak and understand Hindi and Urdu, while they developed their own language which they originally called Sarnámi Hindustáni, but which is now called Sarnámi. It is a mixture of Hindi vernaculars of North India, mainly Bhojpuri, Avadhi. Many people, in particular, the older generations speak and understand the language. Among the younger generation, there are less people who speak it. It is for some Indians a matter of concern that the language could die, as it happened in Guyana and Trinidad.

In politics, the Indians have played an important role since the end of the Second World War. Since World War II, there were political reforms in the country: the colonial government granted autonomy for internal affairs. Universal suffrage was introduced, which inspired leaders of different groups to establish political parties. So the Indians began to play a role in politics and from the mid 1950's, they participated in government. Political leaders from different ethnic groups realised that they had to work together to establish a peaceful society. As a result, in Suriname we had the development of a political system in which most of the political parties have an ethnic base, but they are willing to collaborate. This system, known as consensus democracy or consociational democracy, has been a contribution of the Indian political leader Jagernath Lachmon. He developed the multi-party system and was inspired by the idea and principles of Mahatma Gandhi.

HISTORY AND COMMEMORATION

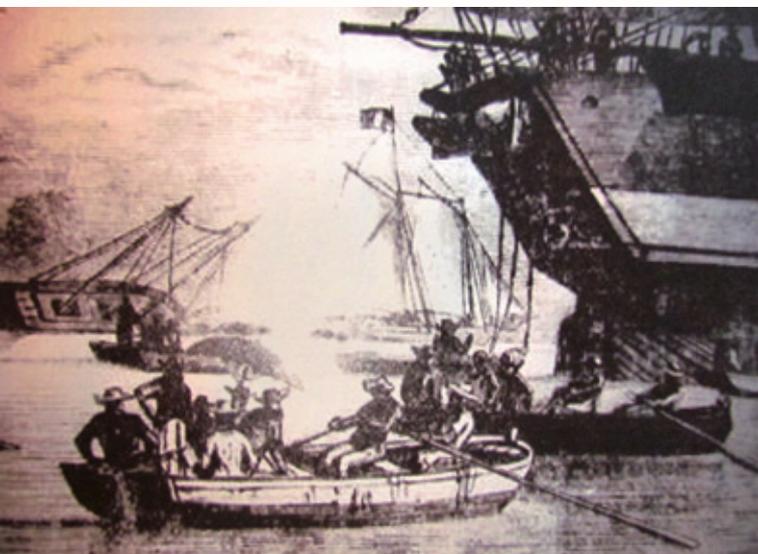
A Heartfelt Tribute to the Martyrdom of the Indian Immigrants of Ilet Cabri, the Trials and Tribulations of the Indentured Labourers of Guadeloupe and a Special Reflection on Two Outstanding Historical Figures of Guadeloupe

Mahen Utchanah,
Chairman of AGTF and
GOPIO-International (Mauritius)

In 1909 while writing in the newspaper the Hindustani in Port Louis, Mauritius and in 1917, in the newspaper the Colonial Settler in Suva, Fiji, Manilall Doctor, a famous defender of the rights of Indian indentured workers, reminded his readers that ever since the genesis of the indentured labour system in the European colonies during the mid-19th century, Indian immigrant men, women and children have always had to endure corporal punishment, have been imprisoned and denied their basic rights as human beings.

A Human Tragedy Rediscovered at Ilet Cabri

Between 1860 and 1874, the martyrdom of 35 indentured workers who were deported to Ilet Cabri, or



*Immigrants landing at Pointe a Pitre in Guadeloupe in 1860.
Source: Photo courtesy of Mr. M. Utchanah.*

Isle of Goats located off the coast of Terre-de-Haut-Les Saintes in Guadeloupe, is the most tangible reminder of the sufferings and inhumane treatment which the Indian immigrants had to endure. It is a terrible human tragedy which is unique in the annals of the global migration of more than 1.3 million indentured workers from India to more than 30 colonies, territories and countries between the 1830s and 1920s.

Until recently, this human saga has remained hidden from history and unfortunately, largely forgotten by the Indians of Guadeloupe and of the global Indian diaspora. It is thanks largely to the valiant and dedicated efforts of Mr. Michel Narayninsamy, President of GOPIO-Guadeloupe and Mr. Michel Rogers, Historian and Researcher that today we are aware of the true story of the Ilet Cabri prisoners. It is only now that their names, experiences, sufferings, hardships, resistance and courage of the 35 Indian indentured labourers have been researched, written and being disseminated in Guadeloupe and other countries of the Indian diaspora by GOPIO-International.

GOPIO-Guadeloupe has undertaken a laudable initiative of reappropriating and revalorizing their history and the history of the indentured labourers by shedding light on the story of the Ilet Cabri prisoners who were condemned for years to breaking stones under a hot sun all day long on an isolated islet. Their experience is comparable, to a certain extent, to the prisoners of Alcatraz Prison in San Francisco Bay in the United States and Robben Island near Cape Town, South Africa.

Honoring the Memory and Struggle of Ilet Cabri Indian Prisoners

This important devoir de memoire began in 2011 when the Honourable Mr. Vayalar Ravi, Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs of the Republic of India, visited Guadeloupe and unveiled a commemorative plaque entitled 'Memorial de l'Immigration Indienne en Guadeloupe'. It was erected in memory of the Indian indentured labourers who arrived and settled on the island between 1854 and 1889.

On 12th August 2012, a magnificent stele was unveiled by Louis Molinie, the mayor of Terre de Haut on the occasion of the World Day of Young People of Indian Origin. It was a bold initiative undertaken by myself, along with my good friend, Mr. Molinie, with the full support of GOPIO-Guadeloupe and

GOPIO-International. This monument pays the highest tribute and honors the memory, struggle and sufferings of those 35 brave “insoumis” and ensures that their names will live on in history.

More recently, between 30th May and 2nd June 2013, a number of activities were organized in remembrance of the 35 Indian freedom fighters or “guerrilleros de la liberté” of Ilet Cabri. On 31st May and 1st June, a commemoration ceremony, a religious ceremony and a visit to Ilet Cabri were held in order to honour the memory, sacrifices and achievements of the 35 Indian labourers who were exiled on that desolate islet.



The names and dates of deportation of the 35 brave Indian indentured immigrants who were sent into forced exile on Ilet Cabri by the French colonial authorities of Guadeloupe where they perished.

Source: Photo courtesy of Mr. M. Utchanah.

These commemoration ceremonies were carried out as a result of the decision which was taken at a major meeting of GOPIO-International in Cochin, Kerala in India in January 2013 to honor the memory of these brave Indian freedom fighters. The underlying theme of these commemoration ceremonies clearly reflects the objective of GOPIO-Guadeloupe and GOPIO-International which I have emphasized on several occasions: “Un peuple qui oublie son passé se condamne à le revivre”.

A Profile of the 35 Indian Immigrants of Ilet Cabri

Between 1860 and 1874, 34 indentured Indian males and one indentured female labourer were put on trial for insubordination and other acts of resistance on the sugar estates. They were sentenced by a French magistrate to be deported to a prison or House of

Correction on Ilet Cabri where they were sentenced to hard labour by breaking stones in the hot sun. Ilet Cabri is a densely wooded, isolated, inhospitable and located several kilometers off the coast of Guadeloupe.

The indentured labourers came to Guadeloupe from Pondicherry, Karikal and other French comptoirs in India. In 1860, Madernayagom, originally from Madras, was 35 years old and the first one to be deported for repeated insubordination to his employer. In 1870, Valiame, the only female indentured worker, was also deported at the age of 27. The last one to be sent to the islet was immigrant Ramassamy in 1874 who was sent there at the age of 30 for repeated insubordination and insolence to his employer.

These 35 Indian prisoners died because they were required to break stones all day long in the hot sun and provided with little food and fresh water. They were not given proper shelter, accommodation and proper facilities for personal hygiene. They were also beaten and tortured by the few prison guards on the island.

The deaths of these brave immigrants amounted to a micro-genocide which was covered up by the French colonial officials, buried in the public records of Guadeloupe and forgotten by history and the people of Guadeloupe until recently. The treatment and high mortality rate among the prisoners on Ilet Cabri also clearly reflect the terrible trials and tribulations which the Indian indentured workers endured in that French colony for several decades.

The Trials and Tribulations of the Indian Indentured Workers in Guadeloupe

As a French colony, Guadeloupe occupies an important place in the French colonial experience with indentured labour just like French Guyana, Martinique, Reunion Island and New Caledonia. Between 1854 and 1889, this Caribbean island received around 39,800 indentured men, women and children. It is estimated that during the long, arduous and dangerous journey from India to Guadeloupe over a period of 35 years, almost 2,983 men, women and children lost their lives.



*The surviving stone structures of the prison on Ilet Cabri.
Source: Photo Courtesy of Mr. M. Utchanah, June 2013*

The archival records of the island indicate that in some of the “communes” of Guadeloupe, the mortality ranged between 34 % to 45% during the first 3 to 5 years of their indenture contract. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are only 55,000 Guadeloupeans of Indian descent. Between the 1850s and 1890s, thousands of Indian indentured labourers died on the estates of Guadeloupe because of harsh treatment, long working hours, poor nutrition, accommodation, and virtually no healthcare.

The martyrs of Ilet Cabri and the high death rates of the indentured workers on their journey to Guadeloupe and on the sugar estates in that French colony speak volumes of their inhumane treatment and poor living and working conditions. It becomes evident that the experience of Guadeloupe with indenture makes it a rare and even unique experience among the French and European colonies which adopted the indentured labour system between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries.

Therefore, the story of the 35 immigrants of Ilet Cabri is significant with regards to the history of indentured labour in the world. It is also relevant to commemorate the toils, sacrifices, resistance and suffering of the 35 Indian indentured labourers. After all, they fought for their individual freedom; they resisted their inhumane treatment because they were determined to be free. Their history is our history and our history is a continuation of their history.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INDIAN INDENTURED LABORERS IN GUYANA (1838-1917)

Professor Dr. Lomarsh Roopnarine,
Jackson State University, United States of America

For over three-quarters of a century (1838–1917), the British Government allowed the British Guianese sugar planters to import indentured Indian laborers. The arrival of these laborers was in response to a so-called labor vacuum caused by the gradual withdrawal of newly freed Black slaves from plantation agriculture and failed experiments with various immigration schemes following final emancipation in 1838. An estimated 240,000 Indians were brought from India to British Guiana, now Guyana, under the indenture immigration system. They were expected to provide labor to their assigned plantations for five years with the option to re-indenture for another five years when their contracts expired. Their employers were expected to provide wages, basic housing, medical care, and a non-abusive working and living environment. By the early 1870s, the indentured

laborers were given another option—to accept small parcels of land to settle in lieu of their entitled return passages. More than two-thirds of Indian laborers decided to stay in Guyana, while about a third of them returned to a familiar and settled life in their *janmubhuni* (motherland).

A majority of Indian emigrants to Guyana were single males between 20 and 30 years old. Fewer families, children, and single women were transported to Guyana since they were perceived by their employers to be a burden to the plantations because of child-bearing and rearing. Indian laborers were drawn principally from North and South India, and they varied remarkably in their social caste structure, language, and religion. Of the total Indian emigrants to Guyana, only twenty-five percent were women. For many of these Indians, the decision to leave was indeed hard. They were tied to the same environment as their families for generations, and this familiarity gave them confidence and happiness in the midst of immense material poverty. Moreover, long-distance Indian migration was suppressed by the caste system. Crossing the high seas (Kala Pani) to Guyana was synonymous with committing a serious crime that carried the risk of caste defilement and social exclusion. Some Indians who undertook the sea voyage and returned home had to spend substantial sums of money to feast their gurus and undergo spiritual purification rites—which were sometimes rigorous and gruesome—in order to be reinstated into their caste. For this reason, many formerly indentured Indians returned to Guyana and the Caribbean for a second and even third time and never returned to India.



Indentured labourers.

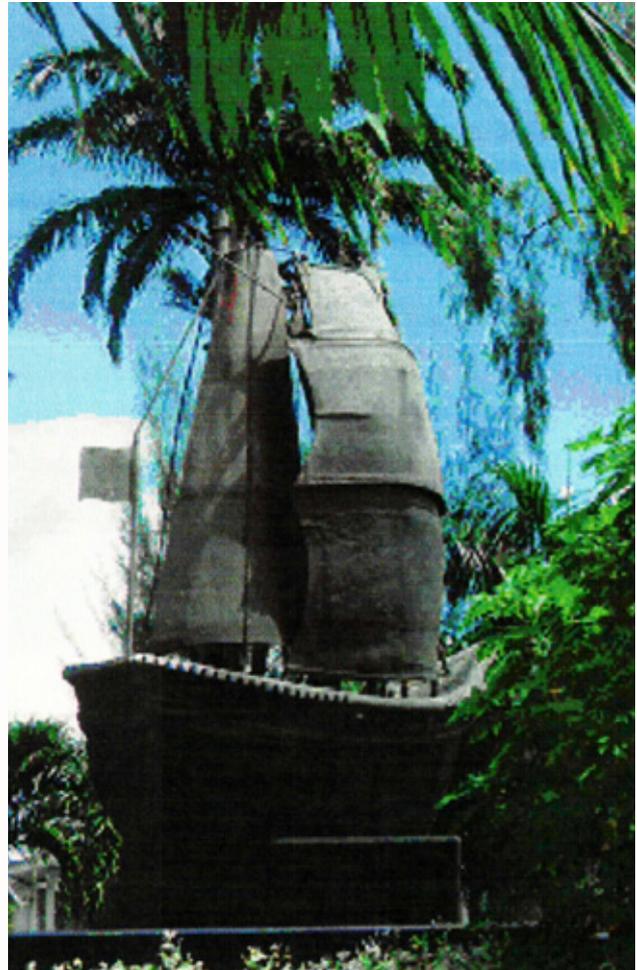
Source: National Archives of the Republic of Guyana.

In spite of these impediments to migration, Indians in large numbers (2000–3000 yearly) embarked on the sea journey to Guyana mainly because of British colonialism, economic hardships, social oppression, natural disasters, civil wars, and family quarrels. While some Indians were duped into indenture through the unscrupulous work of local recruiters (Arkatis), other Indians became indentured willingly. The journey of Indians from the Indian depot, to the sea voyage, and to the sugar plantations was deplorable and abusive. Sanitation was poor, and diseases, such as cholera, were

rampant in the depots and on the ships. The plantations in Guyana were like prisons without walls governed by a series of elaborate labor ordinances that effectively put the power in the hands of the sugar planters. The planters were expected to provide basic amenities (noted above) but rarely did they comply with such responsibilities. The Protector of Immigrants, the Stipendiary Magistrates, and Governors, who were entrusted to safeguard the rights of Indians, were subservient to the views of the planters, since both groups shared common interests. Yet, the influx of Indians into Guyana continued until 1917 when, for reasons relating to the inequities in the recruitment system and ill treatment of Indians abroad, the Indian government abolished indentureship, and the last returning ship from British Guiana to India left in 1955.

During and after indenture, Indians relied on their own cultural resilience for survival and in so doing, created remarkable semblances of lost India through religion, festivals, and feasts. Indian agricultural skills have not only rescued Guyana from total disaster but also continue to feed Guyana and the Caribbean. Gradually, some Indians broke out of their insular indentured communities and accepted western forms of education, but Indian cultural practices never fully lost their magnetism. Subsequently, descendants of Indian indentured servants have excelled in politics, law, literature, and medicine. The Indian community in Guyana is proud and pleased to have produced the Jagans, the Luckhoos, and the Naipauls to lead them, particularly in the turbulent period of post-independence Guyana. Indians have shown a particular capacity to respond appropriately to discrimination and difficulties, as their forefathers did during indenture. Nowadays, Indians are cattle rearers, land and shop owners, pharmacists, moneylenders, etc. They are in the civil service, out of which three members became Presidents of Guyana: Cheddi Jagan, Bharat Jagdeo and Donald Ramotar. Indians' music, dance, and drama have charmed Guyana for years, and their foods, curry chicken and roti, have graced homes and become national dishes.

(Source: Roopnarine, Lommarsh, *Indo-Caribbean Indenture: Resistance and Accommodation*.
Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2007).



*The monument commemorating the arrival of the first immigrants in Guyana in 1838.
Source: Photo courtesy of Jayshree Mungur-Medhi.*

COMMEMORATING THE MAKING OF OUR HISTORY

The Impact of the Indian Indentured Labour System on Colonial Mauritius (1829-1920)

Dr. Satteeanund Peerthum, Senior Historian,
Ex-Ambassador and Ex-Minister

The Genesis of Immigration & The Labour Revolution

The introduction of almost half a million Indian indentured men, women, and children into Mauritius between the late 1820s and the early 1900s was a major milestone in Mauritian colonial history. This long, important, and complex process forever altered the history, demography, economy, and society of this small Indian Ocean island.

In 1829, a handful of Mauritian planters introduced 1100 Indian labourers to work on their sugar estates but, in general, this labour experiment proved to be a major failure and, within a few months, the labourers were repatriated to India. However, between January 1830 and August 1834, there was a small trickle of indentured Indian labourers who came to Mauritius. But, it was only during the second half of 1834 and after, that large-scale Indian immigration to Mauritius began. Furthermore, it is also important to mention that in February 1835, the British officially abolished slavery in Mauritius and after serving a four-year apprenticeship period, the island's more than 60,000 apprentices were freed in March 1839.

During the second half of the 1830s and after, thousands of Mauritian apprentices left their former owners and settled in different parts of the island. At the same time, the local sugar planters began to import Indian labourers to supplement and eventually to replace the apprentice labourers to work in the island's sugar canefields, in their homes, and in Port Louis. Between November 1834 and March 1839, around 25,700 Indian labourers were landed on Mauritian shores. However, immigration from the Indian subcontinent was suspended in May 1839

only to be renewed in January 1842, when it became controlled and sponsored by the British governments of India and Mauritius and a Protector of Immigrants also was appointed in Mauritius.

The Demographic Revolution

Between the mid-1830s and early 1860s, as Mauritius was experiencing a prolonged sugar revolution, a demographic revolution was also underway. In 1835, the Indians made up less than 4 % of the colony's total population and by 1860, they constituted more than 66% of the total population. During the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, as many historians have pointed out, the composition of the local population of the other British sugar-producing colonies was not altered in such a dramatic way and over such a short period of time as in Mauritius.

In all between 1834 and 1910, around 455,000 Indian men, women, and children were brought to Mauritian shores, with around 290,000 remaining and 165,000 returning mostly to India and some even migrating to other British colonies such as Natal, Fiji, British Guyana, and Trinidad. Therefore, Mauritius was unique among all the British colonies because it received the greatest number of Indian immigrants.

“The Great Morcellement Movement”

During the 1840s and after, the Old Immigrants, or those who had served their five-year contracts and remained in Mauritius, had saved some money and began to settle outside the sugar estates. They either bought or squatted on small patches of land in the rural areas and some even married ex-slave women and others settled in Port Louis. Gradually, between the 1840s and 1860s, a small rural Indian peasantry was emerging as they acquired small patches of marginal lands and became small cultivators and raised domesticated animals. At the same time, others became small traders and hawkers.

Between the 1870s and 1920s, a large and important class of rural Indian landowners began to emerge in Mauritius. During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, with the stagnation and gradual decline of the sugar industry, many of the sugar barons sold their marginal lands which were located on the fringes of their sugar estates to thousands of

Bardoo Lirdar.	X	Lungone	X
Sabaram Male.	X	Callachaud.	X
Bhoodho.	X	Bholak.	X
Champak.	X	Jisara Bhoodhao.	X
Bhurdho.	X	Sibchurn	X
Chooneram.	X	Chota Boodhao.	X
Julloo.	X	Deenram.	X
Chota Bhoodhao.	X	Budhram	X
Bachoo.	X	Muggroo.	X
Onjoon	X	Shareek	X
Rammohun.	X	Chaylun.	X
Lookram	X	Choolungo.	X
Dhiram.	X	Bhuggroo.	X
Ghaupa.	X	Gungaram.	X
Bhoowun	X	Chota Muggroo	X
Chota Choonulall.	X	Chota Dhiram	X
Nigna	X	Dookhun	X
Auklah.	X	Bhumarak	X

The names of the 36 indentured labourers who arrived on 2nd November 1834.
Source: MNA.

Old Indian Immigrants and a few Indian merchants and traders in what became known, according to Richard B. Allen, an American historian, as the 'Great Morcellement Movement'. Between 1870 and 1910, the Indo-Mauritians spent more than Rs.30 million in the acquisition of land.

By the early 1920s, the Indo-Mauritians owned around 40% of the island's valuable arable lands. As a result, most of them became small cultivators, many others became small-scale sugar growers, and a

handful were large-scale sugar producers. This Great Morcellement Movement of the late 1800s gave rise to a large Indian bourgeoisie and peasantry by the early 1900s which was gradually becoming involved in the island's politics during the first half of the twentieth century.

