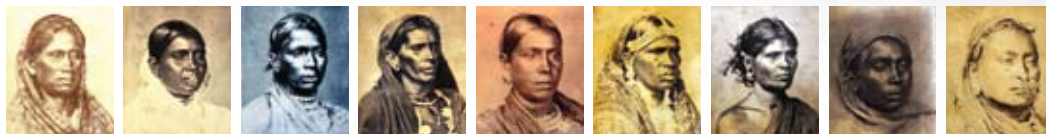


NEWSLETTER

Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

2 November 2012 No. 10



Indian Indentured Women who arrived in Mauritius between 1843 and 1851 (MGI Archives)



THE REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION OF ICOMOS EXPERT TO AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY, MAURITIUS- 19-22 MARCH 2012

Following the decisions adopted at the World Heritage Committee at its 35th Session held between 19 and 29 June 2011, a UNESCO Reactive Monitoring mission undertook an evaluation of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property from 19 to 22 March 2012 "to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the Planning Policy Guidance in sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property".

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON 'NEW PERSPECTIVES ON INDENTURED LABOUR (1825-1925)'

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Research Council organised a 4-day International Scientific Conference on "New Perspectives on Indentured Labour (1825 – 1925)" from 5 to 7 December 2011.



WORKSHOP ON THE REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Considering that the Management Plan is an overarching document required by UNESCO to ensure the preservation and sustainability of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property, the AGTF and the Ministry of Arts and Culture held a workshop on Thursday 14 June 2012 at 10.30 hrs to present a draft executive summary of the proposed Management Plan 2013-2018 together with the Development Plan to stakeholders.

VISIT OF DR FAROOQ ABDULLAH, THE MINISTER OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

The Minister of New and Renewable Energy of the Republic of India, Dr Farooq Abdullah visited the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site on the 18 January 2012.



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Visit of Dr Farooq Abdullah, the Minister of New and Renewable Energy of the Republic of India – *Soonanda Nankoo*

Feelings Expressed by some Visitors at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property

Editorial Committee

Mrs C. Ramah, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Arts & Culture

Mrs S. Ramlallah, Board Member, AGTF

Mr B. P. Dinand, Board Member, AGTF

Ms C. Forest, Head Technical Unit, AGTF

Mr S. Peerthum, Researcher, AGTF

Ms C. Miao Foh, Research Assistant, AGTF

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Editorial



I am delighted to endorse the publication of this newsletter which has now become a recurrent feature while we commemorate the anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers from India, China, South-East Asia, Madagascar, East Africa, the Comoro Islands, Reunion Island, Yemen and Sri Lanka in Mauritius.

This year marks the 178th anniversary of the arrival of our ancestors who left their birth land in the quest for a better living. They endured the harshness of our colonial masters and paved the way for what we are today.

While not forgetting our past and maintaining our cultures and values, we cannot continue to dwell in history but need to look ahead. Learning from our past, we forge for the future. In this lies the greatness of a nation.

This year's commemoration is of particular significance since Mauritius is hosting the 6th Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas just before the commemorative ceremony. We have the privilege of having the Hon. Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs of the Republic of India, Shri Valayar Ravi, in our midst. We will also have the privilege to welcome, the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon during the course of this month.

"Shared Roots – Common Destiny" is the theme for the regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Mauritius.

Indeed, no other theme could have better suited the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property because this is the first and foremost root place from where the "Great Experiment" on Indenture started. Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property is a showcase to the world and we are proud to be the descendants of indentured immigrants.

To enable people understand what indenture really was and how the indenture living atmosphere of those days was and also to pay tribute to our ancestors, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board has deemed it appropriate to create a replica of an indenture village and hold permanent exhibitions on the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property. This will be our homage and contribution for the safeguard of our heritage. At the same time, we want the site to be the focus for cultural and vibrant development. What we are undertaking today is paving the way for forthcoming projects for the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, which are the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and the development of a Permanent Exhibition Centre at Trianon Old labourers Quarters.

Just as our ancestors spared no effort for a better Mauritius we also will spare no effort to preserve, protect and promote our heritage. The team at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is dedicated towards this end and I am confident that with the support and assistance of one and all we will attain our objectives.

While paying homage to all our ancestors who landed and all those who perished during the voyage and to all those slaves who toiled for us and those who gave their lives on the mountain at Le Morne, I would also like to thank the President of the Republic the Hon. Prime Minister, all the Cabinet Ministers, the members of the Diplomatic Corps, and Heads of Para-Statal institutions, Cultural Centres, the Board Members of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board, the staff and all stakeholders and those who have helped us in this endeavour, directly or indirectly.

Let us work hands in hands together for a Sustainable and Green Mauritius.

We have **"Shared Roots but a Common Destiny"**.

2 Nov. 2012

Dr. S. P. Boodhun
Ag. Chairperson

Proud to be the descendant of an Indentured Labourer



Republic of Mauritius



I am thankful to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for associating me with the publication of this newsletter on the occasion of the 178th Anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

The arrival of the first Indian immigrants is, in fact, a major historical event which has already influenced and shaped the course of the history of Mauritius. Therefore, on this auspicious occasion of commemoration, we cannot afford to be oblivious to the untold humiliation and sufferings that the Indian immigrants had to endure to make of Mauritius what it is to-day.

The history of the Indian immigrants in Mauritius is also a vivid reminder of the extent of sacrifice that they had to undergo in order to uphold their cultural values and languages. In the same breath, their struggle for their fundamental rights including the right to education should be an example for the coming generation to emulate.

I wish to make an appeal to one and all to continue to work hand in hand for the development and betterment of the citizens of our country, irrespective of their ancestral origins or cultural differences.

I take this opportunity to wish the Board of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund success in its mission to preserve our cultural heritage.

H.E. Mr Rajkeswur Purryag, GCSK, GOSK
President of the Republic
07 September 2012



Prime Minister
Republic of Mauritius



I am pleased to associate myself once again with the commemoration of the landing of the first indentured labourers at the Aapravasi Ghat.

The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site commemorates the point of convergence where indentured labourers were moved from different parts of India to Mauritius to work on sugar cane plantations or to be transshipped to other colonies. It is a monument to our shared history and the repository of shared memories.

This ancient landing stage is of symbolic significance to our people, specially to descendants of immigrants. These early settlers have left us a rich legacy that we should always treasure.

It is of utmost importance that we preserve and promote this World Heritage Site for the benefit of posterity. We have thus taken several initiatives, such as amendment to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Act in 2011 with a view to regulating development, including demolition, in the Buffer Zones of the Site. My Government will ensure that this historical monument plays the role devolved upon it.

I congratulate the Board members, as well as, the staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for their good work.

Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP
Prime Minister
21 September 2012



Republic of Mauritius



I am pleased to be associated with the issue of this annual newsletter by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund in the context of the 178th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius

This annual '*devoir de mémoire*' at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site is of crucial national importance as we cannot leave to oblivion the toils, sacrifices and sheer determination of our indentured ancestors in the face of great adversities. These people have been instrumental in laying the foundation of our nation as the real star and key of the Indian Ocean.

Six years after its inscription as a World Heritage Site, the Aapravasi Ghat continues to move into the future through controlled development in line with the requirements of UNESCO. All stakeholders have been taken on board in order to ensure that imperatives of development do not clash with the necessity of preserving our heritage. Thus, the Aapravasi Ghat Conservation Project has been implemented and the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre shall be operational as from next year.

I congratulate the Board and employees of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for their initiatives.

M. Choonee
Minister of Arts and Culture



Lord Mayor's Office



The 178th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers at the Aapravasi Ghat, in Port Louis, will be commemorated on next 2nd November.

This event is not very far away from the moment when there will be the bicentenary of this landmark, this turning point in the social and political history of Mauritius. Its commemoration every year brings back memories of the hardship endured by the forefathers of many of us who had hopes of a better life in a new country but whose hopes were shattered by the inhuman conditions in which they had found themselves.

Initiatives have been taken to pay tribute to those indentured labourers who, just like the slaves from Africa have laid the foundation of the Mauritian nation by their sweat and tears. Besides the 2nd November decreed as a public holiday, there has been the listing of the Aapravasi Ghat as a common heritage for the whole humanity. The need to preserve the memoirs of the landing place of the indentured labourers was thus fulfilled.

When the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by UNESCO on 16 November 1972, a great leap forward for humanity was made to preserve sites which have a significant importance in a country's historical, cultural and physical background. However we should look behind such sites which have witnessed emotions, distress, hopes, dedication, commitment of human beings. In preserving such sites as the Aapravasi Ghat, we are preserving pages of the book of history of Mauritius to allow future generations to turn these pages, to know their roots and to pay homage to the memory of those ancestors who had left no stone unturned to work hard for a better future for them in Mauritius.

Turning back the pages will start very soon during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Mauritius, preceding the anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers. Two events which have much in common: memories of those who left India in the hope of better horizons.

Dr Mahmad Aniff Kodabaccus
17 October 2012

The poetics of Indenture in Mauritius



1830s	Slavery became unsustainable, The fading out call liberation in masters mentation Alternative labour speculation, Indenture in impregnation	1870-1920	Cheated on cane weight, looted on land acquisition price Exploited from rise to set, deprived of food healthy rice Yet preserved tradition and culture, sang and dance in midst of turmoil Mother tongue down graded, attempt to obliterate, survived yet till day
1833	Fake Death Certificate of Slavery was crucified Pretentious Birth Certificate of Indenture was certified Wine remained the same, bottle remained the same Stickers were changed, Trade mark was changed	1901	Ray of hope dawn out of blue, Mohandass Karamchand Gandhi transited Stock of the Indenture plight came into light, M.K Gandhi was overwhelmed
1834	Started first Great Experiment on Indenture in Mauritius Departed Atlas with immigrants on board from Calcutta Horrorful Voyage, rough waves, dreadful Kala Pani Dreams but worth dreaming , rose garden, golden stone What was in wait, weighed healthier than sea sickness Jahaji bhai by side, whippers before sight, Geeta/Coran wrapped in hide Ramayan, Tirukkural, Satya Prakash though sealed in luggage Invoked vibes of courage, patience, endurance and hope Many died, despite presence of doctors on ship Wept their comrades, smiled the sharks below the ship Dead thrown in deep salted water, dying ones dumped on Flat Island Survival landed at harbor, Port- Louis, Mauritius Island Cattle like disembarked, registered and numbered 48 hours after, into sugar camps to discover fate in reserve Ignited there from, Indenture, so called free labor against forced labor Slavery was re-born and baptized as Indenture Slavery was cosmetised with wage for this venture Sun not setting in Colonial Empire, darkness settled on Indenture	1906	Gandhi sent Manilal Maganlal Doctor, dynamic French speaking barrister Began the beginning of indenture's end, started the non violent Andolan Fundamental human rights and needs, became the struggle targets The pilgrimage stick of Manilal Doctor, united the divided indentured Labourers Hard work, savings culture, fraternity and unity in diversity were inculcated Vital imperativeness of Education, keen interest in local politics transmitted Baitka , Maqtab took form to inform essentials of existential realities A New Era started, nourishing in it's womb the seed of freedom
		1909	The Royal Commission under international pressure Recommended Termination of the Indenture System
		1910	The last ship Sudara landed at Apravasi Ghat With the last batch of indenture immigrants And thus ended officially the Saga of Indenture
1860-1885	110,000 complaints lodged in Colonial Court for non payment of wages Justice remained under trial, double cut system continued chopping wages	1910-1968	But the hang over continued The old habit of exploitation continued And so the Andolan , the struggle continued Voting rights were denied, the Labour Party was born The proletariat movement gained momentum And thus was paved the way to Independence...
1871	Racial discrimination , De Plevitz petitioned, 9400 signed Colonial Police insensitive, Administrative Authorities declined		
1834-1922	300,000 arrestations as vagrants, right of freedom denied Frequent vagrant hunts , like hunters behind forest animals Immigrant Pass compulsory, confinement to camps mandatory Thousands died out of cruel treatment, harsh working conditions More than hundreds committed suicide out of no hope for any hope		Raju Mohit Officer in Charge, AGTF 2 Novembre 2012

DECOLONISING THE MIND IN INDENTURED LABOUR STUDIES

Dr Sandew Hira, Director of the International Institute of Scientific Research in The Hague, Holland

Introduction

Indentured labour is closely linked to slavery. The dominant Eurocentric framework of analysis (concepts and theories) of slavery has been used for the analysis of indentured labour. Lately, there is a new current in social and historical studies that challenges this framework in fundamental ways and calls for decolonising social sciences. They are developing an alternative framework for social sciences. This article briefly touches on the discussion that this current is engaged in and its implications for the study of indentured labour.

The Eurocentric Approach on the Abolition of Slavery and the Start of Indentured Labour

A major discussion in the study of slavery in the European colonies is concerned with the so called "Williams Thesis". Eric Williams argues in his monumental study *Capitalism and Slavery* that slavery was abolished mainly for economic reasons. The campaigns of the abolitionist movement in Britain had some influence, but were not a decisive factor in the abolition. In Eurocentric studies on slavery, the abolitionist movement is seen as a highlight of European civilisation. So, if slavery was abolished for moral reasons, then this testifies the high moral standards of European civilisation for which the people from the colonies should be grateful.

But if slavery was abolished for economic reasons, then there were apparently no high morals involved, but plain greed. The requests of descendants of enslaved Africans therefore are justified in demanding reparations from the colonial powers.

The basic argument in the Eurocentric approach against the *Williams thesis* centres on the question whether there was an economic decline in the colonies after the abolition of slavery. If there was an economic decline, then apparently the British people were willing to pay a huge price in order to stand to their moral principles. And that is an expression of their high morals and civilisation. The title of Seymour Drescher's book *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* sums this argument: the British committed economic suicide for higher moral reasons. From a decolonial perspective, this argument is rejected on logical grounds: the motive for an enterprise in the colony to do business is profit. If a company makes a loss, that does not change its motive. So if there is a temporarily economic decline, after the abolition of slavery, this does not mean that the profit motive of the planters had disappeared.

The abolitionist argument is often the starting point for the dominant Eurocentric studies on indentured labour. The argument runs as follows. Why was there indentured labour? Because the colonialists abolished slavery. Why was slavery abolished? Because the abolitionist movement succeeded in convincing the politicians to take the higher moral grounds. Indentured labour was then introduced from these motives. So if indentured labour was introduced out of moral considerations, (replacement of slavery) then a system was put in place that was humane.

Hugh Tinker's book *A New system of slavery* is a repudiation of this idea but within the Eurocentric framework. It does not challenge the legitimacy of colonialism, but sees the bad treatment of indentured labourers as an aberration of British civilisation.

Aerial view of Aapravasi Ghat (AGTF Collection)

The Decolonial Framework to Slavery and Indentured Labour

The decolonial approach to the study of slavery rests on two pillars. The first is the question of the legitimacy of colonialism. In the Eurocentric framework, colonialism is seen as a legitimate system. In the decolonial framework, colonialism is seen as an illegitimate system of oppression and exploitation. A guy from Liverpool has no legitimate right to go to Africa to kidnap human beings and enslave them nor does he have any right to conquer, possess and rule a country like India, 8.000 km away from Liverpool.

The second is the nature of scientific research regarding colonialism. In the Eurocentric framework, this research is labelled "scientific" and as such, is a reflection of the truth about the nature of colonialism. The Eurocentric framework does not acknowledge the concept of "Eurocentrism". It presents its finding as scientific and universal truth.

In the decolonial framework, Eurocentric research is seen as part of the ideology of colonialism and not as science.

In the decolonial framework, colonialism is analysed as a system of oppression and exploitation with five interrelated dimensions.

1. The Geographical Dimension

Colonisation was a major project of five Western European Countries: Portugal, Spain, Holland, England and France. Other countries joined but in the end, played a small role.

These countries conquered and occupied areas outside Western Europe, colonised their population and imposed an administration during the occupation. The result was a massive geographical relocation of population and genocide on a mass scale of the Indigenous people in the Americas. In this process, these countries were in constant competition with each other.

2. Economic Dimension

The rationale for the foundation of colonialism was economic. It created a capitalist world economy where private enterprises, striving for maximum profits, were the driving forces behind the process of colonisation. These forces have developed a worldwide economic system that has created welfare in one part of the world at the expense of the colonised parts of the world.

3 Social Dimensions

Social relations in the colonies were organised on the basis of two principles:

- a. **Race.** Race is defined by the coloniser as the concept of "the other" rather than the concept of skin colour. Race determines the social position of the individual. If an individual belonged to the race of the coloniser then he or she could occupy the higher social strata of society. If that individual belonged to "the other race", then he or she was barred from these strata and condemned to live in a world of oppression and exploitation.

- b. **Collaboration.** Colonialism creates social layers of collaborators from the ranks of "the other" that are used to control the oppressed and exploited.

Within the country of the coloniser, the main organising principle was class. Class is defined as the relationship of social groups with regard to the control of the means of production (either through ownership or through administrative control). The class that controlled the economy in the colonies was the same class that controlled the economy in the colonies, except in those countries where a majority of the white population managed to create "internal colonialism" (such as USA).

4. Political and Administrative Dimension

The control of state power in the colonies was ultimately in the hands of the capitalist class in the west. That power was delegated to their representatives in the colonies. Political and administrative control was, in the final analysis, exercised by military force in the colonies. The judicial system was a reflection of this reality.

In the colonies, the capitalist class could hold on to power for a long time. But social struggle succeeded in creating mechanisms that have created the imagery of alternative sources of power, while in the colonies, their sources were oblivious because any attempt to challenge the colonial power was in most cases ultimately met with military force.

5. Cultural and Mental Dimension

Colonialism was also a mental force that has developed a world view that is imposed both in the mind of the coloniser and the colonised.