THE DAHAJI BHAJ

Dawood Auleear, Board Member

While collecting Bhojpuri folktales, I came across an interesting concept that bound together the first Indian Immigrants who landed at Aapravasi Ghat in Trou Fanfaron. The old folks were excited to talk about the DAHAJI BHAJ and the solidarity that tied them.

It is true that there was a push factor that triggered the flux of Indian labourers to Mauritius; the narrators stressed on the sorrows that inhabited the travellers, crossing the *kala pani* and leaving dear ones behind. The broken hearts shared their grief on board the ships from Indian ports bound for Mirish Desh and developed a love and solidarity that fellow travellers feel for each other on first time long voyages to foreign lands.



Source: MGIIIA

This bond of solidarity was translated into regular social visits, sharing of news about state of health and economic situation and finding brides and grooms for children and joining hands to build houses or repair carts. In other words, any action that would render the life of fellow *Dahaji Bhai* pleasant.

Dahaji Bhai (brotherhood born and matured on ships) bond was translated into feeling for each other that transcended religions, languages and casts. When randomly attributed to different and far away sugar plantations and separated once in Mauritius, the *Dahaji Bhai*s struggled to locate each other and meet whenever possible. The big occasion was the wedding ceremonies which no fellow *dahaji* would miss, even at the threat of being sent to the vagrant depot for unauthorized leave to travel.

The oxcart was readied for the long travel in case the bride/groom lived on the other end of the island. *Satua* (a mix of 7 grains powdered to be mixed with milk or water and sugar) would be prepared to be shared on stops on the two-way journey. The best dresses would be taken out of the *sandook* (a wooden box) to be worn during the seven days, three days before and 3 days after the religious rituals. It was mandatory to be present for the *Raat Jagai* (a whole night reserved for singing and dancing on the wedding eve) and the *Chawthari* (the day following the wedding when the newly-wed couples visit the bride's family to enjoy the lavish food served).

The seven days' reality escape would give a brutal wake-up shock. Very often, the revellers would be locked at the vagrant's depot but no price was too big to keep the *Dahaji Bhai* candle glowing. Today, we are trying to revive the *Dahaji Bhai* spirit and we call it a rainbow nation concept. What's in a name as long as we make of this land a paradise island.

HONORING A MAKER OF OUR HISTORY

Remembering the Work & Struggle of Pandit Basdeo Bissoondoyal, 1906-1991

Mahen Utchanah,
Chairman of AGTF and
GOPIO-International (Mauritius)

“The Bissoondoyal movement was breath taking in what it encompassed in relation to the very limited resources that it had: it embraced social reform, political, economic, and social emancipation, cultural revival and education both of the individual and of the people. It has its exalted aspects and its limitations.”- Promises to Keep, Uttam Bissoondoyal.

Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal was one of the most important historical and religious figures of 20th century Mauritius. He was a Mauritian patriot, a Gandhian, Hindu missionary and an eminent writer. Through his actions, writings, speeches, and the Jan Andolan, his socio-cultural movement, he was a maker and shaper of modern Mauritian history.

The Historical Figure

In 1991, the late Uttam Bissoondoyal, former Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and Basdeo's nephew, captured the essence of his uncle's long struggle in Mauritius, when he wrote in his preface to the fifth volume of the *Collected Works* of Basdeo Bissoondoyal:

“Basdeo's life has integrated the intellectual and spiritual life and the political, social, and cultural uplift of the Indian community. Without him, future historians will no doubt say, our history would not have been the same. Although he became the exponent of the Indianism of Gandhi, Tagore, and Dayanand and propagated a new vision of the intellectual and spiritual India”.

Indeed, today historians unanimously agree that, as a defender and leader of the oppressed people of our

country, Pandit Basdeo Bissoondoyal followed in the footsteps of such illustrious Mauritian historical figures as Reverend Jean Lebrun, Rémy Ollier, Napoleon Savy, Adolphe de Plevitz, Manilall Doctor, Pandit Cashinath Kistoe, Dr. Maurice Curé and Emmanuel Anquetil.

Between 1939 and 1991, Professor Bissoondoyal was a leader and a key figure in the Indo-Mauritian community. He greatly influenced and moulded three generations of Indo-Mauritians through his estimated 6,000 public sermons, hundreds of bhaikas, and extensive writings. For a period spanning more than five decades, he dedicated his life to reviving and firmly entrenching Hindu traditions, customs, and values into the lives of Indo-Mauritians throughout the island.

Ever since December 1939, Bissoondoyal used public sermons, bhaikas, and the organization of mass Hindu festivals to preach and educate the Mauritian masses. In his brilliant biography of Pandit Bissoondoyal, Abhimanyu Unnuth, a well-known Mauritian writer, eloquently explained:

“The missionary, Basdeo Bissoondoyal, answered the call of the moment: he toured every village and every town. Through his sermons, his books and the influence he exerted on the people, he imparted to them the strength needed to stem the strong current which was forcibly carrying them away. This was nothing less than the process of a powerful revolution which in years to come was to constitute the foundation of a significant cultural and political movement”.

The Jan Andolan (The People's Movement)

Some of the key events during the early career of Pandit Bissoondoyal were also milestones in the history of early modern Mauritius such as the founding of the Jan Andolan in 1939, the Mahayaj of 1943, the celebration of the independence of India and Pakistan in August 1947 in Port Louis, and the literacy campaign of 1948. Within days after his return from India, Bissoondoyal gave his first official public sermon at Cassis and immediately, he took up the cause of the oppressed Mauritian masses by forming the Jan Andolan or the People's Movement towards the end of December 1939.

In December 1943, the Maha Yaj took place in Port Louis at la Rue du Pouce and it was attended by 60,000 individuals. Several years later, when looking back at this particular event, the leader of the Jan Andolan remarked, with a great deal of satisfaction, that it was “a landmark in the history of the revival of Hinduism in our island home”.

In August 1947, Bissoondoyal organized a meeting in Bell Village, Port Louis on the occasion of the independence of India. This was attended by thousands of Hindus and Muslims.

Between May and July 1948, he carried out an intensive campaign, at the grassroots level, to show Indo-Mauritians how to sign their names in Hindi. This would be crucial in enabling them to pass the literacy test and become eligible to vote in the general elections of August 1948, as per the new constitution of 1947. This dramatically increased the size of the electorate to 70,000 voters, as compared to the paltry 10,000 at the 1936 general elections. Indeed, this was one of his greatest achievements and what Bissoondoyal started in the 1940s was truly a people’s movement.

A Man of the People

Between 1944 and 1949, more than 300 voluntary Hindi schools were opened all over the island and they were under the supervision of the Swayam Sevaks or ‘loyal servants’ who owed obedience to the leader of the Jan Andolan. During his long struggle, Professor Bissoondoyal was responsible for the education of thousands of Indo-Mauritians. Dr. S.Peerthum explains that his work among the Mauritian masses, especially during the 1940s, is comparable and even surpassed the work of the great intellectual and pedagogue Paulo Freire in Brazil during the 1960s.

The work of Basdeo Bissoondoyal and the Jan Andolan did not end with the general elections of 1948, but continued during the 1950s and 1960s. After all, by teaching and organizing the Mauritian people at the grassroots level, he also paved the way and contributed in this island’s accession to independence in 1968. At one point, even Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam did admit that Basdeo Bissoondoyal, through his long struggle and hard work, played a crucial role in Mauritius obtaining its independence from British rule. In fact, it is quite telling that the

statue of Basdeo Bissoondoyal is located less than 30 meters from that of Ramgoolam, at the Port Louis harbour.

Basdeo Bissoondoyal the Gandhian

In his writings, Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal often mentioned that his two favorite works were *Paul et Virginie* and *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, the famous autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi. Between 1933 and 1939, during his student days in India, he was undergoing his apprenticeship as a Gandhian. In 1934, Pandit Basdeo Bissoondoyal met Mahatma Gandhi in Lahore and a second time in 1937, in Calcutta.

It is interesting to note that even in 1939, while still studying for his M.A in Calcutta, Bissoondoyal was already building a reputation for himself to the extent that the Calcutta police kept him under close surveillance. After all, in December 1938, he was delegated by the Mauritian Labour Party to represent their grievances to the Indian National Congress. In December 1939, after having completed his M.A and while sailing from Bombay to Mauritius, each evening, for two weeks, he delivered sermons to his fellow travelers who were mostly Mauritians.

Shortly after creating the Jan Andolan, Bissoondoyal began several campaigns for the promotion of the Hindi language and Hinduism throughout British Mauritius. According to Basdeo, even Pandit Cashinath Kistoo gave his blessings and firm support for the creation of the Jan Andolan and its objectives.

During the 1940s, this great Gandhian and Mauritian patriot was jailed four times by the British colonial authorities because of his activities on behalf of the oppressed Mauritian masses. Following the example of Mahatma Gandhi, his spiritual guru, Bissoondoyal preferred to spend time in prison, rather than paying a fine which was being demanded by the colonial authorities because he was preaching without a permit from the local colonial police.

While reflecting on these hard times, Bissoondoyal wrote:

“I have to fight many full battles. We were insulted, ill-used and antagonized, attacked, and off and on thrown into jail. I believe that to the end we will remain firm in our purpose and never deviate from our path.”



Statue of Basdeo Bissoondoyal
Source: Courtesy of Mr Peerthum Junior

Furthermore, while in prison, Bissoondoyal drew his strength by reading Mahatma Gandhi, Henry David Thoreau, and Leo Tolstoy. Throughout the 1940s, Bissoondoyal used Gandhian tactics such as non-cooperation, passive resistance, and mass meetings in his long and valiant struggle against British colonial oppression. During that period, one of the well-known songs in Mauritius ran as follows:

“The valiant Bissoondoyal brought with him the teachings of Gandhi, and with stern self-sacrifice spread those teachings all over the country”.

Therefore, it is evident that thanks largely to this towering figure of our modern history that the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi were brought to Mauritian shores and were successfully applied here.

In 1975, Pandit Bissoondoyal wrote, with some satisfaction:

“Of all the countries of overseas India, Mauritius is the one where Gandhism has had the most hearty welcome.”

Clearly, it would not be an exaggeration to state that Bissoondoyal was as close as Mauritians got to having someone like Mahatma Gandhi in the history of their country.

The Eminent Writer

Professor Bissoondoyal was not only a Gandhian missionary, but also one of the most prolific writers and great intellectuals in Mauritian history. As early as 1932, one of Basdeo’s articles was published in the

journal *l'Idée Libre* in France. Over a period of more than 60 years, he has written several articles and books in four languages: Hindi, Sanskrit, English and French; apart from Mauritius, these books were also published in India, Great Britain, and France.

During his long and illustrious career, he wrote more than 275 articles as well as 20 books in Hindi, 14 in English, and 5 in French. Apart from Gandhi, the works of Bissoondoyal were also heavily influenced by the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Max Muller, Voltaire, Swami Dayanand, Prem Chand and Bernardin de St. Pierre. It is worthy to note that he painstakingly translated Paul and Virginia into Hindi in 1956.

In his articles and books, Bissoondoyal wrote on literature, world history, philosophy, religion, and comparative civilization. In general, his works have shaped the thoughts and heavily influenced the writings of three generations of Indo-Mauritian intellectuals and writers and they have become an integral part of the Mauritian literary heritage.

The Legacy of Bissoondoyal

Basdeo Bissoondoyal passed away in June 1991 at his residence in Sookdeo Bissoondoyal Street in Port Louis. Almost 20 years after the death of Pandit Bissoondoyal, in one way or another, we are still benefiting from the long and valiant crusade of this great historical figure for social justice and social equality. Indeed, for a long time to come, Professor Bissoondoyal's work and struggles will be remembered and honored by the Mauritian people.

Thus, it is a matter of great importance for all surviving Bissoondoyalists and Mauritians in general to preserve and promote the achievements and legacy of Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal in the Republic of Mauritius. The Government has created the Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal Trust to perpetuate the memory of this legendary stalwart. It now falls on us as Mauritian citizens to pay homage, in a proper manner, to the legacy and achievements of such an important maker of 20th century Mauritian history.

2^e ÉDITION DU COLLOQUE DE L'ODI- RÉUNION 29 - 30 AVRIL 2014 EN PARTENARIAT AVEC L'UNIVERSITÉ DE LA RÉUNION

« Interculturel Diaspora Indienne et
Mondialisation: Réalités, Enjeux et
Perspectives. »

Céline RAMSAMY-GIANCONE, coordinatrice.

En partenariat avec le laboratoire universitaire CIRCI, (Centre Interdisciplinaire de recherche pour la construction identitaire) et le conseil général de la Réunion, le deuxième colloque de l'Organisation for Diaspora Initiatives Réunion s'est déroulé avec succès, réunissant des chercheurs de la région indianocéanique, de Chine, et de la France hexagonale. Sous le thème générique de l'Interculturel, et du vivre-ensemble dans la zone Océan Indien, trois axes avaient été retenus : interculturel et mondialisation, interculturel et identité, l'Engagisme.

Le panel très large et riche des communications ne pouvant faire l'objet d'une restitution intégrale, un aperçu peut cependant être donné sous l'angle des interventions suivantes :

Contributions sur l'Engagisme dans l'Océan Indien.

Ce dernier axe a donné l'occasion aux historiens, juristes et à d'autres intervenants d'apporter des éclairages sur les liens tissés entre l'Inde et ses diasporas dans l'Océan Indien. L'occasion a en effet été donnée également d'aborder la diversité liée à l'engagisme, à travers la prise en compte des migrations issues de Madagascar, de l'Afrique, de la Chine et des Seychelles.

Sur le plan historique, le journaliste et écrivain Breejan Burrun a retracé l'histoire de l'engagisme dans la zone océan-indien et dans les Caraïbes, rappelant que ce vaste mouvement a occasionné un déplacement de plus d'un million d'ouvriers

agricoles indiens à travers le monde, contribuant à un enrichissement ethnologique, culturel et économique des sociétés dans lesquelles se sont insérés ces travailleurs.

L'apport de la population d'origine tamoule au 18^{ème} siècle à Maurice a été exposée par Vishwanaden Govinden, de l'Institut Mahatma Gandhi, qui a partagé cette migration en deux vagues successives: la première composée de commerçants et artisans en provenance de Pondichéry et à l'origine du développement du commerce de produits de consommation indiens, et la deuxième composée en majeure partie d'ouvriers agricoles.

L'engagisme à la Réunion.

Concernant l'engagisme indien à la Réunion, de nombreux auteurs ont évoqué la vie quotidienne sur les lieux de dépôt des engagés à la Réunion, dont les médecins officiant sur les lieux de quarantaine. Les notes d'Auguste Vinson et d'Adolphe Coustan, rattachés au 19^{ème} siècle au lazaret de la Grande Chaloupe ont alimenté l'exposé de Michèle Marimoutou-Oberlé, doctorante à l'université de Nantes.

Jean-Régis Ramsamy, président de l'ODI-Réunion, s'est penché sur un chapitre méconnu de l'engagisme, le macadam ou les ateliers de travail du Barachois ayant existé au 19^{ème} siècle.

La construction pluriculturelle de la société réunionnaise a fait l'objet de la communication du professeur Prosper Eve, centrée sur l'espace habitationnaire comme lieu de l'interculturalité, ayant permis la cohabitation des cultures entre engagés indiens et ceux venus d'Afrique et de Madagascar.

Ouvrant la question de la valorisation et de la diffusion des connaissances sur l'engagisme, Mahen Utchanah, chairman de l'AGTF, a présenté le projet « Indentured Labour Route Project », qui devrait donner lieu à un espace de travail international, établi sur la base d'une coopération entre historiens de l'Océan Indien et d'autres parties du monde. Les dissemblances entre l'engagisme à Maurice et à la Réunion ont été relevées par Ho Hai Quang, s'appuyant sur les lieux de réservoirs de main d'œuvre et la politique du travail.

Diversité des réflexions sur l'Interculturel et les diasporas.

Par delà les regards portés sur l'histoire, des réflexions interdisciplinaires sur l'interculturel, le rôle des diasporas et la mondialisation ont étayé ce colloque. On peut citer la contribution de Issa Asgarally, (Fondation pour l'Interculturel et la Paix) interrogeant le rôle des diasporas, entre « nouvelles tribus » et acteurs de l'interculturel et celle du professeur Michel Latchoumanin (directeur du CIRCI, responsable scientifique du colloque) mettant à l'épreuve la vision idyllique de l'Interculturel sous l'angle de la globalisation économique et culturelle, le néocolonialisme et la résistance aux formes d'occupation. Le professeur Zhihong Pu, de l'Université Sun Yat-sen (Chine), anthropologue de l'éducation, a exploré le thème de l'altérité en interrogeant les stratégies de communication mises en œuvre par les étudiants chinois et les expatriés français résidant dans la province de Guangdong.

On ne saurait retranscrire la teneur de ce colloque sans évoquer l'intervention de **Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, prix Nobel de littérature 2008.**

L'écrivain a débuté son discours en rendant hommage à Edmond Albius, jeune esclave à Bourbon, disparu dans l'oubli malgré sa découverte géniale de la fécondation de la vanille, avant de dénoncer les catastrophes humaines en lien avec l'émergence des diasporas. Depuis la fuite du peuple juif lors de la défaite des zélotes, en passant par le déplacement de population en Palestine en 1948, la plus terrible catastrophe serait l'esclavage, « *entreprise savamment orchestrée et bien organisée pour dépouiller des humains de leur culture et de leur mémoire, et les transformer en bête de somme* ». Il précisera également que l'esclavage « *par sa cruauté et barbarie, préfigure les programmes d'exterminations caractéristiques des temps modernes.* »

En lien avec la thématique du colloque, le prix Nobel a décrit l'engagisme comme « *une masse humaine ployée sous l'autorité d'un petit nombre, et générant pour les investisseurs de considérables profits dans la production industrielle du sucre, du coton, de la gomme arabique ou dans l'exploitation des mines.* »



Consul général de l'Inde Georges Raju, Nassimah Dindar, présidente du Conseil Général, JMG Le Clézio, Sarojini Bissessur, officer in charge FIP.



Conférenciers du colloque ODI :

Raja Munuswamy (Paris), Deva Koumaren (Paris), Pu Zihong (Chine), Anne Dambricourt (Paris), Christine Nayagam (Inde), Liseby Bègue (Rodrigues), Kusum Agarwal (Inde), Mahen Utchanah (Maurice), Sacri Richel (Réunion), Haokip Pakholal (Inde), Ho Hai Quang (Réunion), Michel Latchoumanin (Réunion), Prosper Ève (Réunion), Burrin (Maurice).

Le pendant de ces bouleversements consisterait néanmoins dans les « **ensemencements et fertilisations** », lexique utilisé par Le Clézio pour évoquer les conséquences de l'apport de ces populations sur les nouveaux territoires, donnant lieu à l'expression de nouvelles identités, et à des sociétés avancées en matière d'échanges et de reconnaissance de l'Autre, loin des schémas figés de la vieille Europe.

L'ODI, association qui mobilise un certain nombre de chercheurs autour de la thématique centrale de l'indianité présente à l'île de la Réunion, tenant compte du contexte pluriculturel, atteint pour la deuxième fois un de ses objectifs principaux, celui de permettre une réflexion scientifique sur cette thématique par l'intermédiaire d'un colloque international. Les organisateurs saluent la collaboration des différents partenaires dont les collectivités territoriales qui ont su saisir l'enjeu d'une démarche réflexive, alliée à une démarche coopérative régionale.

La présence de JMG Le Clézio à ce colloque 2014 concrétise, du moins le souhaitons-nous, la poursuite de l'action de l'ODI, réunissant chercheurs et écrivains, dans la perspective d'une exploration sans cesse renouvelée de l'histoire des sociétés indianocéanes.

Les actes du colloque devraient paraître au cours de l'année 2014, aux Editions Grand Océan.

THE TAMIL CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF MAURITIUS: ORIGIN AND CONTEMPORARY STATE

Marcel Chowriamah

This article briefly describes the presence of the Tamil Christian community in Mauritius in the context of the celebrations marking the 180th Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured labourers.

The Definition and Demography

The sources for the definition and the demography of this community are official Census during colonization periods, Electoral Reports and archival research on indentured immigrants. In 1891 Census Report, the Indo-Mauritian Community was defined thus:

“... the Indian Population was divided into two sub-divisions (a) Indo-Mauritians, that is to say, Persons of Indian origin born in the colony ‘and (b) Other Indians, i.e Indians born out of the colony”. “... Indo-Mauritians are off springs of parents both of whom were Indian immigrants, but where the father belongs to the General Population and the mother not, the children are returned as General. If the father was Indian, the child is an Indo-Mauritian”.