In this world-view, the west is presented as progressive civilisation power and colonisation as a blessing rather than a crime against humanity. A complex multitude of mechanism has been developed to create and maintain the idea of western and white superiority and non-western inferiority. One of these mechanisms is knowledge production. Social sciences has been used to generate the colonial idea of western superiority and thus has manifested itself as ideology rather than science. The other side of the coin is that social sciences have been used to mask colonialism as a legitimate system rather than a system of oppression and exploitation.

A New View on the Abolition of Slavery

In the decolonial view, we make a distinction between two approaches in the abolition of slavery: a civilised and an uncivilised approach.

1. In the civilised approach, there is an acknowledgement that slavery was a crime and those responsible for the crime should be held accountable for their deeds. The uncivilised approach denies that a crime has been committed for which responsible people and institutions should be held accountable.
2. In the civilised approach, the perpetrators offer their apologies to the victims of the crime and ask for forgiveness. In the uncivilised approach, the perpetrators expect gratitude from the victims for the deeds of the perpetrator.
3. In the civilised approach, the perpetrators pay reparation and compensate the victims for unpaid wages and human



Mauritian Labourers at work on Mare d'Albert Sugar Estate in the 1940s. Source: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture

suffering. In the uncivilised approach, the perpetrators are getting reparations for so called loss of their property, thus insisting on the concept of legitimacy of slaver rather than viewing it as a crime.

4. In the civilised approach, respect for human rights should be the basis for dealing with people that have been freed from slavery (and the indentured labourers that replaced them). In the uncivilised approach, these people were denied their human rights: the right to form their own destiny with political, social, civil and economic rights.

In the decolonial framework, the European approach of the abolition of slavery was an uncivilised act that was an expression of one of the lowest points in human civilisation and not a highlight.

The Approach to Historical Studies

The application of this framework to the study of slavery and indentured labour has the following consequences.

First, the decolonial approach develops scientific criticism of Eurocentric studies. What is wrong with the concepts and analysis of Eurocentric studies? Basically, we argue that they are not based on facts but on fantasies. So, we examine the propositions, arguments and facts and judge them by scientific standards (the underlying facts and the logic of the arguments).

Second, we develop an alternative methodology. Many studies on slavery and indentured labour are of a descriptive nature, and for a reason. Descriptive studies pose the “How” question. How was slavery and indentured labour organised? How did the people work and live? How were they transported? etc.

Analytical studies posed the “Why” question: “Why was slavery abolished? Why were there certain rules and regulations in transport or housing or work conditions etc. The “How” question can disguise the nature of the system as a system of oppression and exploitation. The “Why” question might expose the nature of the system.

In our methodology, the five dimensions are treated in an integrated way. It shows how these dimensions are interrelated in both slavery and indentured labour.

Third, we have no taboo subjects in our studies. In the Eurocentric approach, some themes are taboo: reparations for slavery and indentured labour, colonialism and racism, the double oppression of women, the comparison of slavery with other crimes against humanity such as the Jewish holocaust and other totalitarian systems such as fascism and Nazism.

Fourth, we use different concepts and terms. We don’t talk about the discovery of America by Columbus but about the invasion and the conquest. We don’t use the term slave but enslaved (nobody is born as a slave; they are brought into the condition of slavery by force). We use the concept of “uncivilised abolition of slavery”.

The Coming Years

The decolonial framework is now used in historical studies on slavery and indentured labour in the former Dutch colonies. In the coming years, we will implement it in the studies of colonialism of other European powers. We are training young researchers in methods of scientific critique and the methodology of decolonial analysis. We hope to present studies of indentured labour in the future, from this new perspective.

LA DYNAMIQUE IDENTITAIRE DES PREMIERS ENGAGÉS TELINGAS AU DÉBUT DU XIX^E SIÈCLE À LA RÉUNION

Dr Sully Santa Govindin, Chercheur Associé au LCF
(Langues textes et Communication dans les espaces créolophones et Francophones)

L'ingénieur Dumas en poste dans la colonie entre 1828 et 1830 dessine les Indiens coolies sur plusieurs planches référencées dans la collection 98 Fi aux A.D.R. Nous peaufinons les traits de ces premiers engagés *Télingas* d'après les sources iconographiques et manuscrites.

Il est peu aisé de différencier les esclaves des engagés dans les représentations de l'artiste. Néanmoins en scrutant les Indiens, des détails discriminent les engagés *Télingas* qui apparaissent dans le paysage urbain de la colonie. L'aquarelle référencée 98 fi 15 montre quatre hommes avec leurs attributs vestimentaires traditionnels que sont le cache-sexe, le pagne et le turban. Sur une autre planche, deux autres femmes en tenue blanche sont vêtues d'un drapé indien. Ces personnages sont qualifiés de *Parias* et signalent assurément leur origine *Télinga*. Cette désignation est liée à l'importance de cette caste dans le recrutement d'engagés entre 1828 et 1830 et confirme bien leur statut de contractuel.

Certains groupuscules d'engagés initialement affectés aux domaines sucriers se sont affranchis de l'espace rural pour gagner aussitôt la ville. C'est ainsi que nous les retrouvons sur les chantiers en tant que cantonniers en attendant un hypothétique rapatriement vers Yanaon.

Les similitudes dans le port simplifié des vêtements : le turban et le pagne auraient-elles permis à l'ingénieur Dumas de différencier les statuts de ces personnes dans ses aquarelles ? Le port de la chaussure était prohibé aux esclaves, et il est probable que les domestiques et les pions chaussés et parés d'un costume indien soient des indiens affranchis ou contractuels conformément aux usages depuis l'époque de la Compagnie des Indes au XVIII^e siècle. Plusieurs termes désignent ces engagés : domestique indien, *Pion*, femme *Paria*, (hommes) *Parias*.

Cette prépondérance du type indien *Télinga* de la caste des *Parias* dans le recrutement est confirmée dans les représentations de l'ingénieur Dumas qui légende ainsi pas moins de six personnages de cette désignation. Cette présence massive entraîne une forte cohésion d'une communauté d'engagés indiens de même culture et de même origine sociale. Dès le départ du premier convoi en 1828, le groupe est structuré autour d'une personne plus âgée et le plus expérimenté pour les représenter auprès des instances patronales et administratives. Ce recrutement s'apparente au système dit *kangani* où les migrants étaient encadrés par des vétérans que les planteurs avaient choisis comme recruteur.

Sur la *Turquoise*, le premier convoi qui débarque les engagés indiens à La Réunion en 1828, le vétéran est *Gony Paty Palalou*, le chef âgé de 45 ans et marié à *Gony Paty Papy* sa femme restée en Inde. Par ailleurs, ces premiers travailleurs n'étaient point séparés et se retrouvaient en groupuscules de quatre à cinq individus sur les domaines : Les quinze premiers *Parias* furent placés chez des propriétaires de Sainte-Marie. Deux institutions de protection furent créées pour défendre les intérêts légaux de ces travailleurs : la *Commission* et le *Syndic*. Malgré les mesures de protection, la mentalité coloniale assimila promptement ces travailleurs aux esclaves, et les archives rapportent l'importance des protestations et des révoltes d'engagés en cette première moitié du XIX^e siècle.



Quatre *Parias* en position debout, fléchis et assis au premier plan (Peintures aquarellées de Jean-Baptiste Louis Dumas en 1830, Archives Départementales de La Réunion Fonds Dumas 98 fig 15)

Plusieurs mutineries eurent lieu sur les domaines sucriers : en 1830, à Saint-Gilles-les-Hauts sur La propriété de Villèle ; à Saint-Denis chez Adam ; et en 1831, au *Champ Borne*. Les engagés indiens désertaient les domaines au profit des ateliers coloniaux qui étaient situés à proximité des ports d'embarquement pour les retours en Inde.

Ces travailleurs exercent une dynamique sociale qui inaugurerait les luttes syndicales pour la défense de leur condition de vie et de travail. Ces combats étaient menés par les leaders *Télingas* : *Ogou Sourapa*, *Souba Saïdou*, *Natchialou* et *Vincalou* (A.D.R. 168 M3, 1830). L'incidence de cette cohésion des *Télingas* s'exerçait sur la solidarité ethnique et sociale, entre les coolies *Parias* et les esclaves *Malabars*.

De manière prévisible, ces premiers *Télingas* s'approprièrent rapidement l'espace symbolique afin de compenser la violence du monde colonial. Ils consolidaient ainsi les fondements de l'hindouisme posés par les esclaves indiens et ouvriers hindous du XVIII^e siècle. Les autorités inscrivent de *jure* dans le premier contrat d'engagement, les mesures assurant aux quinze engagés *Parias* et *Télingas* leur droit à la liberté et l'expression religieuses. Ils bénéficient de quatre jours pour célébrer la « fête de la moisson », *pongol*, et d'un « espace sacré », la *pagode*. Les articles 4, 5, 6, 7 et 8 des contrats d'engagés précisent les avantages accordés aux travailleurs indiens durant tout le XIX^e siècle. Les engagés *télingas* refusaient ainsi de *facto* la confusion des statuts dans le monde du travail entre esclave et engagé, et le modèle assimilationniste colonial.

"AN UNTOLD STORY":

THE ARRIVAL OF INDIAN INDENTURED LABOURERS IN MAURITIUS BETWEEN 1826 AND 1834

Dr Satteeanund Peerthum and Satyendra Peerthum, Researcher & Historian

The Genesis of Indentured Labour in 1834 to be Reconsidered?

In a recent seminal conference paper, entitled 'Reconceptualizing the "New System of Slavery"', Richard Allen, an international scholar of indentured labour, observed:

"Discussions about how the indentured experience can be conceptualized and interpreted also reflect this tendency to view the colonial plantation world in terms of sharply demarcated pre-and post-1834 eras. The consequences of this chronological apartheid include an implicit, if not explicit, propensity to view the indentured experience as a separate and distinct historical phenomenon unto itself, a view which necessarily limits our ability to understand the dynamics of this global migrant labour system more fully and to reconstruct the lives of the more than three million men, women, and children who participated in it with greater accuracy and insight."

The Experiences of Immigrants Peerkhan, Bactuon and Luchmun

During the late 1820s and first half of the 1830s, important examples of indentured workers coming on individual contracts can be seen in the experiences of Peerkhan, Bactuon and Luchmun. In 1828, Peerkhan (Immigrant No.3522), a Muslim, arrived in Mauritius from Calcutta. He was also a Bengali who was born in 1778. He was 50 years old and engaged to work for Mr Sampson for five years on his sugar estate in Flacq. He lived and worked as a labourer on the same sugar estate for more than 30 years before passing away in 1858.

In 1829, Bactuon (Immigrant No.3525), a Hindu belonging to the Coury caste, arrived in Port Louis from Calcutta. He was born in a village in Bihar in 1784. He was 45 years old and engaged to work for 5 years to Mr Tribolet on a Mauritian sugar state in Flacq District, just like Peerkhan. Bactuon lived and worked his entire life in Mauritius in the same District where he died on 15 March 1860, at the age of 66.

In 1830, Luchmun (Immigrant No.3534) was thirty-five years old when he arrived in Mauritius from Calcutta to work for Mr Rudelle, who was part-owner of a sugar estate in Flacq District. Immigrant Luchmun was born in a village in Bihar in 1795 and he was described as belonging to the Gowalla caste. Between 1830 and 1835, he worked for Mr Rudelle and completed his indentureship.

During the 1840s and 1850s, he worked as a labourer and then as a labour supervisor on Belle Mare Sugar Estate. However, by the late 1850s, Luchmun continued to pave his way up the complex plantation hierarchy. Between 1859 and 1878, he was employed as a labour contractor on Belle Mare Sugar Estate and then Constance Sugar Estate. By 1879, he acted as a labour contractor for Constance Sugar Estate.



Luchmun (Immigrant No.3534) was photographed at the Immigration Depot in 1881 when he was 86 years old (Source: MGIIIA/PG series)

In 1865, Luchmun purchased three arpents and two perches of land near Constance from Mr Villiers, the estate manager of that sugar estate, for the amount of five hundred and fifty two dollars. Shortly after, this important portion of land was devoted to small-scale vegetable cultivation. Luchmun, a pioneer Bihari Old Immigrant, was one of the precursors of a large and important emerging class of Indo-Mauritian small

landowners. By the early twentieth century, their immediate descendants became some of the colony's most important small sugar planters, landowners, land speculators, vegetable cultivators, merchants, traders and businessmen.

In 1881, Luchmun lost his Old Immigrant Ticket and went to secure a duplicate copy thereof from the Immigration Depot in Port Louis. Immigrant Luchmun was photographed for the first time and is seen as being a well-dressed, well-kept individual and whose hair had been dyed black. These are clear signs, to a certain extent, that he had achieved some measure of social mobility. He passed away in 1885 at the age of ninety at his residence near Constance Sugar Estate.

The presentation and discussion of the archival evidence in this article, makes it evident that Mauritian and foreign historians and scholars need to reconsider the idea that the history of indentured labour in Mauritius began in 1834, as suggested by Dr Allen. The archival data clearly shows that between 1826 and 1834, there are an estimated 2000 Indian and Chinese indentured labourers who were brought to work on the Mauritian sugar estates and in Port Louis.

In addition, the experiences of several of the pre-2nd November 1834 indentured labourers have already been recorded and analysed. It is through such an approach that we can get a better understanding of the complexity of the gradual and difficult transition from slave labour to indentured labour. Equally important, it can also make us realise that these two historical periods overlapped one another and are not separate, as it has often been suggested in our country's historiography.

NAME	AGE	SEX	RELIGION	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	REMARKS
Peerkhan	50	M	Muslim	Calcutta	Engaged to Mr Sampson
Bactuon	45	M	Hindu	Calcutta	Engaged to Mr Tribolet
Luchmun	35	M	Hindu	Calcutta	Engaged to Mr Rudelle

Extract from the Ship arrival register showing the arrival of Immigrants Peerkhan and Bactuon in Mauritius. (Source MGIIIA/PE 1)

"LONG AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES": THE EXPERIENCES OF THE PIONEER MUSLIM INDENTURED LABOURERS BETWEEN 1837 AND 1882

Satyendra Peerthum, Researcher & Historian

An important and often neglected research theme in Mauritian indentured labour historiography has been the life-stories and experiences of the pioneer indentured labourers who arrived in Mauritius during the 1830s. One particular group among them is the early Muslim contractual labourers. Between 1834 and 1842, a total of 26,028 contract workers arrived from the Indian sub-continent, out of which 11% were Muslims. The majority of them came from the Bengal Presidency in eastern India and the Madras Presidency in southern India. Most of them embarked on indenture ships at the ports of Calcutta and Madras before coming to Mauritius.

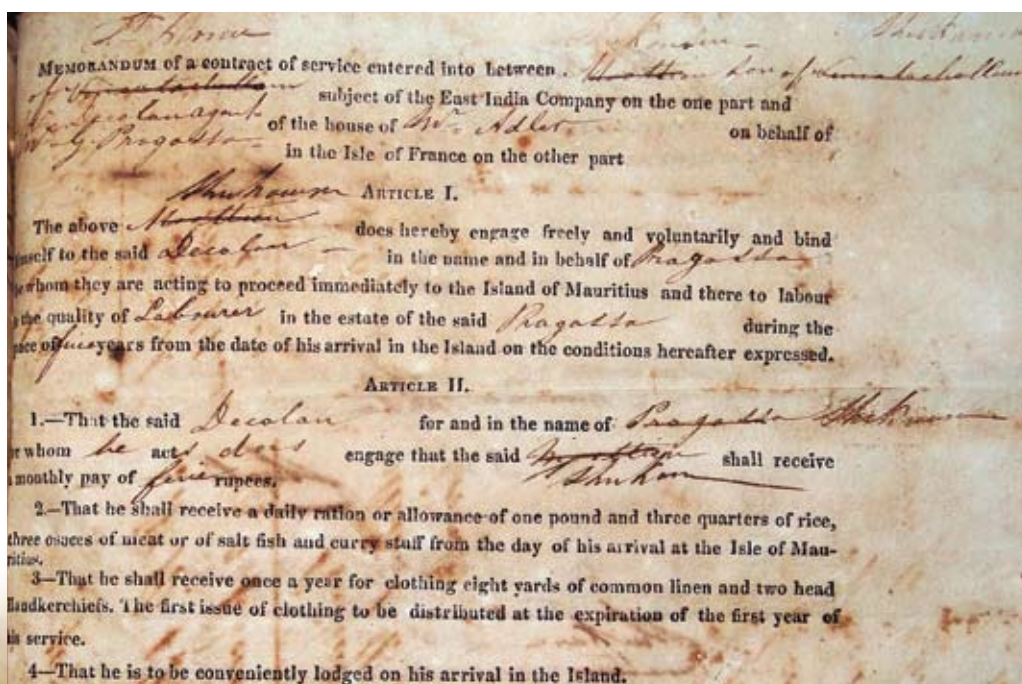
Recent research undertaken by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has shown that many of these early Muslim indentured labourers lived long and productive lives. They made an important contribution to the emergence of the island's sugar revolution, its transformation into a plantation colony and also into the most important sugar-producing colony in the British Empire. They lived and worked for more than 40 to 50 years on Mauritian sugar estates and their life-stories have only recently been studied in detail. At the same time, they

exemplify worker agency in nineteenth century Mauritian history which can clearly be seen in the life-story and experience of Shaikoussen.

The Life Story of Shaikoussen (Immigrant No.324)

Immigrant Shaikoussen arrived in Port Louis harbour on 21st November 1838 on the *Sterling* from Cuddalore, India. On the day of its arrival, the ship was inspected by a Medical Officer and a Port Officer. When registered at His Majesty's Customs House, Shaikoussen was assigned No.324 which became his 'Immigrant Number' and remained an integral part of his identity in Mauritius for the rest of his life. A few days later, Shaikoussen and his two fellow travellers started to work on Pragassa's small sugar estate as labourers in Pamplemousses District.