They were shown together although the size of each of the religious components (Hindus, Muslims and Christians) was computed. Thus, in 1891, there were 12,010 Christians, and 8,274 Indo-Catholics. In census of 1952, there were 16,421 Indian Christians or 3.75% of the total population; Indo-Catholics numbered 14,652, giving this break-down for the last time. Another document, the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve of 1957, basing on the census of 1952, stated, that on an estimated population of 600,000 in 1958, there would be 277,500 electors, and 9,000 electors for the Indo-Christian Community. It is relevant to highlight the affirmation of the Commissioners that



Portrait of Anamah, immigrant no. 275933.
Source: MGIIIA

“... the Indo-Mauritian Christians have been added to the Indo-Mauritian Hindus under the heading ‘other Indo-Mauritians’ ”.

A third source explored has been the number of Christian indentured labourers compiled from 41 ships from Madras, between 1859 and 1861. Out of the 12,874 indentured immigrants, 477 were registered as Christians. The publication *Angaje: The Early Years (Volume 1)* stated that one per cent of the indentured labourers were of Christian faith. In fact, there is a constitutional ambiguity to quantify the Indo-Mauritian Christians with regard to the four constitutional communities.

During Colonisations

The French brought the first Tamils from Pondicherry, Karikal and Tranquebar. These Tamils played a pioneering role in the construction of harbours and ports, military barracks, religious structures (temples, churches, mosques); occupying various levels of the administrative set-ups. Besides, they were involved within the vibrant tamil merchant community as bankers, importers and retailers. Among them were the Arlanda, Nalletamby, Anthony mootoo, Vadamootoo. They raised financial resources, acquired the land and constructed the St. Francois Xavier church which was consecrated in 1823. They were also involved in public life to an extent that Eliacin Francois became the first Indian-origin Mayor of Port Louis. In 1886, the Governor John Pope-Hennessy appointed Gnanadicrayen Luc Arlanda member of the Legislative Council.

When he passed away in 1890, his son-in-law, Dr. Xavier Nalletamby succeeded him. In 1896, Marcellin Savrimootoo became the first Indian-origin laureate in the English scholarship competition and eventually graduated as a Civil and Electrical engineer from Coopers Hill, London. Besides, Zamor Bongout, who came from Pondicherry and died in 1856, donated the land to construct the first chapel of St. Croix where Fr. Desiré Laval, the national missionary has been buried. Their descendants have gradually been assimilated into the coloured population although a small group have retained their Tamil name. The predominance of the French language, both in Roman Catholic Church and in the society, led to the gradual decline of the Tamil identity and consciousness both in the public and private environment. They were subjected to the simultaneous assimilation into the coloured population and to the creolisation process.

The immigration of Tamil-speaking catholics, as indentured labourers, started from 1829 with regular contractual immigration as from 1834. This immigration was equally plural in terms of languages, religions and locations. Chandrashekar Bhat stated that, just as India's diversity, *"Emigration of these from India too has been widely varied in terms of their historical context, causes and consequences of migration from India as much the social characteristics, such as level of education, caste and class, place of origin and religious and linguistic affiliation immigrants."*



Portrait of Moodoocunnee, immigrant no. 274766.
Source: MGIIIA.



Portrait of Anthonee, immigrant no. 278478.
Source: MGIIIA.

Since Christianity was much more spread in the Madras Presidency, the majority of Tamil-speaking Catholics were from Pondicherry, Karikal, Tanjavur (Tanjore), Trichy, Madurai, Negapatnam, Madras (Chennai), North and South Arcot, Chingleput etc. The larger number of the present-day Tamil-Catholics is the descendants of these indentured labourers who were themselves distributed, along with their fellow-passengers, to those places where sugar-mills and sugar estates existed. From preliminary research effected at the M.G.I. archives on 41 ships, between the years 1859-1861, 477 Tamil-origin Christian immigrants have been registered out of 12,874 passengers. They still bear the original Tamil Christian names such as Arokiam, Arlandoo, Arlappen, Annamah, Chavriamah, Chavrimootoo, Essoo, Migale, Pakiam.

The places closely associated with them are Stanley, Montroches, Bonne-Mere, Vacoas, Cassis, Mapou, Souillac, Mahebourg, BeauVallon, L'Esperance, etc. The Royal Commissioners, in their Report of 1875, wrote at: "No. 2880, MORAL and PHYSICAL CONDITIONS. 'On Stanley Estate we saw a Roman Catholic chapel built for and by the immigrants in their camp.'

The land on which this first chapel was built was donated by Sir Celicourt Antelme, the owner of the Stanley Sugar Estate to the Tamil-speaking indentured labourers in 1871. It was apportioned to Tamil-speaking Hindus and to Tamil-speaking Catholics. This donation was legalised in 1909. Today, on that plot of land, there are the Old Catholic chapel adjacent to a kovil for the Tamil-speaking faithful and a mandir for the Hindi-speaking Hindus. The Truth and Justice Commission has acceded to the request of the Tamil-Christian community to declare the old chapel '*Patrimoine National*'.

Stanley is the birthplace of two priests of the community, Fathers Michel Arokeum and André Puttay, who exercised their priesthood respectively in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh and Chilaw, Sri Lanka for twenty-five years for the Parampara festival, organized by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture, three of the five performing groups came from Stanley namely, Indo Mauritian Catholic Assn, Lall Mohamed Brothers and Ravita Salick troupe.

Religious and Cultural Way of Living

The missionaries and the catechists of the Mission Indienne, founded in 1861, catered to their spiritual and cultural needs. The first two missionaries were Fr Francis Roy and Fr. Constance Puccinelli of the Jesuit Madurai Mission. Catholic indentured labourers and their descendants were thereby insulated from the creolisation process ensuring thus the retention of their cultural affinities through parish-level informal laity structures, known as Darma Sabei. The Darma Sabei composed with elders of the community, regulated the cultural, religious and social activities and contributed for funeral expenses.

In 1952, Shri John Aloysius Thivy, the then Indian Commissioner, co-founded the *Indo Mauritian Catholic Assn* with *grassroot* rural and urban local leaders of the community with the twin objectives of cherishing both their faith and their culture. This organization constitutes a formal structure to support faith-based cultural, religious, civic and social activities such as Varusha Pirappu, Pongal, Sankranti and Divali, broadening thereby the perspectives of the community. The recurrent nature of the activities reinforces the community awareness, identity, fellowship and solidarity at family, regional and national levels. Besides, the choir is contributing immensely by rendering Tamil hymns in masses, marriages, funerals, novenas to Our Lady of Vailankanni, to St. Anthony and to St. Sebastien, annual pilgrimages to St. Francis Xavier in Port Louis, St. John de Britto in Caudan and St. Thomas in Beau Songes and in social and cultural functions.

A closer and regular support from the AGTF to the Indian Christian community will enhance their specific ancestral awareness and reinforce their self-esteem and pride.

EXPLORING THE HISTORY OF THE INDENTURED LABOUR

An Overview of the Living and Working Conditions of the Indian Indentured Labourers on the Mauritian Sugar Estates (1834-1888)

Urvanee Dookhorun, Trainee at the AGTF & 3rd year student at the University of Mauritius

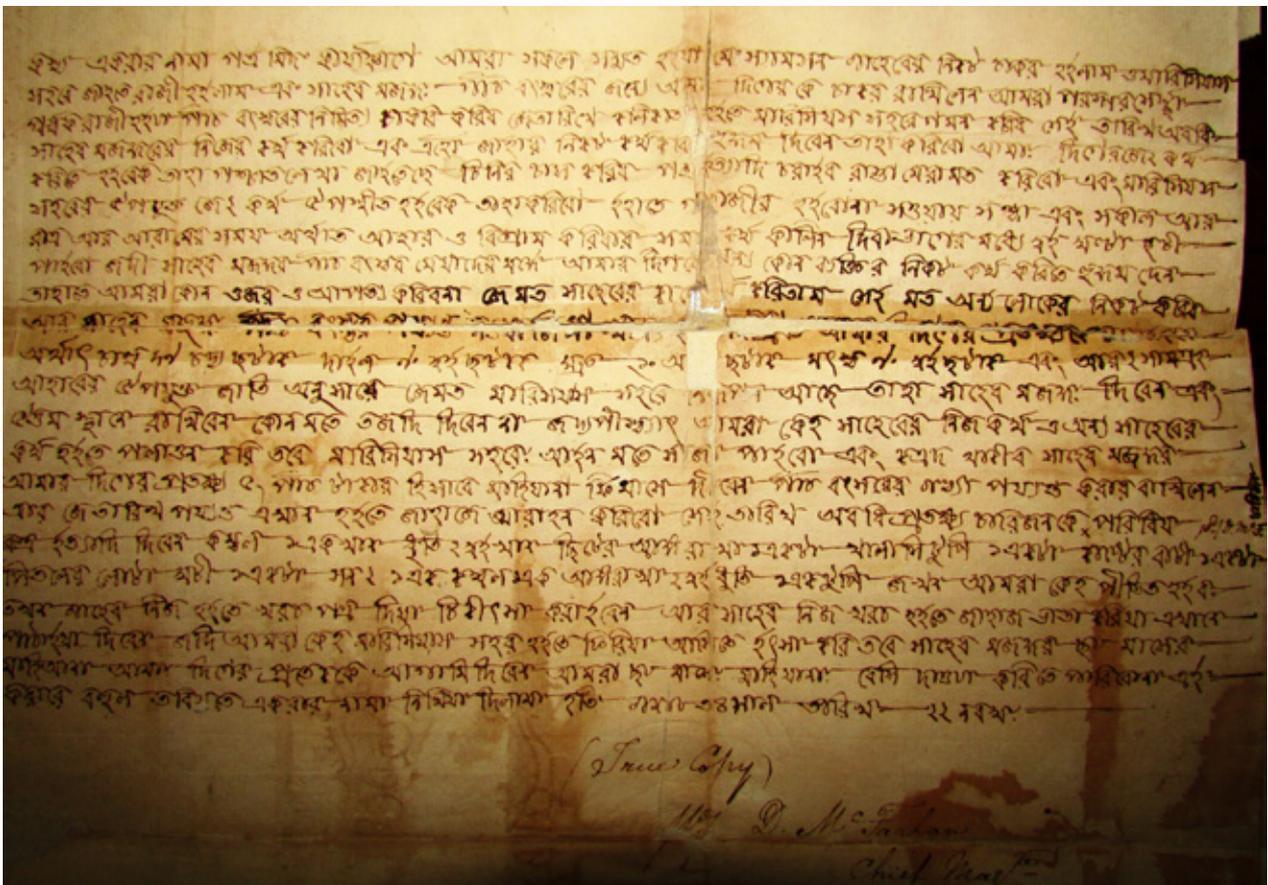
The indentured system has played a key role in the making of the Mauritian history. Large scale indentured immigration started during the mid-1830s, around the time that slavery was abolished in Mauritius. The indentured labour system was established on the 2nd November 1834 by the Mauritian and British planters

and colonial officials in order to increase the supply of labourers on the island's sugar plantation during and after the apprenticeship period.

The indentured labour system was based on a contractual agreement between an employer and a labourer. The contract regulated the terms of employment of the labourers, and specified the wage rates, working hours, the type of work, rations, housing and medical care. However, the labourers had to endure difficult living and working conditions because of inhumane treatment and repressive colonial laws and regulations.

Working Conditions

According to Charles Anderson, the first Protector of Immigrants, during the 1840s, the Indian labourers were overworked and subject to physical and verbal abuse. Their daily working lives consisted in either performing different tasks or one specific task from



Indenture Contract in Bengali from 1834. Source: MNA

early morning to evening which was often called 'task work'. Labourers had to work nine hours from Monday to Saturday and two hours on Sundays. Plantation work was harsh and tedious and pauses, such as lunch breaks, were strictly regulated. Furthermore, the indentured labourers were sometimes assigned longer hours of work when they failed to complete their task.

As a result, when the labourers did not perform their work well and complete their task, they were punished and deprived of their wages. Proper food rations and clothing were not always given to them on time. When the indentured labourers refused to work under such conditions, they were considered to be habitual idlers, deserters, vagrants, and trouble makers.

When the Labour Law of 1867 was enacted, it gave rise to serious abuses. Its objective was to bring the Old Immigrants under a system which controlled their mobility, labour, and lives. With the implementation of the pass system, the immigrant was given a pass and when any immigrant failed to carry it with him, he was punished and he was considered to be a vagrant.

Wages

For the indentured workers, their wages were the only reward which they received in return of their hard labour. Although immigrants charged their employers with assault, the irregular delivery of rations, the late or non- delivery of tickets and discharge paper, the lack of adequate medical care, the great majority of their complaints concerned the non-payment of wages.

It was, therefore one of the main factors in their grievances. The estate owners knew that even though they did not compensate workers with wages, they would not lack food as they would still be given rations. Thus, in Mauritius, wages were paid monthly and rations were free of cost.

The wages were Rs 5 per month during the 1850s and this did not increase in the following years. But part of the wages was cut even before the labourer had embarked for Mauritius. According to Marina Carter, the labourers were thus paying for their recruitment, inspection and registration. Illegal absence and sickness without permission led to the deduction of wages. In cases of inability to work, the indentured labourer was liable to the 'double cut', whereby he not

only lost that days' pay but was required to work a further day without pay.

Wages were also cut when labourers went to complain against their masters. For the year 1860 to 1867, wages remained somehow the same except in 1867 where a slight decrease was felt. Under the contract, the wages were not always fully paid. When the island faced many calamities in the 1860s, the employers reacted by hitting at the wages. And, most of the immigrants did not understand what these deductions were for.

When the labourers sought for other work, they were charged with desertion and were fined over and over again. Furthermore, the masters were never regular in payment. Wages were often kept in arrears for months. The trouble of wages was a crucial one for indentured labourers as 72 percent of the 110,940 complaints filed by the labourers from 1860 to 1885, focused on the disappointment to not receiving their wages either in full or on time. A survey was made by the 1872 Royal Commission on sixteen estates, which revealed that deductions for absenteeism from work cost labourers from 12.1 to 38.5 percent of their remuneration. Therefore, workers continued to tolerate the unfairness of non-payment of wages well into the 1880s, losing an approximate of 24.4 percent of their wages for numerous unreasonable grounds between 1880 and 1884.

Vagrancy

Vagrancy was considered as one of the prominent features in the indentured system during the late nineteenth century. Every immigrant of either Old or New had to bear an identity. With the implementation of the Labour Law of 1867, it compelled all immigrants to register themselves and failing to do so resulted to arrest. In the late 1870s and 1880s, stringent regulations in the name of vagrancy regulation were amended to limit the mobility of the indentured immigrants on the island. As a result, the number of arrests among Indian labourers increased for about three times in two years; 10,970 were arrested in 1867 to 30,904 in 1869. The real objective of anti-vagrancy legislation was to restrict their mobility from the estates even after the completion of indenture to ensure their availability for plantations.

The indentured labourers were forced to carry passes, which indicated their occupations and place of residence and anybody found outside his area was arrested and sent to the immigration depot. In 1881, Protector Trotter commented on the state of labour conditions and attributed the continuing incidence of illegal absence to Indian dislike of the manner in which they were treated and managed by estates authorities.

Contracts

The contract was an essential feature in the indentured system. The following details such as duration of stay, working hours, wages, clothing and lodging were mentioned in the contract. In the contract, the wage of the immigrants was set at a fixed rate. However, the contract made in 1834 was quite different from later contracts. In 1858, the contract system was introduced which ended the freedom of the labourer to choose his employer. In 1849, the term of indenture was extended to three years compared to 1862 which was a contract of five years. The following statement of the number of written contracts that has been entered into during the last ten years:

Year	Contracts
1872	71,174
1873	65,379
1874	63,137
1875	60,555
1876	63,221
1877	63,715
1878	62,535
1879	56,582
1880	55,149
1881	55,149

Table: Number of contracts 1872-1881



Lawgonkin an indentured labourer from China
Source: MGIIIA



Mauracheea, Immigrant No.95684
Source: MGIIIA

THE FUTTAY SALAAM OF BOMBAY

Heloise Finch-Boyer, Curator of the
Greenwich Maritime Museum

By 9 pm on 15th of January 1852, the 180 Indian men in the 'tween decks of the *Futtay Salaam* had suffered enough. A group of them broke free, lit torches and clambered down to the hold of the ship to see for themselves whether there was any water left on board. Unfortunately, the British Captain Carrew found the men in the hold. After a struggle, Carrew and his officers secured the Indians on the poop deck. This did not help the stricken ship. Dismasted twice in two cyclones, the *Futtay Salaam* should have docked at Port Louis at the beginning of January. Instead, two weeks

late, the *Futtay Salaam* was becalmed, drifting towards Réunion Island with Indian men, women and children dying and being cast overboard. With no more food on board and water rations down to one wine glass of water a day in the stifling tropical heat, hope was fading fast.

The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, holds a world-renowned collection of maritime archives. Among its watercolours, I found a curious picture labelled the *Futtay Salaam* of Bombay carrying 300 immigrants and coolies, and dismantled in a hurricane, being towed to Mauritius. While I am familiar with the many photographs of indentured labourers and convicts arriving at Mauritius, held at the Mahatma Gandhi institute, there are far fewer depictions of indenture before the photographic era. This watercolour was painted by a British midshipman in the Royal



*Indenture ship in front of the Aapravasi Ghat in 1856.
Source: Mauritius National Archives.*

Navy, John Becket Hodgson, who was on board *City of Poonah*, one of the ships which towed *Futtay Salaam* towards Mauritius. His watercolour depicts a stricken *Futtay Salaam* being towed to Mauritius by the *City of Poonah* and another ship, *Otter*. Although not a trained artist, Hodgson accurately depicts the event and adds interesting details: Indians on deck and a group talking with a Naval Officer on the foredeck; the Red Ensign being flown, unusually, from the main mast. The museum also has Hodgson's midshipman's logbook in which Captain Carrew of the *Futtay Salaam* has written his own testimony of the ill-fated voyage. Intrigued, I have begun to research the incident of the *Futtay Salaam* and here is what I have found so far.

In the year leading up to this incident, the *Futtay Salaam*, originally of Bombay, was regularly transporting Indian indentured labourers between Calcutta, Madras and Mauritius. On December 3rd 1851, the ship left Madras with Captain Carrew as commander, bound for Mauritius with a total of 350 people on board including 154 male and 80 female Indian immigrants and an unknown number of children. On the 25th of December, the *Futtay Salaam* encountered its first cyclone about 1000 miles due south of Sri Lanka. Well reefed, and with all hands on the pumps, Carrew made the decision to take the women and children from the tween decks to the cuddy and cabins under the poop deck. Three misfortunes soon occurred. First, the water barrels in the hold broke loose and some filled with seawater. Second, the water pumps became filled with gram which had worked loose from the woollen bags in the hold. Then, in the morning of the 27th the *Futtay Salaam* lost her foremast.

While Carrew created a jury rig, 10 days later on the 9th of January, the ship encountered a second hurricane which blew away the jury rig and flooded the hold with 8 feet of water. There was no more food and, worse still, the water casks had broken up and there was only one left. Now stranded 50 miles to the north of Mauritius, the *Futtay Salaam* could only sail slowly with the few sails left. Drifting southward, the ship came near enough to see people on shore, but no-one came to rescue and it was too deep to anchor. On the 13th of January the first death occurred on board, and water was rationed to one wine glass. On the 15th, the vessel began to drift towards Réunion, and the crew began to be too exhausted to continue baling water. That night, in desperation, "the coolies ... got below with lighted torches to look for water" Carrew recounts.

On the 16th, seven children died. On the 17th, while Captain Carrew was giving last rites to sixteen Indians, a ship, the *Otter* commanded by Captain Flax, finally came to the rescue, agreeing to tow the *Futtay Salaam* back to Mauritius. Soon after, a Royal Navy ship *City of Poonah* joined the tow offering help "to our pitiable situation, surrounded as we were by the dying and the dead and motherless infants". The two rescue ships passed over supplies of water. The cook of the *City of Poonah* stayed up all night boiling rice and peas for the Indians. When the food was passed over, midshipman Hodgson said of the Indians "the poor fellows were like madmen, the Captain and mates were lashing right and left to keep them from the food and water. Some tried to jump into the boat, and praying for a mouthful, others fighting for a little, women and children the same". A surgeon from the *City of Poonah* also came on board the *Futtay Salaam* to give medical assistance to the Indians. He amputated one man's leg who later unfortunately died. Two orphaned Indian babies were sent on board *City of Poonah* where Mrs Stewart, a British passenger, comforted the children. For some Indians the help arrived too late, and nineteen more people died that day. At 7 am on the 21st the ships finally passed Le Morne and, after receiving more food, the *Futtay Salaam* waited some hours at the entrance to Port Louis, until a steamer could tow her in at 5pm.