Who exactly was Shaikoussen (Immigrant No.324)? He was a Muslim who was born in the French territorial possession of Pondicherry, in southern India, in 1808 and his father was Shaikmamoude. Shaikoussen left his village in Pondicherry

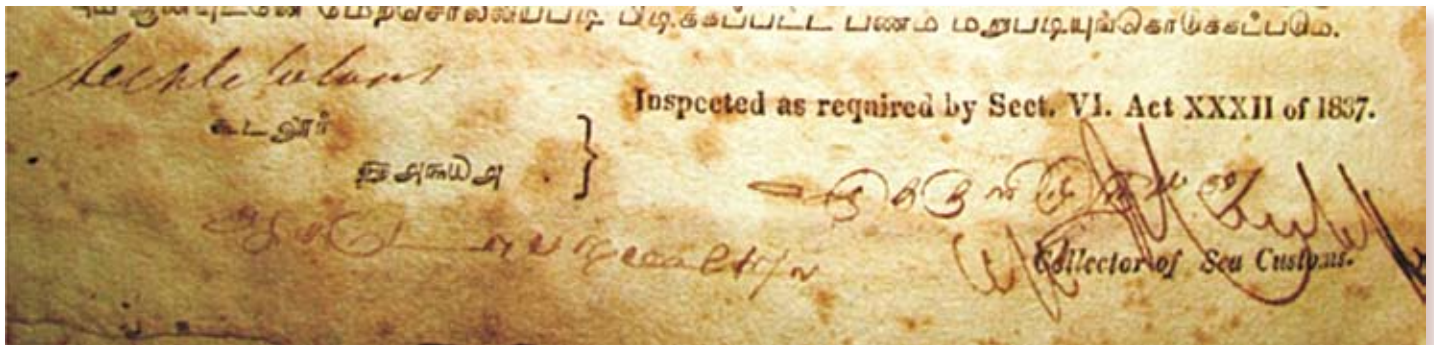


The Indenture Labour Contract of Shaikoussen (Immigrant No.324) which was drafted in 1838 (Source: Mauritius National Archives)

when he was very young and worked for several years as a porter in the port city of Cuddalore. Shaikoussen could speak French, English, Tamil and Urdu fluently and he could even sign his name in the above-mentioned languages. In 1838, he was only 30 years old when he became an indentured labourer and set foot on Mauritian soil.

Will and through the intervention of the Stipendiary Magistrate of Pamplemousses District, his property was transferred to Begum Nafiza, his wife on 30 June 1879.

The life-story of Shaikoussen is the success story of a Muslim indentured labourer from Pondicherry, India, who was able



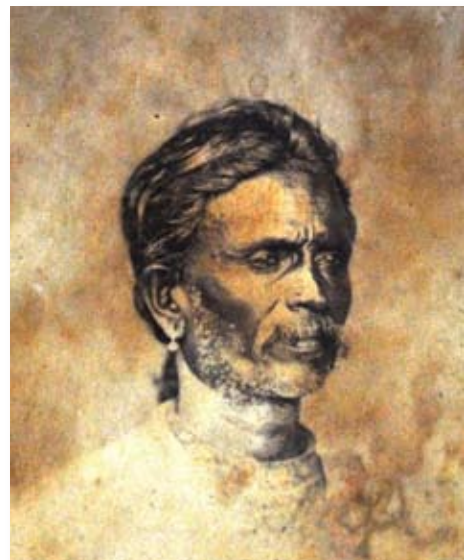
The signature of Shaikoussen on his Indenture Contract which was finalised in October 1838 in Cuddalore, India.
(Source: Mauritius National Archives)

Between 1838 and 1843, Shaikoussen completed his 5-year indenture contract with Pragassa and continued to work for him on a 1-year contract renewed each year. By 1847, he was no longer a labourer and was working as a clerk for Pragassa. Sometime, during the early 1840s, Shaikoussen was able to learn to read, write and do basic mathematics which allowed him to leave the rank of an estate labourer to become a clerk. During the early 1850s, Shaikoussen left Pragassa's service and worked as a labour contractor. Thereafter, as a *Sirdar* for Napoleon Savy, a well-known free coloured lawyer and owner of Grande Rosalie Sugar Estate, in Pamplemousses District.

During the 1850s and early 1860s, he acquired enough money that allowed him to purchase, in May 1865, a plot of fertile land of 5 arpents for 724 dollars, near the present-day village of Pamplemousses.

Between the early 1850s and until his death in 1879, Shaikoussen continued to work as a *Sirdar* on Grande Rosalie. At the same time, he was a small landowner and independent vegetable cultivator. He employed a dozen Old Immigrants and provided vegetable produce to neighbouring sugar estates such as Grand Rosalie and Petite Rosalie and also to the market of Pamplemousses village. In July 1872, Shaikoussen lost his Old Immigrant Ticket and during the following month, he went to the Immigration Depot to obtain a new one. His picture was taken for the first time there, after having lived and worked for more than 34 years in the colony. Though the picture faded with age, yet it does show that Shaikoussen was well dressed and wore a pair of golden earrings which, to a certain extent, is indicative of his social mobility and social status.

On 15 May 1879, Shaikoussen passed away at the age of 71 near Pamplemousses village. Almost a decade earlier, on 1st June 1870, Shaikoussen had already made provision in a Will for the transfer of his property to his family in case of his death. After some unclear legal difficulties with regard to his



Shaikoussen (Immigrant No.324) was 64 years when he was photographed at the Immigration Depot or the Aapravasi Ghat in 1872. (Source: MGIIIA/PG series)

to leave estate labour, educate himself, became a clerk, a labour contractor and then, a *Sirdar*. Eventually, he was able to purchase a plot of land of several arpents, became a successful provider of agricultural produce to some of the sugar estates in Pamplemousses District as well as to the local village market and established his own family. Shaikoussen led a long and productive life and was able to achieve some measure of social mobility in Mauritian colonial society. He is an important example of an industrious worker or immigrant agency in post-emancipation nineteenth century Mauritius.

PHILIP BURNARD AYRES

A PROFESSOR AT FLAT ISLAND QUARANTINE STATION 1856-1859

Raj Boodhoo, Researcher in Medical History

It will be difficult to explain in a short note the contribution of Dr P.B. Ayres (1813-1863) to the development of a quarantine station or his research interest in botany, zoology or geology. This note is much more about those interests. It could only be a passion for research and a need for new experience in medicine that caused Dr Ayres to leave a comfortable position as practitioner, researcher and lecturer in prestigious medical schools and hospitals in the centre of London and accept a post of Superintendent in charge of sick Indians arriving by ships at a quarantine station in a far off colony. Dr Ayres occupied that post from 1856 to 1859.

Dr Ayres was born in Oxfordshire in 1813 and obtained his doctor's degree in medicine at the University of London in 1841. He was member of the Royal College of Surgeons and Licentiate of the Apothecaries Company since 1836. For three years, he was physician at the Islington dispensary where he had ample opportunities of observing the difficult sanitary condition of the city visited now and then by cholera. In the late forties, he was professor of practical chemistry at the Charing Cross Hospital School of Medicine, then in the early fifties, he also lectured at St George School of Medicine at Grosvenor Place. Between 1836 and 1855, he carried out a great deal of research and published no less than thirty-four papers on varied subjects such as, Asiatic cholera, animal chemistry, potato disease, sanitary condition in London etc in the *Lancet*, in the *Medical Gazette* and in other journals.

In January 1856, Governor Higginson informed the Secretary of State that he was unable to appoint a qualified person in Mauritius for the post Superintendent at the Flat Island. It seemed that local practitioners were not interested in that post, they preferred to carry out private practice in Port Louis than venture to lead a life of isolation and want in a barren island about twenty four miles from the capital, totally cut off during quarantine periods. Dr Ayres had applied for a post of Medical Officer of Health in London, but when he heard about the vacancy in Mauritius, he applied and was appointed as Superintendent of the quarantine station at Flat Island. It is difficult to say what he expected from that post. In his application letter, he carefully noted that apart from carrying out his official duties, he would be much interested in researching in botany, zoology and geology in these quarantine islets. He added that he could read and write French perfectly.

Dr Ayres was 42 years old when he landed in Mauritius with his wife and children. Port Louis was in the throes of the

cholera epidemic and the government was busy preparing new laws regarding quarantine stations. Flat Island had by then become a permanent station for cholera. Affected Indian immigrant ships had to stop there to land all their passengers. New buildings, stores and huts for the Indians were being built in 1856. The Superintendent was in charge of the healthcare of sick Indians, he had to provide them with food, medicine and clean clothing. Apart from these duties, the professor spent much time studying the flora and the geology of Flat and Gabriel Islands. He also intended to publish a catalogue of plants.

In 1859, Dr Ayres was appointed Medical Officer in charge of the Civil Hospital in Port Louis and then General Sanitary Inspector. He submitted on vital statistics of Port Louis in 1861. He was then able to make acquaintance with the local scientists such as the botanist Louis Bouton. He succeeded in integrating the select group of elite at a time when there was so much tension between foreign and local practitioners over

the issue of cholera and contagion. Did he meet Brown Sequard who was in Mauritius some time earlier? Dr Ayres became an active member of Royal Society of Arts and Sciences and he even chaired a few meetings. He formed part of the Society's committee to decide about the names of scientists that should appear on Lienard Obelisk at the Pamplemousses Gardens. In 1860, he read a paper on diseases in Mauritius, and another on the fossilized remains of forests in Flat Island. He roamed the countryside in



*T. Corby (1857) Quarters for Surgeon Superintendent
(Source: National Archives)*

search of bones of the dodo. He presented to the Society a bone which he found in a cave at Rivière Noire and which he believed to belong to the *solitaire*. He discussed about dodo bones with George Clark, a school teacher in Mahebourg who in 1865 discovered these bones at Mares aux Songes. By that time, Dr Ayres had passed away in May 1863 in his house at Champ de Mars. This premature death put an end to a number of plans for research and publication. However, when she returned home with her children, his widow, Harriet Chinery, presented all his papers and collections to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew in London. Botanists such as J.G Baker in 1877 and others have made use of these notes in their research and publications.

Materials published in the mid nineteenth century by botanists Bouton, Ayres and Baker, or reports on trees, environment and climate by their contemporaries like Gabriel Fropier or the report on water supply by Mann are not easily available in our research centres; they could form useful reading to present day scientists, engineers and observers.

MAHATMA GANDHI'S CONCERN WITH THE PLIGHT OF THE INDENTURED LABOURERS AND HIS MOVE FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SYSTEM.

Dr Sarita Boodhoo, Chairperson of the Bhojpuri Speaking Union



Little is known of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi was intensely involved with the move for the abolition of the indenture system. He had seen enough of the inhuman treatment of indentured in South Africa, Mauritius and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to agitate for its immediate abolition.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was not yet Mahatma when he came to Mauritius in 1901. Yet he was quite a well-known barrister and activist and his fearless moves on behalf of the Indian traders and indentured labourers in South Africa found echo in the Mauritian Press well before he arrived. He noted that here the prosperous Indians lived in isolation from the poor rural masses. Indeed, Professor Hugh Tinker does highlight in *A New System of Slavery*: “When Gandhi visited the island from a passing ship in 1901, he was distressed to discover how little was being done, the Indian traders of Port-Louis lived in almost complete isolation from the Indians of the sugar fields”.

Gandhiji was appalled by the plight of the poor Indians in the rural areas. From Mauritius, he went to attend the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress in Madras. In his address there, he showed his deep concern for the neglect of Indians in the diaspora: “Our traders and unskilled workers have gone to different parts of the world to South Africa, Zanzibar, Mauritius..... Are they followed by Indian missionaries, barristers, doctors and other professional men?” That is how then when he went to the UK in 1906, he would convince Manilal Doctor, a French knowing young Indian barrister to come to Mauritius to take up the cudgels for the Indians here.

How did he get involved with the Indians in South Africa? His employment as a young barrister, on behalf of a firm of Porbander Muslim traders in Gujarat, for a year in South Africa would change not only his destiny but that of India and South Africa. He would stay in South Africa for 21 years where he was exposed to the abject humiliation; oppression

and injustice meted out to the Indian indentured labourers as well as the Chinese indentured who worked in the gold mines. That would lead him to forge his two weapons of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa* which he would use to lead India to its independence.

Young Gandhi was horrified and shocked by the dismayed condition of the indentured immigrants. In “**The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi**” by the Publication Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of India (1st edition 1964), one comes across several writings, letters, petitions and pleas, speeches of his relating to the abominable system of Indenture. In quite a few of them, he refers to the plight of the Indian indentures in Mauritius. He first made reference to Mauritius on 22 May 1896. He would refer to the voting rights of the Indians in Mauritius. In a memorandum to J. Chamberlain, Secretary of State, London, he would draw his attention to the fact that the population of the island in 1894 consisted of 259,224 Indians as against 106,995 persons under the heading “**general population**”. Here, it is good to draw the attention of readers that the term **general population** was not coined by the Father of the Nation and the makers of the Constitution in 1968, but existed much earlier since the 19th century.

Young Gandhi was so disturbed by the trials and tribulations of the Indian Indentured Labourers and their descendants that he would certainly move for the abolition of the system.

He wrote in *Samalochak* a Gujarati magazine in December 1915: “**Girmit is a corrupt form of the English word agreement...The Document under which thousands of labourers used to emigrate and still emigrate to Natal and other countries on contract of five years, is known by the labourers and the employers as girmit. A labourer so emigrating under girmit is a girmitiya**”

Gandhiji writes in the same article that indenture is indeed a state of semi-slavery.

Again in December 28, 1915, he would, in his speech on India and its colonies, at the 30th Indian National Congress session held at Bombay, submit a resolution to the effect that the system of Indentured Labour is undesirable and urged its abolition because of its “**highly injurious and immoral effects**”. He also petitioned that the self-governing Colonies would extend to the Indian emigrants equal rights with the Europeans.

Gandhi writes in *The Leader* on 25th February 1916 that Gokhale, a great freedom fighter and leader of the Indian National Congress, had as early as in 1912 **"in a speech full of fervour and weighted with facts and figures, moved his resolution demanding repeal of this form of labour"**. This motion would be outvoted by the British members of the Imperial Legislative Council. But Gandhiji's friends, Andrews and Pearson from South Africa, went to Fiji to see the plight of the indentured labourers there. Their report would enable Lord Hardinge, the British Viceroy in India **"fittingly to close his most eventful viceroyalty removing this long-standing and acknowledged grievances (Gandhiji's words)"**.

Gandhiji remarked then that **"the yoke, if it fell from the Negro's black neck, was transferred to the brown neck of the Indian"**. For him the system had persisted because **"its bitterness like that of a sugared pill has been cleverly though unconsciously concealed"**.

According to the *Bombay Secret Abstracts* on March 2nd 1917, under the Citizens' Association, a public meeting was held in the *Khalikdina Hall* in Karachi to protest against the continuance of the system of indentured labour. After condemning the system, Gandhi reiterated that Indians must insist on its abolition by 31st May 1917. From there he went to Calcutta to address on the same issue.

Gandhiji referred to the fact that Mr Madan Mohan Malaviya, founder of the Banaras Hindu University had moved a resolution in the Legislative Council for the abolition of the system in March 1916. But it was turned down by the British. The Colonial planters, on the other hand, attended a conference in London and their delegation met the Secretary of State, Mr J. Chamberlain. Instead of going for the abolition of the system, they pleaded for the indentured labourers, old and new and their descendants to go back to India. Gandhiji opposed this move. One recalls from press cuttings of the time, how there was a hue and cry in this connection by the oligarchy in Mauritius. There was a movement here too where it was strongly upheld that the indentured and their descendants were not Mauritians and they should go back to India!

In Natal, these indentured emigrants were coerced into paying a tax of £3. But thanks to the vigorous move of Gandhi with march of protests, boycotts and so on, the regime of General Smuts came to an agreement with (Gandhi) him to abolish the tax in 1914. In Fiji, they were and still are debarred from owning land.

In Mauritius, the corporate system of the plantocracy marginalized them from the mainstream economic playing field, the effects of which are still visible in the present economic structure.

In his autobiography (part v, chapter xi), Gandhiji devotes one whole chapter to the Abolition of Indentured Emigration. He felt that India had tolerated the system for too long and the time had come when **"people could successfully agitate for redress"**. He writes: **"I met some of the leaders, wrote in the Press and saw that public opinion was solidly in favour of immediate abolition"**. He was even contemplating this issue as a fitting subject for *satyagraha*. But he frankly adds **"I did not know the modus operandi"**.

When Pandit Malviya was denied leave to introduce the Bill of abolition in February 1917, Gandhiji writes **"It was time for me to tour the country for an all-India agitation"**. Gandhiji began his anti-indenture system tour from Bombay. This discussion was centred round the fixing of the date when the system would be abolished. Three proposals were submitted for abolition -(a) "as soon as possible", (b) abolition by 31st July 1917, (c) **"immediate abolition"**.

Mr Jehangir Petit was the convenor of the meeting in Bombay. The Imperial Citizenship Association founded in Bombay decided to adopt 31st July as the latest date by which the abolition should be announced. Meetings throughout India resolved accordingly. Several ladies too under the leadership of Mrs Jaiji Petit including Lady Tata and Dilshad Begum undertook to meet the Viceroy to convince him to abolish the system. Gandhiji appeared impressed by their stand. **"There was unbounded enthusiasm. I had not expected anything like it when the agitation was launched"**.

The pathetic episode of his train journey from Lahore to Delhi eventually to Calcutta is most revealing of the earnestness of his intention.