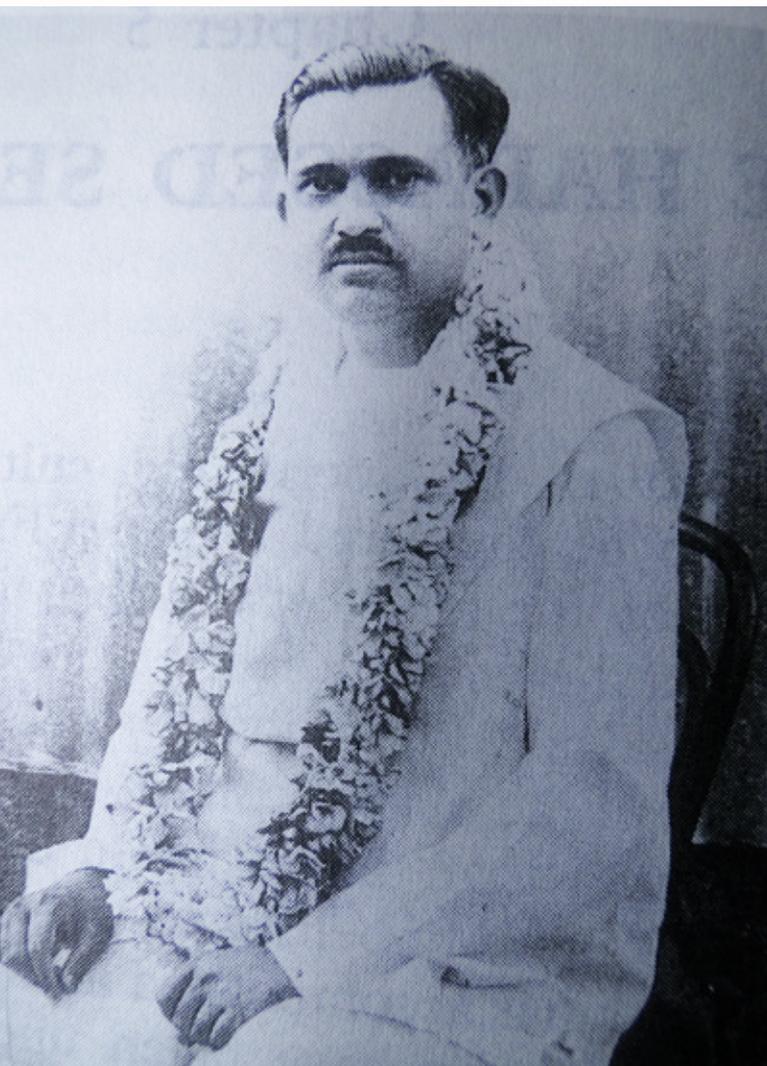
Newspaper reports suggest that the *Futtay Salaam* arrived at Port Louis, on the 21st January dismasted with 181 Indians on board, giving the total number lost at 53. The *Otter* and *City of Poonah*, were awarded one half the value of the vessel, cargo and passage money, estimated altogether at about 3,000 dollars.

We don't know what happened to the *Futtay Salaam* in Port Louis; presumably she was repaired as she is reported to have returned to Calcutta on the 14th June 1852.

BASDEO BISSOONDOYAL: SERVICE WITH A MISSIONARY ZEAL

Anand Moheeputh

If Sookdeo Bissoondoyal carved out a reputation as a firebrand politician in the 1950s and 60s, no less fiery was his elder brother Basdeo Bissoondoyal who though not actively engaged in mainstream politics was, nonetheless, doing spade works to trigger the wake - up call in the Indian community. That community had lost its cultural moorings. It was bereft of unity; it had lost pride in its culture; there was no sense of purpose. It was nothing more than a byword for poverty, exploitation and backwardness. Basdeo



Basdeo Bissoondoyal the Young Hindu Missionary in 1943.

Bissoondoyal rode the island, galvanising the Hindus through sermons and lectures. In those colonial days, anything related to Gandhism or evoking the very name of an Indian freedom fighter was anathema to the British administration and was dealt with contempt and harshness. No doubt, Bissoondoyal who openly espoused the Gandhian cause had to incur the wrath of the authorities. Refusing to be intimidated by threats and crackdowns, he undertook his cultural pilgrimage with a missionary zeal.

The sudden cultural revival of that community had by ricochet a deep repercussion on the political landscape in Mauritius, starting with the general election of 1948 which for the first time saw as many as eleven members of the Indian community getting elected and entering the Legislature. Indeed, the 1948 election fired the first warning salvo to the oligarchy which had been ruling the island since 1725 that its days were numbered. The Bissoondoyal's movement sparked a sense of unity in the Indian community so much so that the Governor of Mauritius, Sir Robert Scott, in a despatch dated 7 January 1955 drew the attention of the Secretary of state for the colonies that *"there is a strong tendency for Hindus to vote for Hindus and that signs of Hindu separateness and exclusiveness, in the political field, are increasing"*.

Born on 15 April 1906, Basdeo Bissoondoyal left Mauritius at the age of 27 to pursue a brilliant academic career in India, more precisely at the famous Lahore University in Punjab where he obtained a degree in English. He completed his M.A at Calcutta University under the guidance of the no less illustrious Dr H. C. Mukherjee who was to become the Governor of West Bengal in free India. In the course of his six year stay in India, he embraced Gandhi's 'satyagraha' approach in resolving issues but the struggles of other Indian stalwarts like Sadhu Waswani, Lala Lajpat Rai and Subhas Chandra Bose were also to cast an adhesive spell on him, forging his future course of action.

Back home in 1939, Bissoondoyal lost no time in throwing all his weight behind the upliftment of the Indians. Clad in his customary white 'dhoti' and 'kurta', he would tour the island delivering sermons, dwelling on episodes from Hindus' epics like the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita. Such sermons were attended not only by Hindus but also

by Muslims. All these culminated in an expression of faith when a "Maha yaj" was held on 12 December 1943 in Port Louis and Bissoondoyal unleashed his message in fiery language urging the Indians to unite and claim their rightful place in the country. Although the authorities having placed a ban on this mammoth cultural assembly and suspended regular railway transport running towards the capital in a boycott move that day, 60,000 people turned up in response to Bissoondoyal's call, a huge congregation never ever seen in Mauritius- this out of a total population of 400,000. The crowd attendance according to Police Intelligence report gave a figure of 25,000 which even then taking into account this lower figure constituted a record for a mass rally when compared with today's big political rallies which hardly draw a crowd of not more than 10,000. There verberations of the "Maha yaj", reached the Governor, Sir Donald Mackenzie-Kennedy, who was advised that Bissoondoyal "is

disseminating objectionable propaganda amongst illiterate and ignorant coolies who can be easily misled if Basdeo Bissoondoyal wants to do so..."

That great cultural gathering was regarded as a success for it kindled a measure of cohesion and pride in the Indian community. It boosted confidence and demonstrated the collective strength the community represented.

The colonial administration did not see this development with a good eye as "*Bissoondoyal's aim*", it was stated in an Intelligence report addressed to the Colonial office, "*in keeping his movement alive is, no doubt, to become the sole leader of the Hindus in Mauritius and increase his wealth while posing as a religious teacher*". Though the colonial administration was informed that Bissoondoyal "*is intelligent, well read, well informed*" and described as "*a self-styled missionary*", he was still found to be "*deserving*



Historic Pictures of the Mahayaj of December 1943.

drastic treatment to curtail his activities". And that was what the Governor intended to do.

Bissoondoyal's sermons though unauthorized were still pursued in defiance of the government order. It was argued by his supporters that those sermons were devoid of political ingredients but were mere religious discourses. Yet, everyone could discern they were peppered with political nuances. With such a mass mobilization, Sir Donald Mackenzie Kennedy, became a worried man. He was disturbed lest a social unrest might explode because according to him, "*the labouring classes are credulous and easily stirred*".

At some point, he even thought of exiling Bissoondoyal to Diego Garcia with the permission of Arthur Creech Jones, the Secretary of state for the colonies. But before Creech Jones wrote back to the Governor, he wanted to ascertain about Bissoondoyal's activities from his friend Emmanuel Anquetil, a respected Trade unionist and leader of the Mauritius Labour party. Anquetil who used to be a member of the British Trade Union and had close contact with British Labour politicians during his long stay in England advised Creech Jones that Bissoondoyal was not doing anything harmful but only championing the cause of the down-trodden and promoting the welfare of his community in his own way. That intervention of Anquetil who was earlier himself banished to Rodrigues most probably saved Bissoondoyal from a deportation order.

But harassment from the authorities kept growing as Bissoondoyal's movement gathered steam. Governor Mackenzie-Kennedy stated in the Council that his patience "*is wearing thin with these mischeavous plays*" of Bissoondoyal who on at least four occasions was arrested for infringement of prohibitive orders. He was prosecuted. Court proceedings by what came to be popularly known as '*Le proces Bissoondoyal*' were usually watched passionately by packed audience. Bissoondoyal in the true Gandhian spirit preferred the rigours of jail to paying fines but the authorities ensured that his "*undesirable activities*" followed by "*petty punishments*" should in no way enhance his popularity nor "*should he be allowed to make himself a martyr*".

That Bissoondoyal's influence spread far and wide could be gauged by the boycott he organized of the last horse-racing day ignominiously dubbed as "*Les Courses Malbars*" when the estates' labourers and their families usually turned up in large numbers at the Champ de Mars to watch rickety horses and donkeys running races. That was the special day marked to poke fun at and pour ridicules on Indians coming from villages by the town dwellers. That disgrace meted out to the Indians stopped forever in 1947 when the Champ de Mars looked surprisingly empty, for the boycott call was massively followed.

The likelihood of a rebellion by the Indian masses was feared with the movement whipped by Bissoondoyal in the 1945s. The Colonial administration was scared of a repeat of the serious disturbances of estates' workers that rocked Mauritius in 1937 and 1943. Governor Mackenzie-Kennedy then decided to give some thought to what was described as the "*Indian problem*" which he was told "*is clearly going to become more difficult in the future*". Improving the lots of the Indians and pacifying Indian politicians by giving reasonable facilities were things contemplated by the Governor who stated that by "*giving the Indian labourers reasonable housing, good food, facilities for recreation and enjoyment, we shall have gone a long way towards discrediting the Bissoondoyal type of propagandist*".

Thus, a historic moment occurred in 1947 when after a series of Constitutional Consultative meetings held in 1945/46, Mauritius was awarded a new Constitution with a set of new liberal franchise as opposed to the 1885 Constitution which gave voting right only to those owners of properties or holding basic educational qualifications. The new Constitution provided for any Mauritian registered as a British subject the right to vote if he could read and write and sign his or her name in any one of the languages prevalent in Mauritius and satisfy a literacy test. In awarding a new liberal Constitution, the Colonial office most probably wanted to deflect the rise of Bissoondoyalism, for Mackenzie-Kennedy was still convinced that "*the bulk of the people of Mauritius are unprepared for democratic institutions and do not understand them*". That implied the Indian community by and large was not ripe to exercise voting right but the Governor could not do otherwise as he was hard-pressed into bringing about constitutional changes due to mounting pressure.

With the new franchise coming in effect, the contributions of Bissoondoyal who immediately embarked upon a massive literacy campaign to 'educate' in a sense the Hindi speaking population had definitely an impact on the 1948 general election. Adele Smith Simmons in the book - *"Modern Mauritius: The politics of Decolonization"* aptly describes Bissoondoyal's role: *"Believing that within two months he could teach illiterate labourers and their wives to read and write well enough to satisfy the registration officer, he extended the network of schools. Armed with a blackboard and infinite patience, he and his teachers prepared thousands of voters."*

Once again, Governor Mackenzie-Kennedy, could not but spit venom at Bissoondoyal because of the vast literacy campaign he vigorously carried out. Describing Bissoondoyal as a *"malevolent man of straw"* who *"can do untold damage to a credulous people"*, the Governor pilloried him in the Legislative Council: *"we could run up a string of hovels and call them schools; we could staff them with hundreds of young men and women scarcely more literate than their pupils and call them teachers who could train thousands of young and old to write their names and addresses and a few simple sentences and call that education. For my part, I shall have nothing to do with such delusions for I regard them as savouring of intellectual dishonesty"*

Bissoondoyal's literacy campaign helped in a large measure to enlarge the number of qualified voters, shooting up from 11,445 prior to 1947 to 72,000 in 1948. The year 1948 was significant in that it marked the crumbling of the vestige of conservatism.

Not a politician, Bissoondoyal was, nonetheless, able to influence the course of politics in Mauritius. His influence tended to emerge through his thinking, oratory, simple life style and devotion to the causes of the Indian community. As well as being an influential figure in the 1940s and 50s, he wrote with his prolific pen in English, French and Hindi several scholarly books and contributed leading articles to prestigious international publications of his time.

As Adele Smith Simmons noted *"Bissoondoyal did more for the Indian community than to improve literacy rates"* but his role was played down over the years, just as the contributions of Subhas Chandra Bose in India was obliterated only to be resuscitated recently. There is no greater disservice to history than viewing such great champions of freedom through the prism of political partisanship.

Bissoondoyal passed away on 23 June 1991. In a belated recognition of his sterling service, the Government named a busy area in Port Louis as the 'Esplanade Prof Basdeo Bissoondoyal'.



BUFFER ZONE

FORMULATING A DEVELOPMENT VISION FOR THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE SURROUNDING THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY (BUFFER ZONE)

Maurina Runghen-Soodin, Researcher & Natasha Kheddoo-Ramcharitar, Research Assistant

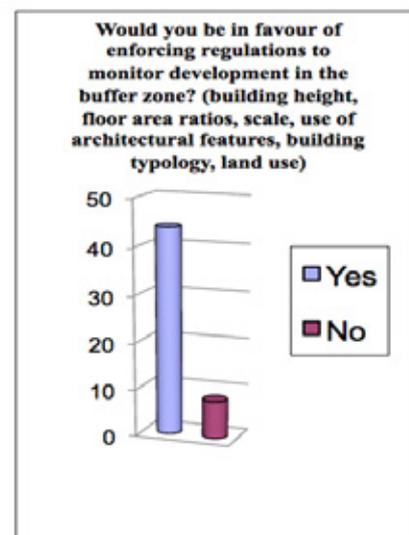
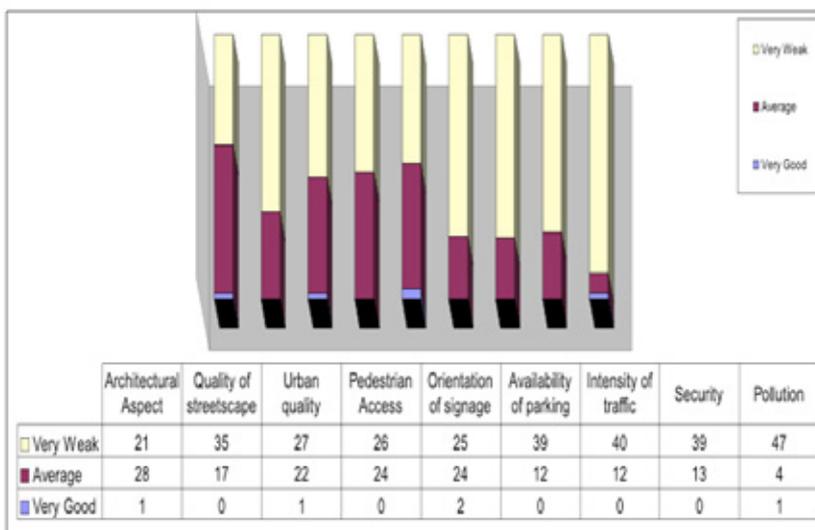
The Historic Urban Landscape of Port Louis is the birthplace of the Mauritian trade and economy as we know it today. It was the place that was chosen to host the port and this choice led to the development of many port related activities such as ship repairs, freight services, warehousing as well as wholesale and retail business. Most of these activities are still carried out in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat, sometimes by families and businesses that have flourished over the last 200 years. The bustling activities in the area are reminiscent of the time when Port Louis was one of the most important and busiest commercial ports in the Indian Ocean prior to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

Today, the Historic Urban Landscape of Port Louis remains the most lively and resilient city of Mauritius. It is the place where thousands of Mauritians go to work, to complete any official business and of course for shopping on a daily basis. The fast development of the economic activities has also resulted in a rapid evolution of the landscape. Over the last decades, property development has been haphazard, focusing on answering to short term needs, which has led to a chaotic situation with respect to the environment in the area. The listing of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Property in 2006 resulted in the need to delimit a Buffer Zone and manage it in a heritage friendly manner. To this effect, a number of studies were carried out by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund to understand the current situation, the concerns of the local population and devise a planning framework that would address all issues in a manner that would encourage development in line with international norms.

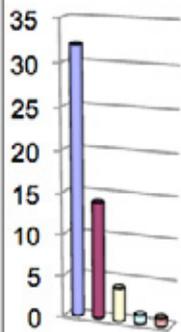
In 2008, a socio-economic survey was carried out in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property to collect the views of the owners and operators with regard to the existing planning norms and the ones proposed in the Planning Policy Guidance for the area which was under preparation at that time. The views collected were as follows:

Weaknesses and assets of the area

In addition to the socio-economic survey, a physical survey of all buildings within the Buffer Zone was carried out in 2008-09. Each building was given a

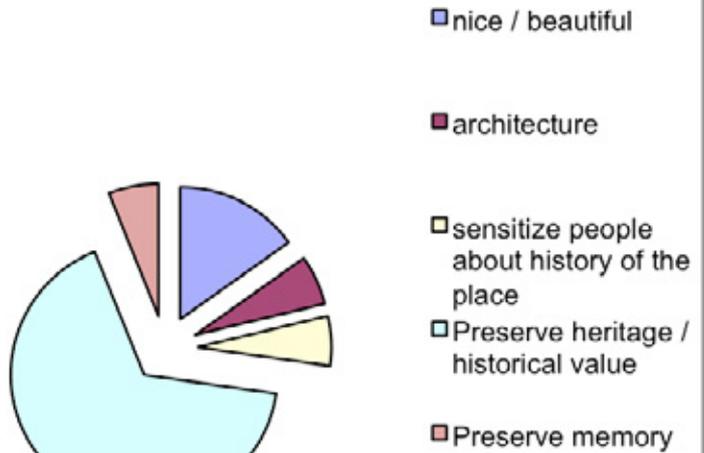


Would you prefer preserving an old building or using a modern building to perform your activity?



- Historic
- Modern
- Any

Reason for choosing a historical building



The screenshot shows the ArcMap interface with a map of a city area. The map is overlaid with several colored polygons representing different zones or grades. A legend on the left lists the layers: landmarks, Grdg_08 (with sub-categories: No Grade, Grade 3, Grade 2, Grade 1), CZ_boun, E21_boun, E22_boun, Motonway, Road, Aerial, and KEYMAP. A data table is open on the right, showing details for a specific location (32/NE/SE/SW).

32/NE/SE/SW	
AGTF_ID	32NE/SE/SW
Est_const	1853
Const_gd	25
His_val	Important religious and social centre on the island in continuous use for more than 150 years.
His_gd	25
Arc_val	Complex consisting of a range of buildings, some older than the main complex with arabesque detailing. Important as representative of a main cultural grouping on the island.
Arc_gd	22
State	Well maintained
State_gd	3
Gp_val	Major landmark
Gp_gd	10
Grade_Tot	85
Pic_2008	<Null>



unique identification number and was assessed based on the construction period, historical and architectural values, the condition of the building and on the importance of the building as part of the urban historical landscape. The buildings were thus categorised according to their value.

Out of the 266 buildings in the Buffer Zone, 70 (including 6 gazetted as National Heritage) were found to be of very high significance and/or rarity and listed as Grade 1 buildings. Thirty-six buildings were found to be of high significance and/or rarity and listed as Grade 2 buildings and 24 were found to demonstrate little significance of its own through importance as an integral part of the larger historic urban fabric and listed as Grade 3 buildings.

In addition to the analysis of the location and density of graded buildings, a streetscape study was also carried out through photographic documentation to define street typologies and formulate guidelines to restore the architectural harmony.

During these studies, the building typology for historical Port Louis was also identified. The buildings were regrouped under 5 main categories, namely the Town House, Case Creole, Stone Building, Warehouse and Miscellaneous.



The type G town house is a one storey building in stone in wood



The type G+A town house is also a one storey building in wood or stone, but also includes an attic

5 types of town houses were identified. These buildings, originally built for residential or residential and commercial use, have in most cases been converted to commercial use



The type G+1 town house is a two storey building originally with balcony



The type G+1+A town house is also a two storey building with balcony, but also includes an attic

It was interesting to note how planning regulations had a major impact on the building typology of the area. For instance, after the 1816 fire, the committee in charge of reconstruction recommended that no building be built in wood. Consequently, very few remaining buildings dating from the French period are wooden.

Town Houses Case Creole

Case Creole

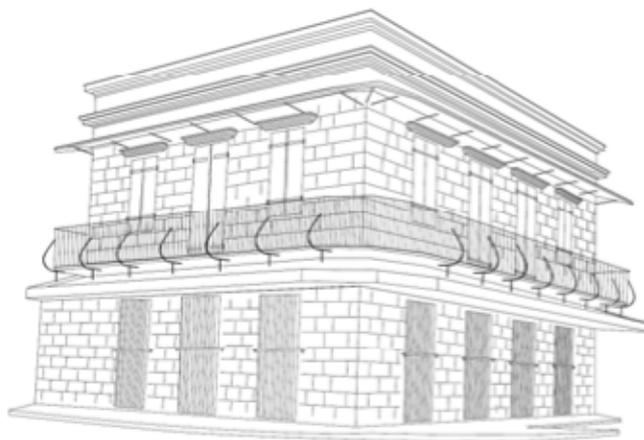
Despite their wide variety, these can be divided into 2 categories: the case creole surrounded by a garden or located on the street.