In those days, Gandhiji was travelling alone and the CID men followed him. He says "Fortunately I had not then received the stamp of Mahatmaship". In one such train journey from Lahore to Delhi where he had to catch another train to attend his meeting in Calcutta, Gandhiji had to pay porter 12 annas to be able to get a seat in the crowded third class coach. Nobody was willing to cede him a seat. He could not afford to miss the train. He would have missed his meeting in Calcutta. As the train was about to move, the porter then shoved the frail Gandhi bodily.....through the window.....for a standing seat! He was taken for a "fakir" or a "sadhu". When they came to know his identity, they felt ashamed. Such was the determination of Gandhi in his march to abolish the system of indentureship. The enthusiasm for the abolition was gathering momentum whether in Bombay, Lahore, Karachi, Delhi or Calcutta.

Before the 31st July 1917, Gandhiji writes, the British Government announced that indentured emigration from India would be stopped. It was in 1884 that Gandhiji had drafted the first petition protesting against the system.

HONOURING INDIANS IN MAURITIUS

Chit Dukhira

Introduction

The first systematic indentured migration from India took place in 1834 when a contingent of 36 labourers came to Mauritius. Other batches followed not only to Mauritius but also to other colonies, mainly British. The Aapravasi Ghat is the place where landed the Indian workers coming to Mauritius. It symbolises the spot of disembarkation of all Indians, indentured or non-indentured, as well as migrants from other countries, landing there, most of whom later settled in the country.

Saving Records of Indians' Arrival Since 1834

In 1970, Ramnarain Ramsaha, Public Assistance Commissioner, saved the records (photos and other documents) of the Indians' arrival since 1834 that had been stacked disorderly at the Immigration Office, Port-Louis, his workplace, from being annihilated. This office was found at the then Immigration Square, forming part of the Immigration Depot, now Northern Bus Terminal. Besides, Cyclones *Alix* and *Carol* of 1960 had severely damaged these documents which were deteriorating considerably.

Dumped at the National Archives, the Records taken to MGI (1976)

Contacted by Mr Ramsaha, Beekrumsing Ramlallah forcefully tried to convince the authorities of the importance of transferring the Indian migrants' register to the National Archives. However, its then director objected to his request, though of immense significance to posterity. The incumbent at that time exercised the discretionary power to accept or reject any document to be archived. This responsibility of the Director of the Mauritius National Archives was subsequently entrusted to the Minister concerned. The documents were meanwhile dumped at the National Archives. In 1975, Dr Kissoonsingh Hazareesingh, then Director of Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), was instrumental in further securing and properly archiving these historic documents. They were taken from Port-Louis and brought for preservation to the MGI, at Moka. Properly bound, catalogued and indexed, they are invaluable to local and foreign scholars researching Indian indenture as well as of help to Mauritians for tracing their roots in India.

Ramlallah's Role as Father of Aapravasi Ghat

Beekrumsing Ramlallah (1915-2000), in public life right from the 1940s, founder-editor of *Mauritius Times* since 1954 and

an elected parliamentarian (1959-1976), even serving as Minister for some time, who chaired the Hindu Maha Sabha during several mandates, championed the freedom of the press and Indianness. He wrote a lot about the indentured labourers, devoting a few editorials to their sufferings and efforts to contribute to national development, with stress on the need for honouring them.

In the late 1960s, Beekrumsing Ramlallah spotted the historical steps at the Coolie Ghat, Immigration Square, as used by the Indian indentured labourers upon their disembarkation. He was the first to observe, annually and voluntarily, on 2 November a day of remembrance of these pioneers. This date is a public holiday since 2001.

Thanks to him, who prevailed upon the authorities in New Delhi and Port-Louis, the Coolie Ghat was consecrated by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi upon her visit to Mauritius in June 1970. On 1st June 1970, Beekrumsing Ramlallah cleared the place of all the garbage with the help of his family and few volunteers. In June, the programme commemorating the visit of Mrs Gandhi was already approved by Cabinet and he had it modified by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam to fit in the visit of Mrs Gandhi who had lighted a *diva* on that occasion. As suggested by him, a commemorative plaque adorns the spot since 1978. Renamed Aapravasi Ghat, this place was declared a national historical site in 1987. By 2006, it was made a World Heritage Site – the world's first such official recognition.

Indians' Centenary Arrival 1935: The World's First Such Event

In 1935, a voluntary national committee, later known as Indian Cultural Association (ICA), celebrated the centenary of the first arrival of Indian indentured workers. Ramkhelawon Boodhun, the first Indo-Mauritian barrister, and Rampersad Neerunjun (later Chief Justice and Sir) were its chairman and secretary respectively. The committee membership, initially with the trader Abdulla Currimjee as vice-chairman and Boodhun Lallah, attorney, as treasurer, was afterwards altered, including, among others, Kissoonsingh Hazareesingh, A. R. Osman, (later Governor-General and Sir), and the two Cannoosamy Pillay brothers - Moreemootoo (Green) and Cooroosamy (Charlie).

Representing the Madras-based Indian Colonial Society, T. K. Swaminathan was the chief guest at this centenary. Editor of the *Indian Emigrant*, a monthly journal which later became *Indian Colonial Review*, he was its founder-secretary since 5 April 1916 when it was established in Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The Society was vowed to promote the well-being of Indians having emigrated to overseas colonies. Swaminathan was delegated by Rabindranath Tagore, the Society's patron, with whom Kissoonsingh Hazareesingh had been corresponding.

In his address, Rampersad Neerunjun stressed the importance to preserve Indian Culture. Dr Maurice Curé, then elected legislator, was present on the podium, among other eminent personalities. He praised Swaminathan, though absent, at the foundation public meeting of what would become the Mauritius Labour Party (23 February 1936). Chairman Boodhun recounted the injustice borne by "Coolies," praised



Ms Gandhi, with Minister Jagatsingh (L) and Prime Minister Ramgoolam (R).

the Indians' laborious efforts for prosperity in Mauritius and paid tribute to the worthy patriots, before appealing for Indo-Mauritians' political representation.

This historic event, denied a public place by the authorities, was organised at the Arya Samaj's Dayananda Dharamshala, in Port-Louis, where Chief Guest Swaminathan unveiled an obelisk, a memorial (with inscriptions in English, Hindi, Tamil and Urdu) to help awaken national consciousness and patriotism. In their speeches, Lakshmi Narain Chatturvedi, Soobrayen Permal and Benymadho Sutteeram recalled Indo-Mauritians' contribution to national development. In his poetic book, *Shatabdi Saroj* (Centenary Lily), on the Indo-Mauritian struggles, published for the occasion, writer (in Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit and Bhojpuri) Chatturvedi suggested the creation of a Labour Party and, elsewhere, encouraged Indo-Mauritians to be involved in politics. For this 1935 centenary, Aunuth Beejadhur came out with his 'Les Indiens à Maurice.' the world's first work in French on Indians overseas. Ramaswamy Pydayya (Pydiah) had by then completed his work, *"Indians in Mauritius,"* which was printed in Madras in 1936.

On 12 January 1936, Hazareesingh delivered, under Swaminathan's chairmanship, a lecture on "A Century of Indian Life in Mauritius" at Rose Hill Town Hall. After referring to Indo-Mauritians' perseverance, philosophy and interest in education, pointed out the fusion of Eastern and Western cultures in the country, contrary to the prophecy of Rudyard Kipling, English author born in India, that East and West will never meet.

The then Municipal Corporation of Port-Louis formally received Swaminathan on 22 February 1936 when he was toasted by several personalities including the freshly London-returned Dr Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, later Sir and Prime Minister (SSR). SSR wrote an article on 'Sons of Immigrants' in the commemorative issue (1936) of the ICA's *Indian Cultural Review*. He remarked therein that Government "has deliberately shut its eyes to a great many wrongs and grievances of the people (...). Education is far from complete, unless it takes notice of civicism; and civicism instinctively merges into politics and economics." Indo-Mauritians "counted for nothing in the hierarchy of statecraft, while, in fact, they are the producers

and makers of the colony." He appealed for "revising the present Constitution on a more equitable basis," since it was "high time that workers of this colony were given a wider franchise," enabling them to "have a say in the government of their country" and urged for "the unification of our race and the brotherhood of man." For him, "there must be a great mass movement, but (...) we must not be cheated into giving fictitious importance to what is false, dead and well-buried." In his book, *"Hazareesingh at 80"* (1991), the author remarked that SSR's article "was going to become his political manifesto." When GMD Atchia was elected Mayor of Port-Louis in 1938, the first non-Christian to hold this post, SSR wrote in the ICR that "the Indian community had reached that stage of its development when it could legitimately aspire to the highest rank in Mauritian public affairs." (*Indian Cultural Review*, "Notes and Comments," January 1938, p.74)

Manilal Doctor and Adolphe de Plevitz Gratefully Remembered

To perpetuate the memory of Mahatma Gandhi's envoy, Manilal Doctor, who had battled for Indo-Mauritians' uplift during his stay in the country (1907-1911) on the legal, journalistic and political fronts, a bronze statue was erected at the *Jardin de La Compagnie* in Port-Louis in 1959. Blacklisted by the oligarchs, the press and the authorities before being summoned by then Swettenham Commission (1909), he advocated numerous reforms, of which almost all later became realities. The statue was financed by public donations thanks to the Manilal Doctor Memorial Committee chaired by Vanprasthi Dhurundhar and whose secretary was Mootoomcomaren Sangeelee. Its vice-chairman, Beekrumsing Ramlallah, who had convened the first meeting and whose *Mauritius Times* had come out in special edition on 3 February 1956 in homage to Manilal Doctor after his death, played a crucial role. The statue stands opposite the Hindu Maha Sabha's seat where met the Memorial Committee.