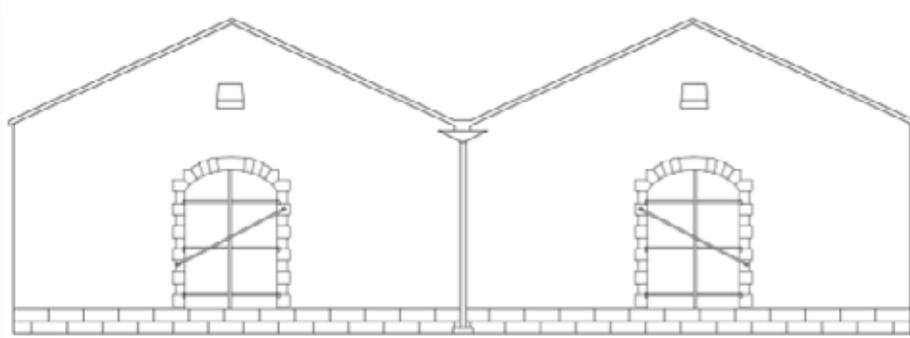
In both categories, they are in wood with shingle or corrugated iron sheet roof and include a verandah.

Big Stone buildings

Big stone buildings, as indicated by the type, refer to buildings that are of a larger scale than Town Houses. They were originally built to house offices, public or private and generally include 2 to 3 storeys with corrugated iron sheet roof.



Warehouse



These are always in stone with corrugated iron sheet vaulted roofs. They can be one or two storey high with openings on the street façade only.

“We would like to see the ‘heritage area’ develop into a vibrant precinct that adds value to the City of Port Louis and brings benefits to property owners, the business sector as well as other stakeholders in the area, and the nation at large.”

Miscellaneous

This category comprises more recent buildings in wood and concrete.

Following the various studies carried out to better understand the Buffer Zone, a planning vision was formulated for the area in consultation with the local community. This vision is explained in detail in the Planning Policy Guidance for the Buffer Zones of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property (PPG6). It can be summarized as follows:

“The planning vision for the Buffer Zone is to encourage a new type of development that is heritage friendly and sustainable in this historic part of Port Louis. Through the creation of an enabling environment, the Buffer Zone will also become the historic precinct of the City, an important cultural tourist destination that is vibrant and lively thanks to the diversity of uses.”

Following the issue of the PPG6, a Development Plan was prepared for the area. This document outlines 10 issues that need to be addressed to achieve the above vision. The views of the local community were collected and a common statement was included in the document:

In order to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property, the Development Plan also recommends the preparation of a Local Economic Development Plan. The aim of this document is to identify potential development opportunities for the area, encourage sustainable development and support investment. Funding for the recruitment of consultants for the preparation of the project was approved by the World Heritage Fund in 2014.

LA CONTRIBUTION DE L'ENGAGISME AU DEVELOPPEMENT COMMERCIAL DE PORT-LOUIS

Christelle Miao Foh, Research Assistant

L'engagisme, système de travail contractuel initié par les planteurs pour la première fois à l'île Maurice en 1829 et mis en œuvre à partir de 1834, a façonné indélébilement le paysage ethnique et culturel de l'île Maurice coloniale. L'Aapravasi Ghat, l'unique lieu de débarquement et à la fois zone d'intégration au contexte mauricien, s'inscrit au centre de la vie de ces milliers d'engagés de toutes origines. Leurs engagements sujets à de multiples restrictions, ont contribué à façonner l'île Maurice moderne.

Employés dans les différentes sucreries de l'île et ne pouvant se déplacer librement, ces engagés, s'approvisionnaient auprès des boutiques implantées sur les sucreries en complément de leur propre production potagère. La plupart des propriétaires de ces boutiques - majoritairement chinois - dans la seconde moitié du 19^e siècle s'approvisionnaient, quant à eux, chez les grossistes dans les quartiers de Port-Louis et éventuellement chez ceux implantés près de l'Aapravasi Ghat. Ainsi cette zone témoin

d'importants échanges commerciaux, se trouve aujourd'hui partiellement dans la zone tampon du site inscrit au patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO.

Ces échanges commerciaux et économiques génèrent inévitablement des interactions sociales qui permettent aux mauriciens de différentes origines ethniques de se côtoyer mais aussi de vivre ensemble. Ces échanges commerciaux et sociaux; du port au centre-ville et du centre-ville aux plantations sucrières, s'avèrent être très importants d'un point de vue économique et culturel. Chinatown, par exemple, situé dans la zone tampon de l'Aapravasi Ghat, est unique pour son rôle dans l'approvisionnement des denrées vers les commerces ruraux et celui fournissant de la main-d'œuvre dans ces boutiques pendant la période coloniale. Ce lieu fut pendant longtemps au cœur des activités des détaillants et a été le centre névralgique par ceux-ci. Ce lieu permettait aussi l'expression libre de la culture chinoise à Maurice, tels que les Kwong. Aujourd'hui en mutation, cette partie de chinatown resplendit à nouveau grâce à l'initiative de plusieurs acteurs qui œuvrent en faveur de sa revitalisation : ouverture de nouvelles activités commerciales, promotion vers les individus toujours curieux de découvrir ce lieu de Port-Louis, son festival culinaire qui attire de plus en plus de personnes, et ses activités régulières font de chinatown un lieu en profonde transformation qui toutefois agit en faveur de la préservation de son contexte historique.



*Port Louis Harbour from Citadel – 1920.
Source : Mauritius National Archives, MA.BF.7.*



*Venpin Street, Port Louis.
Source: Christelle Miao Foh.*



*Cavadee procession passing through Chinatown, Port Louis.
Source: Corinne Forest.*

Les différents édifices religieux, les habitations et autres lieux de vie témoignent de la richesse culturelle et ethnique de cette région de Port-Louis. Cette zone majoritairement commerciale aujourd'hui était autrefois mi-commerciale et mi-résidentielle. Nous pouvons aussi retrouver dans cette zone tampon, des espaces réservés à certains corps de métier que l'on ne peut trouver que dans des zones précises. Ainsi, certains corps de métier établis le long de la rue la corderie sont les commerçants de tissus et autres produits dérivés venus d'Orient. Certes l'établissement d'activités similaires dans d'autres régions de l'île ne fait plus de cette zone l'unique lieu d'approvisionnement aujourd'hui, mais nous rappelle cet héritage intangible dans la façon de faire du commerce: sa longue tradition commerciale lui confère un aspect unique.

EXPLORING A RARE INTANGIBLE URBAN HERITAGE SITE THE HISTORICAL & HERITAGE VALUE OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE IN THE AAPRAVASI GHAT BUFFER ZONE

Ghirish Bissoon, Mauritius Post Limited

For almost one and a half centuries, the General Post Office, an imposing historic structure has served as the main post office of Mauritius. For more than a century, as the office of the Postmaster-General. It has played a key role in the development and expansion of the postal service in Mauritius ever since the late 19th century and it is one of the most important heritage sites in the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site Buffer Zone.

A Rare National Monument

The General Post Office was decreed a national monument in 1958 through Government Notice No.614 by Governor Sir Robert Scott, based upon the recommendation of the Ancient Monuments Board. More recently, the General Post Office was listed on the “National Monuments of Mauritius” which is a schedule attached to the National Heritage Fund Act (No.40) of 2003. At the same time, it forms an integral part of the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site.

The General Post Office, or often referred to as “la poste centrale” by Mauritians, consists of large stone blocks as well as of thick iron and wooden beams which are imbedded within the structure. The front part of the building has five arches and the words “Post Office” are written in the Oxford style and the inscription of the date ‘1868 A.D’ is also clearly seen. Between 1847 and 1870, the postal headquarters of British Mauritius was known as the Postmaster Building and it was located in central Port Louis. In 1853, Reverend Patrick Beaton, a British missionary and visitor, mentioned that the old Postmaster Building was situated on Government Street near to Government House.



*General Post Office in 1935
Source: Toussaint, 1935.*

A Historical Aspect

The General Post Office was constructed between 1865 and 1870 and was inaugurated in December 1870. The erection of this national heritage started in January 1865 under the supervision of Surveyor General Morrison. Around two years later, in January 1867, shortly after his arrival in Mauritius, Nicholas Pike, an American Consul and visitor, observed: *“There is a new post office in the course of erection near the Customs House. It is to be hoped that the new light and airy place will give a proportionate impetus to the activity of the clerks on mail day.”*

By December 1868, more than seventy-five percent of the building was completed. Between 1869 and December 1870, the roof, the exterior walls and the front part of the edifice were finished. The General Post Office of Mauritius was built at a cost of between 10,000 and 11,000 pounds sterling. It should be noted that over a period of six years, the Surveyor General’s Office used more than 80 workers for the construction of this particular structure. The overwhelming majority of these workers were Indian and non-Indian vagrants who were incarcerated at the Vagrant Depot of Grand River North West and prisoners from the Port Louis Prisons. At the same time, a few of them were also ex-indentured workers, Indo-Mauritians and Creoles (mostly descendants of slaves and apprentices) who were engaged on monthly contracts. They were skilled craftsmen such as stone sculptors/stone cutters, carpenters, masons, and blacksmiths who earned high wages for their work. It is evident that these skilled and unskilled workers who, by the sweat of their brows, were the true builders of the General Post Office.

The Colonial Postal System

In December 1870, the General Post Office was officially inaugurated and became functional on 21st December of the same year. In October 1876, postal stamps were also being printed and issued there by trained postal workers. A few months later, in April 1877, the Central Telegraph Office became fully operation at the General Post Office. The General Post Office of Mauritius was modeled on public buildings which were being erected during the same period in Great Britain. In addition, it is an excellent example of traditional colonial architecture of the mid-Victorian Era which can still be seen in other former British colonies such as India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Trinidad, and Guyana.

During the early 1870s, it was at the General Post Office that the establishment of the rural post offices was planned and implemented by the Postmaster General and his staff. During the 1870s and 1880s, around 33 post offices were set up in the eight rural districts of the island. Thus, the General Post Office building played a central role in the creation of a modern colonial postal system in Mauritius. It is also important to highlight that during this period, there were few British and European colonies which had such a well-organized and efficient local postal service.

The Heritage Aspect

The General Post Office is an important structure because it represents the typical colonial architecture in the 19th century. The design of the roof, the clock and the exterior design, especially the five arches as well as the inscriptions, on the front part of this structure are important examples of the sophisticated craftsmanship which developed in British Mauritius during the mid-Victorian Era.

There are other important post offices which share a similar history with the General Post Office such as the Rose Hill Post Office and the old Souillac Post Office. It is a tangible symbol of our Mauritian architectural and cultural heritage. The establishment of the Postal Museum in the General Post Office building in 2008 further enhances its historic and heritage value which should be preserved for future generations. Lastly, it exemplifies the long, rich and diverse history and the heritage value of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site Buffer Zone.



THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

History of the Aapravasi Ghat and indenture

1. When did Aapravasi Ghat become operational and when did it close?

The Aapravasi Ghat formerly known as the Immigration Depot was open on 1st May 1849. Although indenture was formally ended in 1910, some immigrants were still imported until 1924. The Office of the Protector of Immigrants later known as the Poor Law Commission Office continued to function until 1938 when the site was converted into the Labour Department Office.

2. What was the Great Experiment?

Between the mid-1830s and early 1840s, the Great Experiment was initiated by the British Colonial Administration after slavery was abolished in the British colonies in 1834. The objective was to establish a new system of recruitment for much needed workforce in the colonies with the concern to demonstrate that "free" labour was better than slave labour. The success of the Great Experiment in Mauritius led to its adoption in other parts of the British Empire and by other colonial powers.

3. What is indentured labour?

Indentured labour was the modern system of contractual labour established between the mid-1830's and early 1840's in Mauritius and was gradually established as from 1838 in more than 30 countries, colonies, and territories in different parts of the world.

4. How long did indentured labour system last in Mauritius and when did it start and end?

Indentured labourers were imported as early as 1826. Between 1826 and 1833, hundreds of indentured workers were brought, but large scale importation of indentured workers began as of November 1834 and lasted until 1922. However, the formal end of indentured labour in Mauritius is considered to be in August 1910 with the arrival of the *Surada*.

5. The origins of the indentured labourers?

In Mauritius, more than 97.5% of indentured immigrants came from India. These individuals arrived from various regions of the Indian subcontinent: Bihar (40%); Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu (31%); Bengal and Uttar Pradesh (20%); and Maharashtra (9%).

Other indentured labourers who passed through the gates of the Aapravasi Ghat also came from China, the Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique and Yemen. These workers included more than 2,600 East Africans freed from slave ships captured by the Royal Navy and put under indenture.

Altogether, more than 462,000 indentured labourers arrived in Mauritius between 1834 and 1910.

6. How many indentured workers arrived in Mauritius and at the Aapravasi Ghat?

It is estimated that between 1826 and 1910, a total of 462,000 Indian and non-Indian indentured men, women and children reached Mauritian shores.

7. How many women and children came as indentured labourers?

Around 25% of the indentured workers who arrived were females and around 10% were children and infants who arrived in Mauritius between 1834 and 1910.

8. Where did they embark before coming to Mauritius?

The majority of the indentured workers embarked on ships in the main ports of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and the minor Indian ports of Pondicherry, Cochin and Cuddalore. The non-Indian workers embarked from more than 30 ports from different parts of the Indian Ocean world such as Penang, Singapore in the south east Asia, Tamatave and Nossi Be in Madagascar, Ibo on East Africa and Aden in Yemen.

9. How many remained in Mauritius and how many returned?

More than 300,000 immigrants (or two thirds) remained in Mauritius and around 167,000 (or one third) returned to India or emigrated to other colonies.

10. When did Aapravasi Ghat become a National Heritage and a World Heritage Site?

The Aapravasi Ghat became a national heritage in April 1987 and a World Heritage Site on 16 July 2006.

Visiting the World Heritage Property

11. Where is Aapravasi Ghat?

The Aapravasi Ghat is located at Trou Fanfaron in Port Louis opposite the bus station at Immigration Square.

12. How long is the visit of the World Heritage Site?

The visit of the World Heritage Site takes place after the visit of the Interpretation Centre. In total, the visit is 55 minutes including a 45 minute visit of the Interpretation Centre and a 20 minute visit at World Heritage Site.

13. How long is the visit of the Interpretation Centre?

About 45 mins

14. Opening hours

Monday- Friday: 10.:00hr - 17:00hr

Saturdays: 10.00hr – 14.00hr

Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays

15. Parking

Parking is available against payment at SPDC Granary and at Caudan Waterfront

The Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property

16. Does my property fall within the Buffer Zone?

The extents of the Buffer Zone are as follows:
The boundaries of the BZ are:

- to the West and Northwest of the AGWHP, the Trou Fanfaron harbour area and dry docks;
- to the North, the façades on the northern side of Dr. Sun Yat Sen Street;
- to the East, the façades on the eastern side of Royal Street; and
- to the South, the northern side of Duke of Edinburgh Street.



17. How do I give my opinion on the protection and management of the Buffer Zone?

You may do so through the Consultative Committee. The Consultative Committee has been created as per the Management Plan for the World Heritage Property and its Buffer Zone. The role of the Consultative Committee is to provide a means for the local community or any other concerned party to make comments on ongoing projects in the Buffer Zone. It also serves as a platform for the local authority, heritage institutions and any other Government body to consult the local population regarding any project in the area.

You may also contact **the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, Quay Street, Port Louis on 217 31 57 (ext 224 or 227 or 231)** or by **email aapravasi@intnet.mu**

18. How do I apply for a Building and Land Use Permit in the Buffer Zone?

Following the amendment to the Local Government Act 2011, any development, that is, any change to any building in the Buffer Zone, be it in the form of an alteration, change in use, extension or demolition must go through the following process:

- (i) A request for a Building and Land Use Permit accompanied by a Cultural heritage Impact Statement must be submitted to the City Council of Port Louis. The CHIS should be submitted together with plans, (section and elevation), and a description of the proposed works.
- (ii) The documents must be submitted to the Planning and Land use Department of the City Council of Port Louis. The documents are then submitted to the Technical Committee who will examine the applications for development in the Buffer Zone. Before submitting a recommendation, the members of the Committee carry out a site visit with the proponent to assess the CHIS and clarify any aspect of the project that might impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property or on the significance of the Buffer Zone.
- (iii) The Technical Committee then meets to assess the application. The decision of the committee can be to:
 - a. Either make a positive recommendation;
 - b. Or make a positive recommendation with conditions attached;
 - c. Or request that the proposal be amended to meet the specifications of PPG6;
 - d. Or request that a Heritage Impact Assessment and Visual Impact Assessment be submitted by the proponent in case one or more aspects of the proposed development goes beyond the scope provided in PPG6. This will be the case, inter alia, for any demolition, consolidation of plot, building of large scale;
 - e. Or reject the proposal.
- (iv) The recommendations of the Technical Committee are then submitted to the Business and Permits Monitoring Committee and the Executive Committee of the City Council of Port Louis for consideration.
- (v) The Business and Permits Monitoring Committee and the Executive Committee issue the final decision regarding the application for development in the Buffer Zone.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MONUMENTS AND SITES

The International Day for Monuments and Sites is an international event established by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) on 18 April 1982 and approved by the General Assembly of UNESCO in 1983.

The aim is to promote the world's cultural heritage and their diversity and to raise awareness on the need to protect and preserve this heritage for future generations. The International Day for Monuments and Sites is celebrated every year on 18 April around the world: ICOMOS encourages different types of activities, including visits to monuments and heritage sites, round tables, quiz and newspaper articles.



*Guided visit at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*



*Storytelling at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site.
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*



*Pedagogical activity on pottery-making
Source: AGTF Photo Collection.*

Since 2005, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has proposed activities every year to promote the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Sites including guided visits for visitors, heritage trails and educational activities for children. Some years, more than 2,500 visitors took part in our activities.

The purpose of the “World Heritage Day” is to share knowledge of our past with everyone and promote their significance for our nation.

VISIT OF HIGH DIGNITARIES AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE, 1970S TO PRESENT



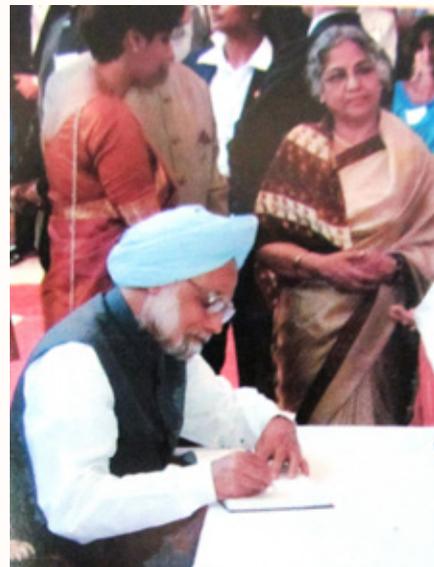
*The Honourable
Srimati Indira Gandhi,
the then Prime Minister of India –
June 1970*



The Honorable Zail Singh, Indian President in 1984.



*Koichiro Matsuura,
Former Director General of UNESCO in 2004.*



*The Indian Prime Minister,
Manmohan Singh in 2005*



Her Excellency Shrimati Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of the Republic of India on 26 April 2011.

“Over 175 years ago, a group of men and women landed on this historic site. These courageous souls graved the inhospitable terrain and struggled against all odds to change the course of the history of Mauritius through their determination and their indomitable spirit. I am very happy that this historic site, which has established a permanent immortal bond between the peoples of the two countries, is being preserved as it was many years ago, to serve as a reminder to the current and future generations of the many contributions made by their courageous forefathers in making Mauritius what it is today. I pay my respectful homage to these Aapravasis.”

The Honourable Shashi Tharoor, the Minister of External Affairs, New Delhi, India in November 2009

“It has been a deeply moving experience to visit Aapravasi Ghat on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the landing of Indians in Mauritius. The memorial is a worthy tribute to the memory of those forebearers whose struggles and sweat, toil and tears built the Mauritius of today. My thanks for the privilege of being here and my best wishes to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund as -it completes the excavations and rebuilding of this remarkable World Heritage Site.”



His Excellency Pranab Mukherjee the President of the Republic of India on 12 March 2013

“ The visit to this historic Heritage site of Aapravasi Ghat, where brave men and women from India and other shores first set foot in Mauritius when they arrived here more than 175 years ago, would remain etched in my memory. Aapravasi Ghat represents, in the most sublime way of the triumph of the human spirit in the face of all odds. It stands as a monument to the memory of these valiant men and women. Their immense courage, will and perseverance have shaped the Mauritius of today.”



INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

APPLYING THE BEST PRACTICE IN MANAGING AND SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDENTURED LABOURERS IN MAURITIUS

Kiran Chuttoo–Jankee, Research Assistant

Introduction

Mauritius is a country managing two World Heritage Sites listed on the World Heritage list of UNESCO namely Aapravasi Ghat (2006) and Le Morne (2008). The Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed under the Criterion vi of the 1972 Convention for the Protection of World Natural and Cultural Heritage. This Criterion acknowledges the importance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the World Heritage

Site because it substantiates further its universality. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) solicits communities because tradition bearers are the custodians of elements of ICH: the tradition bearers transmit and keep this knowledge. In this sense, the ICH cannot exist or be preserved without the involvement of the custodians since they determine the value of this heritage. Consequently, their involvement is imperative for the safeguard of intangible heritage. UNESCO recognizes the need to involve the local community to ensure the long term preservation of intangible heritage. The cultural policy in Mauritius also applies these principles for ICH. Hence, the AGTF is one of the institutions working closely with the local communities to preserve the legacy of the Indentured labourers for which the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site is one of the important symbols.

Before the inscription of the World Heritage Site, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has highly valued the involvement of the community to document, safeguard and conserve the heritage associated with indenture. After inscription in 2006, community participation allowed the revival and preservation of the traditional knowledge that the AGTF has identified as a key



component for research, preservation and promotion. For example, the conservation of the site required the revival of the craftsmanship's skills and indigenous knowledge of lime making. The Site Conservation workers were trained to revive the preparation process of the lime mortar with organic materials such as bell fruit, methi, cane syrup and urad dhol.



The Oral history Unit of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund documents the Intangible Cultural Heritage and collects the memories of the communities and stakeholders. Following the documentation process, it seems essential to share this heritage with everyone to ensure its preservation and promotion. To this end, living exhibitions depicting life in sugar camps, performances of traditional songs and dance, tasting of traditional recipes and demonstration of local skills were often promoted by our institution. Our work consists in recording the indigenous knowledge and promoting it to support its preservation and transmission to the future generation. This is why one of our major projects was to collect life histories and other information from descendants of indentured immigrants. As part of this project, a total number of 450 interviews were collected since 2009.

The following lists the activities carried out by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund to date:

- the “*Varshik Parampara Utsav*”. This living exhibition involves the young and old generations. They present folk songs and dances, traditional games, and crafts to promote their knowhow and share traditional customs and knowledge;

- One of the living exhibitions in November and December 2012 presented the replica of an indenture village. It included a 2-month living exhibition on the traditional culture of descendants of Indentured labourers;
- A three-day workshop entitled “Bhojpuri at the crossroads” organized by the Trust Fund at the University of Mauritius in July 2010 aimed at opening a debate on the Bhojpuri Culture and discuss its future in a multicultural contemporary Mauritius;
- The publication of research results is also important to share and preserve traditions. On 2 November 2010, an audio CD of birth songs from Mauritius and India, sung in Bhojpuri entitled ‘Sohar’ was launched. This CD was the first in a series that the Trust Fund intends to publish. On 2 November 2011, the Prime Minister Dr Navin Ramgoolam launched an E-book of tales from Mauritius in English, French, Creole and Bhojpuri.

In 2012 and 2013, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund contributed to the preparation of the nomination dossier to propose the inscription of *Geet Gawai* on the Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This project was led by the Ministry of Arts and Culture and the University of Mauritius. Through the implementation of these projects, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is contributing to promote a pillar of Mauritian Cultural Heritage and fosters nation building. Our institution firmly believes in the importance of the community for the conservation of the World Heritage Site and the intangible heritage associated with indenture. As such, we support the custodians’ stand: ‘Not for us without us’.



POST INDENTURE PERIOD

THE AAPRAVASI GHAT AND LE MORNE: THE TRANSCULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF COOLITUDE

Khal Torabully

Mauritius is the only country in the world harbouring two UNESCO sites dedicated both to slavery and contractual labour in the wake of the colonial empires. Indeed, the Aapravasi Ghat (listed by UNESCO for the symbolical value of indenture) and Le Morne (a symbol of resistance against slavery) are now both firmly rooted in the cultural scenery of Mauritius. I have always held that those sites have a common mission: to interact in view of evolving a contemporary dynamics of memories and identities *negotiated* beyond dire migrational experiences.

Mauritius, an exemplary case to avoid competition of memories

The word negotiation here points to the fact that, through a transcultural dynamics, we are bringing together two significant historic paradigms that had been hitherto separated. Past historiography and ideological short sightedness indicated how they opposed on several planes. Slavery, a major genocide for Africa, had been ongoing for more than four centuries, engaging more than 15 millions of human beings. Indenture, which was generalized after the abolition of slavery, namely in the first third of the 19th century, lasted almost a century, and exiled beyond a million of persons, namely from India and China. In this approach, it was paramount neither to oppose them nor to negate their specificities. It was useful to see how they concurred in the economic environment of their times and in initiating a process of cultural diversity.

In 1998, I recall that I was in Paris during the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. I talked about the necessity of bringing together those two pages in a shared narrative and humanism. Doudou Diene, the conceptor of the Slave Route for UNESCO then thought it was wise to do so once the work related to



Source: AGTF Photo Collection.

slavery had been firmly anchored transnationally. For him and Federico Mayor, coolitude, which had been brought to light by Cale d'étoiles-Coolitude (1992), was just the right poetics to avert a concurrence of memories between those two paradigms. When the Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006, I was asked to develop the humanism of

coolitude and its inclusive philosophy. UNESCO had in mind the forthcoming inscription of Le Morne on the same list. It was thus necessary to promote a culture of peace through the dialogue of those 2 sites. We had to go beyond a binary approach. So, coolitude developed a perspective of shared memories in the wake of those 2 inscriptions.

This fear of competition of Histories was not without some sociological grounding. It had been observed that in many countries shaped by slavery and indenture, many used those two drab episodes for divisive purposes, bringing into the picture ethnicity and outbursts of racialism. It was urgent for the island to prevent possible uses of slavery and indenture to wage another archaic battle capable of ruining the fragile social setup of the island, besides sending a very unsettling message to the world. The logic of the sites was not to reactivate hate or concurrence of suffering but prepare the tangible basis allowing Mauritius and countries beyond to develop a finer vision of History and a transcultural interaction beneficial to identity and cultural debates. Therefore, it was imperative for Mauritius to showcase a wiser, negotiated approach towards otherness through slavery and indenture.

The transcultural process of coolitude

Though some opposed this *work* (and not *duty*) of memories, there has been a clear emergence of a political willingness to convey a sense of solidarity between those grim episodes.

One stride was obvious while setting the Truth and Justice Commission of Mauritius, based on the cathartic experience made in South Africa by Mandela and Tutu. During its last steering committee, a philosophy guiding indenture and slavery to evolve in a common work of nationhood was expressed through our action which had been ploughing the field for some 15 years. Thence, testimonies were collected from descendants of indentured labourers and slaves in view of a generic document. Its aim was to weigh the trauma, economic and social costs of both episodes. For instance, in a radio programme commenting on this Commission's conclusions, in which I participated, I could hear the descendants of indenture and slavery pointing to that common

direction. I then knew that the momentum was gaining ground in the burgeoning Mauritian consciousness that was at last addressing History some forty years after independence. This joint exercise constitutes for me one of the major benefits of the Truth and Justice Commission, besides a liberation of speech regarding indenture and slavery. It also indicated that this transcultural dialogue is a prerequisite for nation-building and identity negotiations. Though the implementation of the conclusions of this Commission are still in abeyance, I believe that it has allowed Mauritius to envisage a more subtle and complex attitude to identity construction. This dialogue was much expected in a global environment which seemed destined to encounter the much advertised « clash of civilizations » of 11/9. The conversation between both the Ghat and Le Morne contradicted this grim vision and promoted better understanding between the various segments of the Mauritian population. It has set a basis for reconciliation and a corollary, diversified, imaginary which needs to be further promoted on the island.

Dr Navin Ramgoolam : « We need a creative vision of History »...

Many years after the listing of the Aapravasi Ghat (2006) and Le Morne (2008), I am at ease to say we are on the right tracks, though much work lies ahead. This transcultural approach has received much recognition at various levels of the Mauritian society, from the layman to foremost political authorities.

During the commemoration of indenture on 2 November 2013, in his speech, for instance, the Indian Ambassador underlined the importance of Le Morne as another indelible space of memory. He indicated that the slave and the coolie were both victims of an unjust system and, as such, deserved to be honored on the same footing of human dignity. The nation could bear witness to the official stance of the Mauritian Government regarding this issue. Dr Navin Ramgoolam, the Mauritian Prime Minister, clearly indicated the necessity of articulating indenture and slavery along a humanistic approach. He voiced a much expected transcultural stance. He said History is not just the reiteration of facts but also the capacity of imagination to use differentiated History to promote peace and understanding. During

this ceremony, Dr Ramgoolam launched « *VOICES FROM THE AAPRAVASI GHAT* », a transcultural poetic work published by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund. In it, the variegated voices of indenture echo an aesthetics of diversity. Speaking about the duty of memory, Dr Ramgoolam advocated for a *creative* approach towards indenture. This attitude implies that plural memories and identities are to be engaged in a conjugation of Histories far from exclusive perspectives.

Going beyond : transculturalism and « bricolage mythique »

Transculturalism is indeed the right vision for Le Morne and the Aapravasi Ghat. The transcultural approach advocated for entails elements of a «bricolage mythique », made of interactions and creative acts that enable one to overcome regressive reactivations of History. A creative vision implies «going beyond», to quote Homi Bhaba. The pre-fix *trans* in *transculture* encompasses the element of going «beyond» set categorizations. Its conceptor, José Ortiz developed on the plantocratic island of Cuba in 1940. Basically, it refers to an awareness that does not close itself on a secluded memory or identity, but as a « transition » between two cultures. It offers a dynamics that takes the binary into a « third space », to quote Bhaba again, delienating another space where creative interplays can be fostered. Intercultural processes, contrary to transcultural ones, can miss this dynamics of the beyond, and lapse into an undesired hierarchical relation, mirroring hybridation or miscegenation and *mestisaje* where one term can establish superiority over the other.

Therefore, even if resistances and misunderstandings still cling to divisive memories of slavery and indenture, the Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne have not brought two antagonistic polarities in Mauritius. Constant vigilance has been exercised to prevent this opposition. Much more, the state has developed a policy of equality (instead of a hierarchical one) between both sites. In no way has it brought precedence of the one over the other, thus avoiding endless conflicts. By bringing the element of *proximity* of the fate of the subhuman/subaltern in the picture between indenture and slavery, a common status of exploitation by the colonial system, and by highlighting the cultural,

linguistic and social interactions between these migrations, promising transcultural horizons have been envisioned for this island and elsewhere. This scope needs now to be rooted in several wakes of life of Mauritius. Education, culture, arts and the multiple facets of living together are spaces where a corallian interaction, contained in the poetics of *coolitude*, will develop potent strides for a better « *vivre-ensemble* ». As a country much advertised as a « rainbow island » - borrowing Mandela's formula for South Africa - a fecund social and memorial laboratory is at hand here. Articulating the Ghat and Le Morne will yield much in terms of comprehending the History and memories with a plural dynamics.

As things stand, we can state that Mauritius has initiated a much needed transcultural introspection of those two tragic pages of Modern History. It has, so far, wisely addressed them as a means of allowing the island to address tricky cultural and historical obstacles that prevent societies from moving beyond traumatic episodes and their sequels. This is not an easy exercise, which needs time and a sustained political attention. So far, I have witnessed that the complexity of this transcultural interaction has received the attention of many, cutting across community and class distinctions, and of the authorities, and namely, the acting government. This is very heartening.

Set in this variegated philosophy, in keeping with UNESCO's policy of cultural diversity and its efforts to promote a culture of peace, the Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne, I am convinced, have so much to offer in terms of content and visions in this endless transcultural transaction.

DANCING FOR THE GODS: INTERSECTING WORLDS

Sooryakanti Nirsimloo-Gayan

Indian labourers who emigrated under the system of contractual employment, commonly termed *engagement*, braved the vast oceans and broke taboos to forge their future, taking into their own hands the shaping of their destinies. Their collective experience, from the emigration depot and the sea voyage to the estate camp, as well as the cultural baggage they brought, nurtured an *imaginaire* which was to inspire numerous writers and artists of later generations in the countries of settlement.

The estate camps, with their rows of rudimentary mud and thatch huts, in which the labourers dwelt during their period of contract, constituted a space of encounter within colonial society, in spite of the rigid hierarchy and seemingly rigid frontiers separating the world of master from that of labourer. The workers' everyday life gave rise to a material culture which inspired conflicting reactions.

This is well illustrated by the reflections of Delettre, the main character in Clément Charoux's novel, *Ameenah* (1935):

... Au bord d'un champ de cannes, un Calimaye. A l'ombre d'un bois d'oiseaux et d'un bois-chandelle, une sorte de pierre plate fleurie d'une plante à fleurs jaunes dont il ignorait le nom. Au sommet d'une gaulette de bambou, un lambeau d'étoffe flottait.

En ce lieu, il faisait d'ordinaire une station. Q'y avait-il là: dieu, saint ou diable ? Les laboureurs y venaient certains jours en procession, avec des chants et des tam-tams. Sur la terre créole ou Guillaume Dufresne planta la Croix les asiatiques avaient apporté leurs dieux et leurs croyances. Que symbolisaient cette pierre, ces fleurs, cette flamme de toile bise au haut de la hampe improvisée ? Delettre

le savait mal. Par un sentiment de pudeur secrète il répugnait à questionner quelque Hindou sur le mystère de sa foi et de ses rites.

Interestingly, the passage resounds with Christian references: 'procession', 'station', 'mystère', the very words 'dieu, saint, diable'.

At the same time, the proximity of this mass of labourers, in unfathomed ways, inspired the Mauritian elite with an awed interest in the civilisation of their country of origin.

'A un moment où la société mauricienne coloniale prêchait le clivage ethnique et la primauté de la culture européenne, Robert Edward Hart et Malcolm de Chazal, deux poètes d'origine blanche, se sont placés au-dessus des considérations racistes pour manifester leur attirance pour l'Inde et la philosophie hindoue qui ont nourri leur poésie... Hart traduit le Bhagavad Gita en 1936 et publie un recueil de poèmes intitulés Poèmes Védiques (1941) dans lequel il exprime son admiration pour la culture hindoue et à travers cette publication il souligne que la religion hindoue n'a rien à envier à la religion chrétienne car elle est aussi riche en enseignements philosophiques.'

As pointed out by Ramharai, 'l'indianisation de l'espace insulaire mauricien n'a pas été bien reçue par les autres communautés'. But in more ways than one there is ambivalence in that reception. (Ramharai, V. Littérature mauricienne de langue française et diaspora indienne. <http://gerflint.fr/Base/Inde1/Ramharais.pdf>)

Léoville L'Homme illustrates another response to the presence of Indians in Mauritius. He was, it seems, 'attiré par la pensée védique et était épris de l'Inde et de ses valeurs spirituelles', but, at the same time, he expressed an open dislike for the Indians who had settled in the colony.

Raymond K/Verne's poem, *Apsara La Danseuse*, (1941), dramatizes this complex paradox: on the one hand a sophisticated body of knowledge, thought and spirituality, bearing witness to a 'high civilisation'

worthy of admiration, and, on the other, a mass of people arousing nothing but contempt or curiosity, and seemingly unaware of that rich heritage of thought which they could admittedly have claimed as their own, thereby staking a claim to a dignity and respect denied them as a result of their low status in the colonial hierarchy.

As seen through the eyes of the poet, the estate camp reflects the complex reality of this world within worlds. Life, in its day-to-day manifestations, goes on as usual; the cattle winds its way from pasture to enclosure, the women wind theirs from the water cistern to the mud hut, while the men wind theirs around the women, watching them avidly. Meantime, from beyond the invisible frontiers comes the chime of church bells, engaging in a new, hesitant, conversation with the gongs of pagodas, the temple bells and the calls for prayer soulfully resounding from minarets.

But all of them are tragically unaware of the Apsara dancing the cosmic drama of Destiny. She throws herself into 'la mer indienne', the waves of the Indian Ocean themselves physically bridging the chasm between the land of settlement and the land left behind, 'cette Inde brahmanique transplantée'. (Dumas, P. 1941 Hommage, in R. K/verne, *Apsara La Danseuse*, p 7. Port-Louis.)

The poet perceives the camp-dwellers but, like Delettre, seems unable or unwilling to address her burning question to them. Instead, she directs her question at the dying Apsara, a question so dense that its very simplicity unveils an aching hope that somehow, some day, she will be re-incarnated and will rise again to dance for Shiva.

Mais làbas, dans les camps,
Les troupeaux rentrent, sombres,
Dans la brume qui pend.
On dirait que dans l'ombre
Un grand fleuve châtain
Serpente sous les arbres...
On dirait qu'on entend
Battre le coeur du monde...

Le soir, jaune, géant,
Sur des pentes profondes,
Narcotique, s'étend.
Partout, lumière jaune
Qui flambe... dans le vent
Le souffre des cyclones...
Odeurs de massala,
De jaques, de pétrole,
D'achards et d'ananas...
Odeurs acides et molles...

Parfums insidieux
Du rhum et du gingembre...
Parfums délicieux
Des mangues de novembre.
Silence... brusquement...
Cloches mélancoliques
Là-bas, cloche des blancs...
La cloche catholique...



... Cloches partout...
 ,,Mystères dans leurs modes...
 Cloches aux temples hindous...
 Gong... gong dans les pagodes.
 Minaret musulman,
 Blanc derrière les chaumes,
 Mais les cases, le camp
 Sont d'un rouge de chrome.

En des chemins d'argent,
 C'est la file superbe
 Des femmes rapportant,
 Dans les houles de l'herbe,
 Sur leurs bras élancés
 L'eau douce des citernes,
 Chastes, les yeux baissés,
 Que la fatigue cerne.
 Et les hommes, braquant
 Des yeux d'aigle sur elles,
 Les hommes, dans le camp
 Où le rouge ruisselle,
 Rôdent comme des loups...

La nuit coloniale tombe,
 Tombe d'un coup,
 Lourde comme une dalle.
 On ne te cherche pas?...
 Le silence torride
 Soule, mon Apsara,
 Les drogue... toi, livide
 Tu roules dans la mer
 Mordante qui te mange...
 Tu nages?...non... tu meurs
 Dans l'eau brusque,
 Ton corps lutte, frondeur,
 Dans la vague musclée
 Qui t'aspire, Apsara,
 Dans l'ombre colossale
 De l'écume lilas...

Ton âme qui brûlait
 De jour et de jeunesse
 Chaude, renaîtra-t-elle
 En toute sa ferveur,
 Toute son étincelle
 Sa fougue, son éclat,
 Dans un enfant solaire ?
 Au souvenir brumeux
 D'une danse lointaine,
 Sous les feux merveilleux
 De la mer indienne
 Danse, mon Apsara.
 Tu danses pour Shiva...



THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE INDENTURED LABOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS

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"The photograph is out there, an object in the world, and anyone, always (at least in principle), can pull at one of its threads and trace it in such a way as to reopen the image and renegotiate what it shows, possibly even completely overturning what was seen in it before" Ariella Azoulay (2008:13) .

The indentured labour photographic portraits have undergone what can be described as a metamorphosis; a transformation of state from one dimension to another; a shift from documents of identification, to images with new capacities and meanings. The photographic portraits within the PG series at MGI are not only a visual testimony of the colonial regime that went to great lengths to record and control the indentured labour population. They are also images that contain the gaze of the labourers themselves, their experiences, their hopes, their fear, their confusion, their anger, their relief, their choices etc. Today, when descendants view their ancestor's portrait, they see past the stronghold of the colonial system of indenture and see something very different.

The establishment of the indenture photographic portrait system in Mauritius exemplifies the degree to which the colonial administration needed to control the indentured labourers. It was a highly structured administrative process from beginning to end. The photograph at that time was perceived solely as an identification document, created to assist with the problems of governing new and ex-indentured populations, as well as resolving issues of stolen immigration tickets (Deerpalsingh 2004). From 1865, indentured labourers were required to obtain a photograph for their immigration ticket, becoming compulsory in May 1868, (Ordinance 31, of 1867). With the task of paying and obtaining the photograph at the immigration depot in Port Louis, the labourers travelled from their place of contracted employment or residence. Once they arrived at the depot, they waited for instructions to enter the photographer's studio. They would enter a room full of strange equipment, a camera, a chair and headrest positioned in a particular



The last photographed ex-indentured labourers at the Apravasi Ghat in 1914.
Source: MGIIIA.

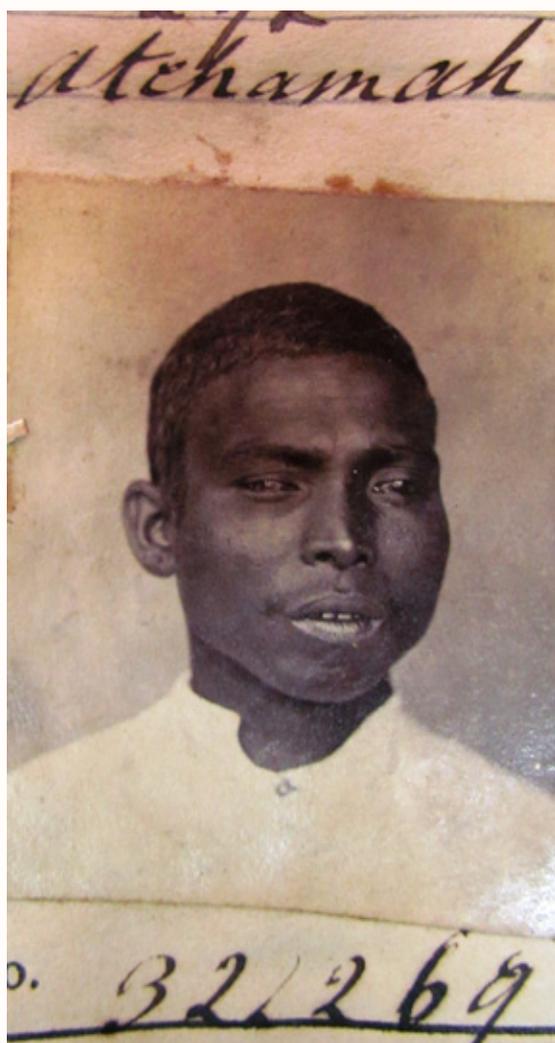
position ensuring the best pose and lighting for the photographic process to work, this light was provided via a large high window (there was no artificial lighting at this stage in Mauritius). They would be instructed to sit on the wooden chair and rest their head on the frame behind. This enabled the immigrant to sit as still as possible for the required length of time, at least 10-30 seconds, depending on the level of light in the room and the skill of the photographer. For the immigrant, this photographic process would have been experienced as strange and very controlling.

When people view a page of the photographic ledgers (PG archives), they see 36 or 30 images pasted upon each page (dependent on year and ledger). They will notice, and often comment upon, the significance of the expression of the people in the photographs. This expression is the same for most photographs; it can be described as stern or serious, and can be explained by both, the strangeness of the experience, as well as,

the photographer instructing the specific pose (not unlike the taking of passport photos today). Once the photograph was taken, the immigrant would wait at the depot for it to be processed, glued and stamped upon their immigration ticket. This process of obtaining the photograph could take one to several days; at a cost to the immigrant in terms of leave from work and wages. If the photograph was lost or damaged, a new one would need to be obtained in the same way. Therefore, a lot of time, money and effort were invested in this process for both the colonial administrators and the indentured immigrants. Although, the subjects seen in the photographs display their compliance towards this colonial administrative system, they had little choice, but to comply. Without a photograph attached

to their immigration ticket, the labourer could be charged with vagrancy and imprisonment. Therefore, the photograph on the immigrant's ticket was also essential for the immigrant to be able to negotiate a degree of freedom while living on the island, albeit in an ambiguous and tenuous form.

From an academic point of view, the history of the indentured photographic portraits and the colonial context of their creation are of great significance. However, regardless of this highly structured and controlled system of identification, for the descendants of indentured labourers, these rigid colonial processes no longer confine the indentured photograph. The photographic ledgers have been undergoing a transition



*Immigrants Utchanah and Mohit, photographed in the late 19th century.
Source: MGIIIA*

of meaning and purpose since their re-discovery in the 1970's. People now use the photographic archives to seek out their ancestors. When they are found, the descendant views the photograph and engages with their ancestor, sensing and imagining their life at the time the photograph was taken. They experience strong feelings of appreciation and gratefulness towards their ancestor. They consider and appreciate their, demeanor, facial features, eyes, expression, choice of clothing, the way they wore their hair, their jewellery, their headdress, their sari and scarves. By reflecting on the image, the viewer is immersed into the world of the immigrant and at some level the immigrant/ancestor speaks back to them through their gaze. By reflecting on the immigrants/ancestors point of view we allow him or her to transcend the oppression of the photograph, and its original purpose. By being visually present in the photograph, the ancestor is no longer perceived as lost or absent.

When viewing the photographs, descendants of indentured immigrants, reconstruct the past of their ancestors into the present. There are many examples around the world of similar reconstructions of meanings created from colonial images. Such as, descendants of Australian Aboriginals who when viewing colonial prison photographs of their ancestors, see beyond the chains that are visible in the photograph, and are instead focused upon the visual presence of their ancestors, connecting with them and bringing them into their present lives (Jane Lydon (2010)). This similar experience occurs when descendants view the photograph of their ancestors from the indentured labour photographic archive. The visual existence of ancestors often changes the descendant's perceptions about indenture and personalizes their connection with their family history. The photographs reveal their lost ancestors, bringing to life their face, their name, and family connectivity. They reinvigorate a sense of personal identity and belonging.

Today, the narratives that are elicited from the photographs are less about the colonial regime and its processes, and more about the descendant's ancestral stories and circumstances, and a particular appreciation of their persistence and courage. There is often a desire to extend this experience to other family members and to acquire further knowledge about past generations and other indentured family members. Today, the indenture photographic identification system is appreciated because it was responsible for the creation of the ancestor photographs. Through the photographs, ancestors now gaze back at their descendants and new relationships are formed between generations and families.

Acknowledgements: Thank you to the assistance of the staff at MGI, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, The National Archives and the individuals and families who have shared their experiences and thoughts about their ancestors' photograph.

L'AVENTURE DES NOMS INDIENS A LA REUNION

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La question du nom chez les Réunionnais d'origine indienne (appelé *Malbar*) est récurrente². Il est courant d'entendre l'interrogation suivante :

*« Tiens c'est un nom bizarre ! » ou encore
« Nous connaissons tous quelqu'un qui
porte à peu près le même nom que vous ?
Manifestement une certaine confusion règne
autour des noms indiens.*

Chaque nom renvoie à une dimension particulière pour quiconque se rend en Inde. Il existe une multitude de noms indiens à la Réunion. La grande majorité relève du pays tamoul, un certain nombre sont d'origine « télougoue³ », d'autres enfin sont à classer dans le groupe « Calcutta » ou Inde du Nord. Les noms en présence dans l'île, peuvent être issus d'un héritage de la caste (ou *jâti*), relatif aux religions, ou à la région (ou des villages) d'origine en d'autres termes rarement choisi au hasard. La difficulté de toute recherche se distingue à la lumière de ces remarques. Aucune recherche sérieuse sur les noms ne peut se faire sans la prise en compte de la dimension *castique* surtout lors de notre période de référence, 1828-1901⁴.

Le croisement documentaire sur la base d'actes d'état-civil aux Archives locales et de quelques copies de listes de navires n'est pas la méthode la

plus pertinente mais la plus pratique. Quarante-huit listes représentent environ 1 395 noms. Logiquement l'appui sur la modélisation choisi par Sudel Fuma dans son étude onomastique concernant les esclaves se

2 La communication s'appuie sur l'étude, effectuée dans le cadre d'un D.E.A, en Histoire contemporaine (CRESOI) – (Université de La Réunion- 2005), « DES NOMS INDIENS AUX NOMS MALBAR : LES DEBUTS DE L'INTEGRATION DES ENGAGES A LA REUNION (1828/1901) » qui a donné par la suite un ouvrage, intitulé « La Galaxie des noms Malbar ».

3. La langue majoritaire dans l'Etat voisin du Tamil Nâdou, l'Andhra-Pradesh

4. JAFFRELOT Christophe, Inde : La démocratie par la caste, histoire d'une mutation socio-politique, 1885-2005, p.2, Collection L'espace du politique, Fayard 2005. Dans ce livre, l'auteur démontre clairement l'importance et le rapport des castes dans le quotidien des Indiens, encore aujourd'hui. Cette notion conditionnerait même la cohésion de la société indienne

révélaient un outil perspicace⁵. Il a démontré comment 30 000 noms ont été distribués aux esclaves en 1848. Parmi les obstacles qui s'opposent à toute tentative d'une étude détaillée des noms indiens, en premier plan surgit l'absence documentaire flagrante. Sur les 200 registres traitant des Indiens *Malbar* aux Archives départementales seules une dizaine sont accessibles. La faculté malheureuse de l'île de perdre régulièrement des stocks d'archives dans les incendies, quand ce ne sont pas des champignons mesquins qui opèrent⁶, entame sensiblement la démarche.

Le traitement des noms indiens par les autorités administratives de l'époque ne fut pas sans conséquences. Globalement les noms furent retranscrits, et traduits avec une certaine légèreté. Après un siècle d'évolution à La Réunion, les noms subissant de profondes modifications, il est improbable de s'appuyer exclusivement sur le facteur nominatif pour initier une recherche généalogique. Cet acharnement a produit comme résultat des identités étranges. Les agents locaux ne maîtrisant aucunement les langues indiennes encaissaient sans renâcler tel ou tel nom d'Indien. Parfois la traduction qu'ils en firent tomba au plus juste, mais dans de nombreux cas, l'approximation était de rigueur. De leur côté, les engagés eux-mêmes n'offraient pas beaucoup de garanties de leur identité. A la question du nom, il pouvait donner tel prénom, (deuxième prénom par exemple), voir le nom de leur mère, leur village ou un sobriquet⁷ ! Même en Inde, sous le *British Râj*, il a été rapporté que certains ont transformé leurs noms –lors des débuts du recensement- dans le but de leur donner un plus grand dessein.

5. FUMA Sudel, « La mémoire du Nom ou « le nom, image de l'homme ». L'histoire des noms Réunionnais, d'hier à aujourd'hui à partir des registres d'affranchis de 1848, Tome 1 & 2. IOI REU 969-742 FUM

6 Nous devons préciser les limites de cette réflexion. Nous savons pertinemment qu'il s'agit pas d'une définition de chaque nom Malbar là il faudrait probablement maîtriser plusieurs langues indiennes, dont le tamoul, le télougou le bengali, et le marathi. Une étude ethnologique, aurait permis aussi de cerner plusieurs les rapports entre les noms et les castes, car nous restons persuadés qu'aucune étude onomastique ne peut se faire sans pendre en compte la dimension des castes.

7 Robert Deliége rapporte que dans les premiers recensements de la population, les Britanniques, « amateurs de littérature ancienne » (sic), avaient demandé que les gens indiquent leur varna. « De nombreuses castes inférieures en profitèrent pour s'inventer un pedigree de brahmane ou kshatriya » écrit-il. Ce phénomène n'est-il pas à mettre en liaison, dans une certaine mesure, avec les titres que les souverains du Moyen âge octroyaient à leurs courtisans pour les remercier de tel acte de bravoure ou de fidélité ? Les rangs (ou castes) des vicomtes, marquises et autres seigneurs grossissaient par ces récompenses. Ainsi naissait le célèbre proverbe connu des généalogistes « dans chaque famille il y a un pendu et un roi ».

L'autorité administrative d'accueil à La Réunion n'était nullement compétente pour mener une investigation sur les identités. Le système assimilationniste s'était déjà mis en route pendant la période de recrutement de la main d'œuvre⁸. Les incompréhensions apparaissent dans les premiers actes d'engagés.

Des noms-puzzle

Certains engagés dans l'île portaient un nom et un prénom identiques.

Ex : SINAN SINAN

VIRASSAMY VIRASSAMY ...

Il existait encore un obstacle supplémentaire, qui était imprévisible pour l'administration locale. En Inde, il était courant pour un père de famille, d'octroyer le nom de son père, à son fils. Cette autre forme de filiation complétait la vie sociale. Ce mode d'attribution, tel un puzzle, permettait de remonter à un certain niveau généalogique. A condition d'en connaître ses rudiments. Dans la réalité cela n'était pas pour faciliter la tâche de ceux qui devaient repérer l'identité des travailleurs indiens.

L'instrumentalisation extrême des noms

L'enregistrement des noms était de différents ordres. L'une des pratiques réclamait de l'engagé, son nom (et/ou prénom), ensuite celui de son père. L'agent n'avait plus qu'à composer le couple nom + prénom, respectant le principe de l'état-civil. Une autre « méthode » consistait à n'obtenir que le prénom voulu par le ou les parents. Surtout en vigueur dans les camps autour des usines, cette technique prenait en compte un prénom donné (ou choisi) auquel on additionnait le prénom de la mère.

Les agents de l'Immigration éprouvent de sérieuses difficultés pour restituer exactement le nom des individus. Le 28 janvier 1873, l'un d'eux relève assez fidèlement le nom de Sevicaounden Moutoucaounden mais il orthographe ainsi le nom d'un autre indien Madarassin, qui s'appelle en réalité Nadarassin. Sevicaounden Moutoucaounden et Nadarassin Simbalingom font une demande de renouvellement de permis de séjour à Ste Marie.

En 1896, le consul anglais Bennett, en poste dans l'île, saisit le gouverneur de La Réunion, car une dispense d'engagement octroyée quelques jours plus tôt à Selly (ou Sally) Papounaick, a été retiré à cette dernière. Selly souffre de rhumatisme chronique, ainsi que l'affirme le Docteur Mac Auliffe. Son compagnon Mounigan, affirme qu'il se chargera de ses besoins. Le fils, Naramsamy (ou Narianin) a été l'objet d'une taxe de capture, car il ne s'est pas engagé.

A cette époque, dans la plupart des cas, ce sont les mères qui se livraient à cette démarche⁹. Cette pratique singulière eut pour conséquence de pérenniser des matronymes (d'origine indienne) largement en vigueur à La Réunion¹⁰. L'existence de ces matronymes indo réunionnais, provoque parfois la curiosité en Inde, lorsqu'il est attribué à un homme. Au risque de sombrer dans un contre-sens historique, il est à penser que les engagés eux-mêmes ne se souciaient peu de la question de leur identité nominative. Est-ce lié au phénomène du *kâla-pâni* qui les conduisaient à croire qu'ils n'avaient plus à rendre compte, ni de leur caste, ni de leur nom ? Aucun élément ne rend compte aux Archives, d'une éventuelle protestation à l'encontre de l'attribution d'un nom approximatif. Les travailleurs Indiens possédaient peu de gens lettrés dans leurs rangs. Ils ne se souciaient plus sur la question de leur intégration dans l'île que de leur nom. Ils étaient conscients que leurs enfants porteraient des prénoms populaires dans l'île, que ceux de leurs ancêtres. Ce choix ne les a pas effrayés, ni dissuadé d'accepter le système.

Quels sont les facteurs qui ont provoqué les modifications et/ou constitutifs des noms *Malbar* ?

A ce stade de notre réflexion, l'affirmation selon laquelle les noms indiens ont été estompés, voire « dénaturés » ne saurait être contestée. Il est à indiquer que tous les étrangers subissaient un sort identique. Les Chinois payaient le même tribut, dans l'identification de leurs noms, les Cafres (Africains) ou Malgaches n'étaient guère mieux lotis. Les conditions sociales des engagés ont-elles influencé ces changements patronymiques ? Il est clair aussi, que nous apportons plus d'interrogations dans ce domaine, que de réponses.

9. Selon Thérèse Moutounaick, « On donnait le livret de famille à nos maris pour qu'ils les remettent aux responsables des usines. A l'époque ce sont eux qui faisaient le lien avec les mairies pour les déclarations. Souvent les enfants étaient déclarés plusieurs semaines ou mois après car les usiniers attendaient d'avoir plusieurs dossiers pour se rendre en mairies ».

10. Les noms indiens d'origine féminine sont légions : Minatchy, Allamélou, ZaneGuy, Coupaman, Latchimy, Parvedy, Canaguy, Rickmouni, Camatchy, Virama,

8. La caricature de cet état d'esprit est donnée dans l'anecdote suivante.

-Quel est votre nom ?

-Pardon Sahib ?

-D'accord, vous appelez Sahib.

Eu égard des difficultés repérées en faveur d'une étude en profondeur sur les patronymes indiens, nous pouvons exclusivement énumérer un certain nombre de pistes susceptibles d'offrir une compréhension de la question de l'octroi du nom des indiens à La Réunion.

Plusieurs étapes marquent l'évolution des noms *Malbar*.

- **Une période de retranscription**, (Compagnie des Indes) où le sens étymologique des noms n'est pas garanti.

Ex : *Moutouquichena*, (pour *Moutoukichenin*)

- **Une période d'adaptation**, (les engagés conservent leurs noms mais réclament ou acceptent un prénom occidental ou/et catholique pour leurs enfants)

Ex : *Joseph Sevingué* (sa mère s'appelait *Allamélou Sevingué*)

Ce sont les femmes pour une grande part, qui déclarent les enfants à l'Etat-civil à l'époque, ce qui explique que le nom définitif est celui de la mère.

Ex : *On a pu dire que telle famille s'appelait Jadia¹¹, en souvenir du bateau qui les transportèrent...*

Enfin une période d'intégration, (qui débute au XXe siècle, les *Malbar* possèdent un nom d'origine indienne, et un prénom européen, c'est la norme). Nous pensons que l'on peut inclure dans cette phase, les recours devant les tribunaux pour la réappropriation d'un nom ou prénom indiens. Il s'agit d'une adaptation des vocables patronymiques à la réalité locale.

Cette typologie permet de confirmer :

- Que les noms *Malbar* puisent leurs origines dans les profondeurs régionales de l'Inde Nord de l'Inde)
- Que les noms ont un accent majoritairement dravidien (Tamil Nâdou, Andra Pradesh¹²) et que les matronymes apparaissent en grand nombre.

11. Entretien avec Suzanne Hoareau, née Jadia. (01.10.2009)

12. Dans une catégorie Autres, nous pouvons classer les noms des originaires de « Calcutta » (ex : Bissoundial Joabsing, Biqui Miahou, Rickmouni, Bissassa...) et les autres de Bombay ou du Gujarat. Dans cette étude, nous sommes appuyés surtout sur les Indiens de confession hindouistes, puisqu'ils constituaient la grande majorité des travailleurs engagés. Les Indiens de Bombay ou du Gujarat (communément les Zârabes) débarquèrent en grand nombre dans la dernière partie de l'engagisme et plus encore à l'échéance de ce système.

- Que les fils d'engagés, dans un souci d'intégration décidaient de noms français/catholiques pour leurs enfants.
- L'exhumation et l'exploration d'un millier de noms, nous a montré que dès la deuxième partie du 19e siècle, une forme de « métissage culturel des noms » était en cours, peut être même plus tôt.

Modification des noms, pratique courante

La référence constante aux noms *Malbar*, croyons-nous, dans la Réunion du 21e siècle renvoie à une interrogation identitaire et sociale, peut être sur le positionnement de ces descendants d'immigrés dans ce bout d'Europe du Sud.

S'il y a encore des esprits éclairés pour estimer que le débat sur les noms indiens à La Réunion, ancienne Bourbon, n'a pas lieu d'être posé, il conviendra de justifier les nombreuses références verbales aux noms des aïeux dans les conversations familiales. Pas un mois, pas une semaine, ne s'écoule, sans un parent, de préférence un peu âgé demande à tel ou à tel autre, s'il n'est pas parent de celui-ci ou de celui-là !

Faut-il aussi penser que tout un peuple est pris de crise paranoïaque, lorsqu'il martèle que le nom de ses aïeux a été l'objet de modification, de contorsion, bref d'escamotage ?

Pour paraphraser l'historien Paul VEYNE, nous ajouterons que: « les historiens racontent des événements¹³ vrais qui ont l'homme pour acteur (...). Comme le roman, l'histoire trie, simplifie, organise, fait tenir un siècle en une page ». Ainsi il ne porte pas de jugement ni péremptoire, ni définitif. En revanche il est en droit de s'interroger sur les limites de l'assimilation.

Trois quarts des familles Malbar affirment régulièrement qu'elles ont perdu leur véritable nom !

Le français en tant que langue, n'a pas permis une restitution complète de l'identité nominative des individus venus en tant que travailleurs à La Réunion. A la question, répondons d'emblée : NOM : NON.

13. VEYNE Paul, COMMENT ON ECRIT L'HISTOIRE, essai d'épistémologie, Coll. l'Univers Historique, 350 pages, Le Seuil, 1971

Le français, en tant que langue, essaie de nous restituer notre nom. Mais il n'y parvient qu'en partie, en témoignent les nombreuses interrogations qui n'ont jamais cessé sur l'authenticité des noms *Malbar*.

Dans le cadre d'une politique d'assimilation, le nom est « travaillé » pour en expurger ses racines afin, qu'il devienne identique, qu'il rentre dans le moule.

Le philosophe J. Derrida invitait à déconstruire les concepts. Le nom n'est pas neutre, pourrait-on conclure à l'issue de cette réflexion qui reste ouverte. Le nom prend une nouvelle allure, lorsqu'il est confronté à une autre langue étrangère. Il est clair que nous pouvons dépassionner notre débat, en nous reposant sur la nouvelle loi de 1993, qui ouvre des perspectives pour les personnes soucieuses de renouer avec une certaine tradition nominative.

La loi du 8 janvier 1993 (Code Civil). « *Toute personne qui justifie d'un intérêt légitime peut demander à changer de prénom. La demande est portée devant le juge aux affaires familiales, à la requête de son représentant légal. L'adjonction ou la suppression de prénoms peut pareillement être décidée* ».

THE NEXT MILESTONE: MANY MORE STEPS TO CLIMB YET...

Dr R Neerunjun Gopee

We would not be where we are today if our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents had not laid the solid foundations for the future generations. After their harrowing sea voyage from India in sheer survival conditions, our forbears had to undergo further trials and tribulations from the time they landed in the island. Their living and working conditions on the sugar estates where they were contracted to work were hardly different from those of the slaves whom they had come to replace in the sugarcane fields.

Narratives of the Indian immigrant experience in our island continue to be researched and published, and constitute a rich account of our collective history which the present generation must make it their bounden duty to learn about. They must appreciate that the struggle against the prejudices which their forefathers had to face is not over, and that despite appearances to the contrary it is still an uphill task. For example, even settling for the date of 2nd November as the day of commemoration had to be fought for – it did not just happen! At this stage it is useful to recall a saying from the great African writer Chinua Achebe: 'The best way to control a people is to give them your version of their history.'

Had a sustained thrust not been maintained, in which Mauritius Times played a leading role, 2nd November would not have been officialised.

We do not have to relive the past but we must have enough awareness of what happened so as to learn the lessons that can be drawn in order to better pursue the onward march towards the future. If we do not do so, that is, take cognizance of past happenings, we run the risk of taking things for granted and becoming complacent, and assume that our relatively successful condition today was a given. It was not, as the example of the date of remembrance shows. Every commemoration must be for us an occasion to take stock of where we have come from, of the rough road travelled, of the new findings about immigrant life that become available through the dedicated work of professionals in the field, what is our situation now and what are the further leaps required so as to ensure our continued progress both as individuals and at society level as part of our ongoing contribution to the national weal.

It is generally accepted that the non-antagonistic, non-conflictual and accommodating nature of the local Indian diaspora is to a large extent responsible for the social and political stability that the island has enjoyed since the time of independence in 1968. After the initial thrust given to their fight against the injustices of the repressive apparatus of the Indenture system (such as restrictions on movement, the pass system, the double cut system etc) by Adolphe de Plevitz in 1869 through his petition on behalf of the Indians to Governor Gordon, resulting in the setting up of a Royal Commission of Inquiry, the next call was from Manilal Doctor, who came here at the turn of the 20th century at the behest of Mahatma Gandhi. He emphasized the need for education and political involvement to achieve emancipation and overcome the conservative forces that were resisting it.

As we look to the future, there are several challenges that beckon, and it is in our interest to do some serious thinking about how to tackle them so that we don't lose what has been painfully acquired and, more importantly, build on that as a foundation. We will consider the key ones. Before doing so, a preliminary remark: children tend to look up to their parents as models; it is therefore for the youth – who are future parents –, especially the educated, enthusiastic and dynamic ones, to take the lead for the initiatives needed to put them and their progeny on the right path to a good life.

Health and well-being: This is everybody's concern, but the reason we start with it is that firstly, health is central to human development and secondly, according to our health statistics, Indians suffer disproportionately from what are known as the non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high cholesterol amongst others, and for which they may possibly have a genetic predisposition. When this is combined with the high levels of alcoholism in the Indians, the Hindus in particular, their risks of severe disease and early death are increased several-fold. Shouldn't this be a matter of serious concern to them, if they truly care about themselves and the future generation? If so, then the question that they must pose themselves is: do they want their children to be healthy and strong, or weak and diseased?

The answer is only too obvious. And the irony is that the way to good health is so straightforward: have proper food, exercise regularly, do not smoke and avoid alcohol. There is plenty of advice being given by the national authorities in this regard, and the least that we must do is to seek out and follow the advice.

Additionally, our ancestral systems of yoga and ayurveda (the latter for the health promotional or well-being aspect, less for the treatment part) can be of great help in keeping us in good health. However, we must push for proper regulation and professionalization in this sector, which in the developed world is emerging as a valuable complement to allopathic medicine, and can even reduce the economic burden of the health sector on the state. Qualified and competent practitioners can drive this as a national agenda for the benefit of all citizens.

Economic security: A combination of historical circumstances led the descendants of the immigrants to look for economic security in the public sector, specially at a time when the doors of the private sector were practically closed to them. Industrialisation, education and professionalism has changed this trend, along with the diversification of the economy with the advent of the EPZ and the textile industry, and in the last decade or so the expansion of the ICT sector. While the State will continue to need highly qualified and trained cadres, as well as lower level functionaries to run its bureaucracy, more and more the tendency will be less dependency on the government as a provider of employment.

It is also a fact that descendants of the Indian immigrants are not as present in the business sector compared to their numbers, and this is something that must be looked into in appropriate forums so as to guide the emerging generation who will be joining the marketplace.

Further, there is a need for accessing and making smarter use of facilities that the State puts at the disposal of all its citizens, and here civil society organizations such as the socio-cultural associations should play a more proactive role in assisting those in need or who are less aware. This would help to give a more positive image of their engagement in the community and, more importantly, they will be doing a real service and meet a felt need.

Education and employment: It is education based on the Indian tradition of knowledge-seeking that has been a pillar in the emancipation and social mobility of the descendants of the original immigrants. However, as we all know, purely academic qualifications and a first degree are no longer sufficient nowadays to secure an employment. Employability depends on qualifications with skills added. It is therefore a must for those going for any type of post-secondary studies to choose carefully their fields of study, and acquire

the desired skills, based on projections of what can be on offer, keeping in mind that such projections do vary after a couple of years. They must keep more than one option open, in other words have a Plan B, or even C. Further, they must keep in mind that life-long jobs are less and less the norm, and prepare themselves to face the consequences of such an eventuality in their career path.

A case in point is medicine: there is a glut of medical graduates who are remaining unemployed, and yet more and more students are still going for medicine. Of course every citizen has the constitutional right to freedom of choice – but clearly, this must be tempered with realism in order to avoid frustration later.

On the other hand, learning is a lifelong process, and whatever subject one chooses should be looked upon not only as a means for professional development but also as an entry point for personal advancement. In other words, even if one has to shift to another field, whatever has been acquired earlier by way of knowledge and skills is never lost: it can – like engineers or science graduates becoming financial analysts – be of use in the new field, and can allow one to broaden one's perspective on life, which is essential for meaningful living in society.

Language and Identity: Society almost imposes on us to have – or declare – an identity, as, in spite of ourselves, we get labelled as belonging to a specific group or community, and then as the 'other'. But in Mauritius, we have multiple identities which are juxtaposed and superimposed. They are not mutually exclusive, and in practice every Mauritian citizen has at least three, namely a transactional identity, a core identity and a Mauritian identity.

The transactional identity belongs to the public space. It is forged as we go through the educational system, the world of work and civil society at large, where language acts to facilitate our insertion and integration. The predominant languages of this identity in Mauritius are Creole and French, with English predominating in official communication. Mauritians of Indian ancestry are at ease in utilizing these languages and in fact one could say that the transactional identity develops practically automatically as it starts at home, within the family.

Next is our core identity, which belongs, or should, to the private space. It derives from our religion and specific cultural practices such as food customs in the home, community festivals we observe, and our apparel especially on cultural/ religious occasions. The language associated with this identity is that of the foundational scripture, e.g. Sanskrit for Hindus.

The Mauritian identity is a composite of the transactional and core identities, and if we wish to live in peace and mutual respect, whether here or anywhere in the world for that matter, it is the transactional identity that should predominate over the core identity. In the public space one should avoid aggressive affirmations of the core identity. Instead, it should radiate from our whole personality as a quiet force for good that is prepared to reach out to the 'other' for mutual exchange and enrichment, in the process reinforcing the sense of nationhood.

Roots and culture: Closely related to language and identity is culture, in which language plays a central role, and connects us to our roots. If we are the trees and branches, our ancestral culture represents the roots that stabilize and give us a sense of direction in the phenomenal world of constant change which can overwhelm us if we are not firmly anchored. It is the language of the foundational scripture that connects us to our roots, for example for Hindus it is Sanskrit in which the truths of the Vedas are articulated. Therefore, in addition to the provincial languages of our varied geographical origins – such as Bhojpuri and Hindi, Tamil and Telegu, Marathi and Sindhi/Gujarati – Hindus must have a minimum of Sanskrit literacy to understand and participate intelligently during the chanting of prayers and mantras on various occasions.

Our culture gives us what we can call a world-view that provides guidance in life: Who am I? Why am I born? How do I define and live my relation with others, with the world at large? What is life, what is death? – among others.

Further, culture is about art and dance, music, literature and social customs, and being cultured is about being refined in one's tastes and conduct. There is a danger of losing out on refinement if we mix forms superficially. An example that comes to mind is the popular Bhojpuri songs which are patterned the local sega: it is neither sega nor Bhojpuri culture – a Bhojpuri troop from India that performed on stage here a few years ago gave a demonstration of what genuine Bhojpuri dance form is from the point of view of rhythm, body language, dress, choreography and so on. There is a good case here for the Ministry of

Arts and Culture, to consider and take suo moto action in support of the performers who want to sincerely preserve their ancestral culture which adds to the richness and diversity of our composite Mauritian culture.

Lastly, socio-cultural associations could organize regular trips to Aapravasi Ghat for children during, for example, school and college holidays to foster interest and appreciation of the history of Indian immigration, where we have built up from and the need not only to preserve but to constantly improve upon this valuable legacy for posterity.

As can be seen, we may have travelled a long way from 1834, but the journey will never be over. We need landmarks along the way, and milestones to benchmark our progress as we climb the many more steps that are ahead of us. Aapravasi Ghat will help us to steer the course, and its further development and the multiplication of activities centred on it is our common concern, and our contribution to the World Heritage. Let us be proud of it, and render homage to those whom it calls to remembrance as well as to those who are directly involved in its enhancement and upkeep.

TRACING THE ROOTS: A MAURITIAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH HIS ANCESTOR'S PAST

Archana Kumar, Professor of English
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"Nothing that is whole, speaks of past ...", wrote Jayanta Mahapatra, one of the well-known Indian poets, commenting on his peculiar fractured family history. I never understood the meaning of these words so much as I do now in the course of my research with the families (both in India and in the erstwhile colonies) whose ancestors were taken as indentured labourers. After long years of sufferings, the indentured labourers earned their freedom paying for it with their blood and sweat. As they settled in these lands, they adapted themselves to the new environment and a new way of life, but there lurked a yearning in their heart to connect with their people back home in India. Even their descendants belonging to the third-fourth generations who have no immediate personal connection with India, and have heard about their "people" only from their forefathers, also harbour the wish to trace their roots.

The same urge impelled Raj Deepak Singh Hurrinath to come to India looking for his ancestor's land and people after almost 142 years. In 1865, his great grandfather, Hurrinath was taken to Mauritius as an indentured labourer. Hurrinath worked there as a driver and married Sonia Sharan Singh and afterwards settled in Mauritius. Their elder son, Devsharan's grandson, Raj Deepak Singh, a chartered accountant by profession, lives in England with his wife while his other siblings still live in Mauritius. In May 2007, Raj Deepak Singh Hurrinath came to India and could find out the village of his forefather, named Dwarkapuri, now known as Yaswant ka Pura in district Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. He and his wife, Priyamvada (her ancestors also belong to some villages in Gaya, India) met their family members who belong to third generation of Hurrinath's family in India. Before Raj succeeded in his efforts, his father, Nanadlal Singh, had also come to India but could not meet his people because of the difference in the name of the village in archival records and its present name. This reunion could become possible through a UP government scheme "Discover Your Roots" through which descendants of indentured migrants could discover their roots. In this scheme, the officials could identify some 18 such

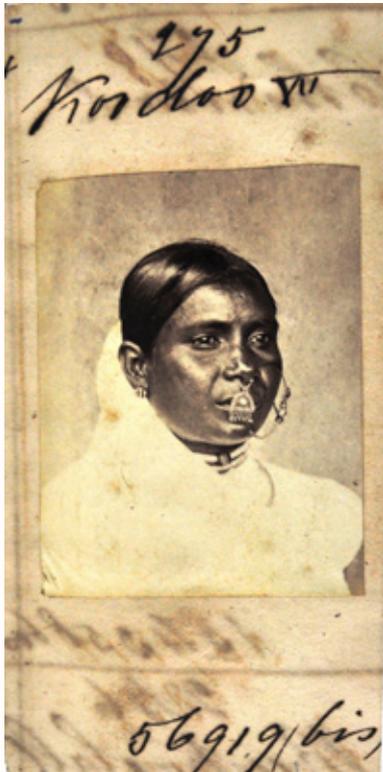
families but Raj Deepak Singh was the first to come to meet his people. We met some of the families of which Hurrinath's family living now in Ataruara is one.

Six years after Raj Deepak Singh Hurrinath and his wife had visited his "lost" family, I and my fellow researchers, Prof. Sanjay Kumar and Prof. Raj Kumar of Banaras Hindu University, met and interviewed the members of Hurrinath's family in Ataruara in order to know their experience of this reunion and also their reaction to this "strange" part of their family history.

When we enquired the men in the family what they knew about their ancestor, Hurrinath, they told that before Raj Deepak Hurrinath came, they often remembered their forefather but they admitted that they did not know much about the circumstances in which he had left. They only knew that one of their ancestors either himself had gone away or was reported to be "missing", they did not know that he was taken to work as *girmitya*. They even did not know that he was taken to some land across the sea. They were ignorant of the actual reason for his disappearance. (This is usually the case with the families left behind because most of the indentured labourers left their family without informing any one, often even they themselves did not know where they were heading towards.)

In this reunion, Subhadra Singh had played the key role as she knew about disappearance of Hurrinath; she helped in identifying that Hurrinath belonged to her family. She had heard a lot about Hurrinath from her mother-in-law, Janaki Devi. Hurrinath was the nephew (brother's son) of Janki devi, and was the sole surviving heir of his family as his only uncle, Jai Pratap Singh, did not marry and lived with his sister, Janki Devi, and through two of them, the later generations came to know of their "missing" ancestor, Hurrinath. On the occasion of marriage and other auspicious occasions when women sang songs invoking blessings of the *pitar* (ancestors), they would remember Hurrinath as one of the ancestors of the family.

Subhadra Singh is now nearly 100 years old and though she was very ill at the time when we met her; she told that she was very happy that Raj and his wife, Priyamvada, had come to meet them. She welcomed them with all proper rituals as is done when the newlywed couple first enters the house in India. She recalled details of Raj and his wife, Priyamvada's visit and also remembered that they had promised that they would come again but did not come.



Source: MGIIIA



Source: MGIIIA

Subhadra Singh's son, Chandra Bahadur told us that from his maternal grand father, Jai Pratap Singh and his mother, he used to hear about disappearance of Hurrinath. He speculated that either he was kidnapped by Britishers or went away for some other reason. He claimed that they were *jamindaars* (feudal landlords) so Hurrinath definitely did not leave because of poverty. (This refutes the thesis that all the indentured labourers left because of poverty and starvation, there were other allurements too.) He and other family members were very happy that their relatives had come from such a far country in search of their ancestor's family. He expressed his happiness on their reunion with his relatives and commented that they were really "great" that they came looking for their family. They had preserved the newspapers in which the news of their reunion with their lost relatives was published. He told that often in the evening, they all would sit and recall the happy moments of their reunion. He is proud of his ancestor's achievement in spite of all kinds of odds.

The women in the family recollected every detail of their relatives' visit. They appreciated the proper respect that Raj and his wife showed towards their family members. They also told that language was no barrier, they could perfectly communicate with one another in spite of their not-so-good-knowledge of Hindi. The family reunion was very emotional. When

Subhadra Devi and others met their relatives, they as well as the family who had come to meet them, too, wept with tears of joy. The young daughters-in-law who were *gotins* of Raj's wife told that at that moment, they felt that one of their long separated relatives had come back though for a short period. Emotion coupled with curiosity animated the village as relatives and friends from nearby villages gathered at Hurrinath's ancestral village to meet his fourth generation descendant.

After Raj and his wife left with promises, the family members in Atraura still remember them. They have no expectations of any kind. Their remembrance is unalloyed with any other motive. They even wished to send them an invitation of their son's marriage which was to be shortly solemnised. This brief reunion has become a memorable event for every member of Hurrinath's family in India.

HEROES OF A GLORIOUS PAST

Nivriti Sewtohol,
Mauritian writer

Large scale land parcelling, mainly marginal ones away from rivers and lakes, occurred during the Petit and Grand Morcellements after 1860. Former indentured labourers, free Indians and many still under contract bought small and large plots, mainly, on deposit. The sugar factories were in need of sugar canes to crush. Indians were ready to cut down forests to grow sugar canes and sell them to the hungry mills. They needed the land although the output per arpent was as low as six tons. On top of that, they were cheated at the cane weighing level at the weigh bridge of the factory where they were even told that their canes were not of required quality and ordered to throw them away. The revenues from the sugar were shared on a ratio that was largely in favour of the mill owner. To make ends meet, the new land owner had recourse to vegetable growing and cattle rearing for his own consumption and as cash crops. In the early 1920s, the price of sugar rose quite high and, together with soft loans from the newly set up Agricultural Bank, the planter succeeded in paying up most of his debts for the purchase of his lands. Following the Great Depression after 1929, the price of sugar would fall very low, thus compelling him to concentrate on vegetable growing and animal breeding with redoubled vigour.

The days of indenture were over after 1920. Free Indo-Mauritians faced problems that looked insurmountable. Yet, he had to make a place under the hostile sun for himself and his family because he was bound to stay in the island now. The planters of the North sent their vegetables to the Port Louis central Market for auctioning. Thieves at the market stole part of their produce. The prices were relatively low and the auctioneers were swindlers. Many growers, like the father of Balmick Ramkhalawon of Seventh Mile, Triolet, carried large baskets of vegetables on their heads and walked to Port Louis where they sold them on the streets with their own hands to ensure their revenues. They had to be always on tenterhooks to keep watch over the proceeds derived. Luckily, they had their baithkas as meeting place where they talked over things concerning land and their agricultural products. They voiced out their sufferings and ill-treatments that all of them underwent at the Port Louis Central Market auctions at the hands of bullies.

The main means of transport before 1950 was the ox-cart. There were hundreds of them in the villages. Cartwrights galore made and repaired them. They also fixed iron on the soles of the feet of the oxen. The carts transported goods and people from one place to another. Old Ramrekha of Morcellement St Andre carried bags of sugar from Bon Air sugar factory to the docks in Port Louis. During their meetings in their baithkas, the planters had come to know that vegetable prices were better at the market of Vacoas and it was free from bullies. They found that if they travelled in large groups, the attackers would be held at bay. They resolved to walk to Vacoas from Triolet. Planters from Montagne Longue also decided to do the same. Adversity had brought solidarity among the oppressed.

In Triolet, Sreekissoon Brizmohun, alias Subhash Chandra Bose, had a large yard along the Royal Road actually opposite the girls' department of International College. Every Friday afternoon, scores of ox carts belonging to individuals or taken on rent, and laden with vegetables, assembled there. The planters would walk in the chill of the night, reach Vacoas in the morning and sell their goods. Brizmohun, one of the participants, related that between seventy-five and one hundred and twenty-five carts took part in the trek at a time. It must have been a sight worth seeing with creaking carts following one another in an endless line, each one with a red lantern dangling in front or underneath. Fodder for the ox hung under the cart in a gunny bag. The carters had their whips or sticks with a billhook hidden out somewhere in case of attack. They plodded on chatting, cracking jokes, singing and taking news. Obviously, no single person or groups of persons would dare to challenge them, the peace-loving Hindus but aggressively defensive when cornered.

After selling their vegetables on Saturday morning, they would make their way homewards. There were tea shops along the way where they would halt to quench their thirst. A few of them, mainly one found at Beau Bassin, were quite famous for their salted and sugared cakes and hot tea. The carters allayed their own hunger and thirst and bought sacks of cakes for their families at home. In their stride, they would stop in Port Louis where they would buy provisions for themselves and for their relatives. They also took some loads for their village shopkeepers so that their carts were full on the return journey home, too. The daring planters thus garnered fully the dues they deserved.



Estate Camp near Triolet in 1939.

Source: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture

The evil practices of robbing and swindling vegetable and fruit growers of the North have continued over the decades. Triolet has been among those most hit. It has been without a vegetable market since its creation till 2005/2006. One has been set up in an economically strategic place along Bon Air Road. One of the aims of the Triolet market is to have an auction section for agricultural products. The building and the space are available, but they have yet to be made functional.

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Group photo of Board members of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, together with Mr. J. Mohit, the Director and Mr. V. Ramoutar, the Administrative Secretary.

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ISBN 978-99903-88-24-4



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Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006