In 1998, Beekrumsing Ramlallah also paid tribute to Adolphe de Plevitz, the first to struggle for the cause of the country's Indian labourers in the 1870s. Thanks to this Paris-born Polish was set up the Royal/Frere and Williamson Commission (1972) whose findings helped mitigate their sufferings. Abused by fellow-Whites who had insulted and threatened, besides physically assaulting, him for his activities in favour of Indian labourers, the Hero of Mauritius, as London's Anti-Slavery Society qualified de Plevitz, now financially ruined, left Mauritius for Fiji in 1876. Beekrumsing Ramlallah personally met the cost of the making and the installation of his bust on the premises of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, as authorised by its then director, Uttama Bissoondoyal.



Photo of Beekrumsing Ramlallah

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SUGARCANE CULTIVATION IN MAURITIUS

Since the arrival of the Indentured labourers in the island of Mauritius during the period 1860 – 1900, recruited from the western part of Bihar, reputed during that period for its remarkable performances in sugar cane productions, marked a turning point in the history of Mauritius. Following termination of their contracts with their Mauritian employers, it is said that some 300, 000 out of the 450, 000 indentured Indian labourer, adopted Mauritius as their new home and decided to remain here forever. Following this ultimate decision, they completely transformed the character of Mauritian life and its industries and further altered the social and demographic conditions and political landscape of this colony.

It is understood from old records that during their contractual period, their normal earnings varied between Rs 4.00 to Rs 10.00 per month, (Female workers = Rs 4.00 per month; Male workers = Rs 5.00 per month; and Gangman = Rs 10.00 per month), supplemented by rations and wooden accommodation covered with dried cane thrash tied in bundles.

The employers were fully satisfied of their humbleness and comprehensive behaviour as they showed great interest while on duty.

Share Cropping Arrangement

During the period 1885 – 1900, following the shortfall in the price of sugar in the world market, some sort of informal partnership or sharecropping arrangements were devised between the indentured workers and estate owners, to occupy the marginal and hillside lands during their free time with a view to be freed from certain obligation vis à vis the indentured worker.

Dewendrasingh Ramlackhan, Ex-Officer-in-Charge of the Sugar Industry Cane Nursery & Sugar Cane Planter

Morcellement Movement

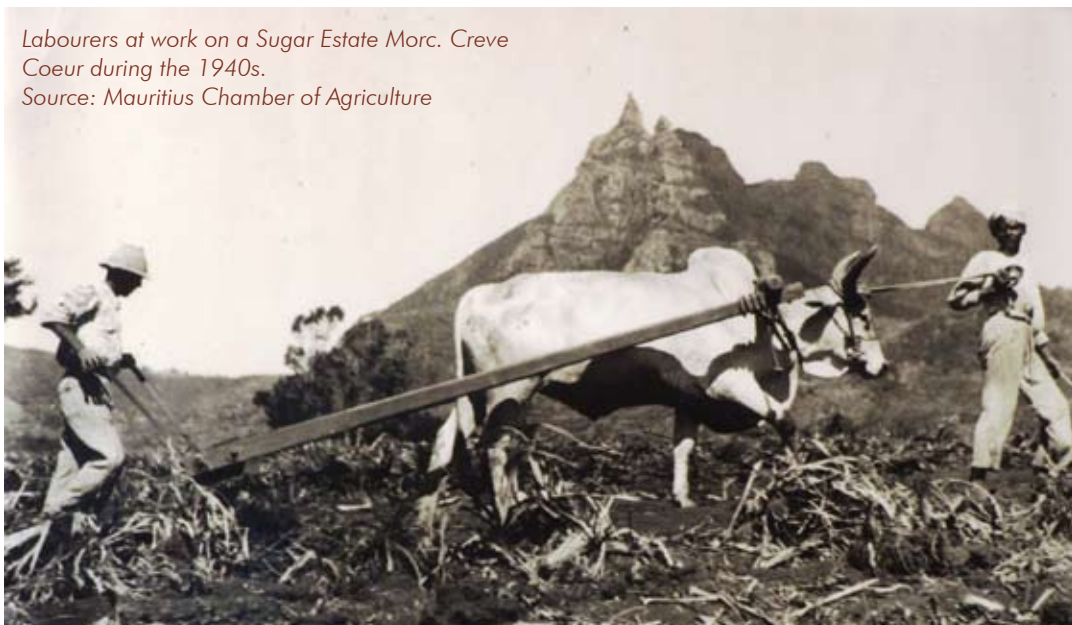
During the period 1900 – 1930, following the continuous decline in the price of sugar on the World Market, the owners of the sugar estate started parceling then marginal lands and unproductive ones. Those indentured workers who had made some savings during their employment period did avail of this opportunity to acquire some lands as there was that great desire for them to possess lands in Mauritius for future requirements. The principal reason behind this “Morcellement Movement,” was to have a cheap labour force available in the vicinity of the Estate and not to have further recourse to import workers from India at heavy cost.

Land Preparation and Cane Cultivation during the Period 1920 – 1950

Between the years 1920 and 1950, mechanical equipments were not available, and the preparation of land purchased from the sugar estate during the Morcellement period had to be performed manually with tools like ‘crowbars’, ‘pickaxe’, ‘forks’ and ‘rattan baskets’.

The heavy stones and boulders were ranged along every 2 interlines and the pebbles were piled in rocky part of the field. Approximately 5000 ditches of 15 by 9 inches per acres were dug for the cultivation of sugarcanes. Cane tops were purchased from the nearby estate. Cow manure and phosphatic guano were applied into the ditches prior to plant canes. All these planting requirements were conveyed to the field through ox-driven carts.

*Labourers at work on a Sugar Estate Morc. Creve Coeur during the 1940s.
Source: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture*



Establishment of the Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund through the Sugar Industry Reserve Fund Ordinance Act no. 3 of 1948

Certain funds were created:

- 1) The Sugar Millers Rehabilitation Fund
- 2) The Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund

Levy of Monies

Monies were levied as 'cess' from the gross receipts of sugar exported to the European Common Market and distributed to both funds on the basis of sugar produced by each category of planters.

Purpose of the Levy

The purpose of the monies levied was to assist individual planter having incurred duly specified capital expenditure connected with the production of sugar.

Constraints of Small Planters not qualified for the Award granted by the Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund

Most of the individual planters cultivating less than 2 hectares of land were mostly self-employed people. They depended solely on their cane revenues, for their living, schooling of their children and welfare of their families.

They could not afford the luxury of incurring heavy capital expenditure for the growing of sugarcane.

All their cultural operations were performed manually. Thus, no financial claims could be submitted to the Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund by these categories of planters for any refund of expenses.

Accumulations of unpaid 'CESS' Monies

During the year 1948 to 1957, the unclaimed 'cess' monies by the above described group of small planters got accumulated, amounted to around 3 million rupees (Rs 3,000,000) in the Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund.

Outbreak of the "Yellow Spot" and "Ratoon Stunting" Diseases in the Sugarcanes

During the year 1957, the outbreak of diseases known as "Yellow Spot" and "Ratoon Stunting Disease" considerably affected the planters' cane yields by at least 40% of their normal yield.

The Committee of 'the Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund'

Under the Chairmanship of late Mr D'Emmerez de Charmoy (Senior Agricultural Officer of the Department of Agriculture), the Committee of the Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund took the decision to establish a cane nursery with a view to helping the community of small cane planters by providing them free of disease cane planting materials for the re-plantation of their fields affected by the prevailing disease.

Purchase of Virgin Lands

Between the years 1957 and 1964, some 379 acres of virgin lands were purchased at Pointe aux Sables from different planters of the same vicinity for the setting up of the proposed "Cane Nursery" with the accumulated unclaimed 'cess' monies levied in the Planters Fund.

Treatment of Cane Planting Materials against the prevailing Diseases affecting Sugarcanes

Cane planting materials of different varieties were purchased from the sugar estate and treated at Belle Rive Hot Water Treatment Plant for 2 hours with a view to eradicating the virus affecting sugar canes.

Plantation of the treated cuttings was effected within 24-hours on the same day at the Cane Nursery.

Newly released Cane Varieties by the M.S.I.R.I.

New cane varieties were propagated at the Cane Nursery following treatment against the Ratoon Stunting Disease prior to supply to the planting community. This sort of processing continued up to the year 1993. The community of cane planters was fully satisfied of the service provided by the management of the Sugar Planters cane Nursery.

Closure of Main Office of the Sugar Planters Development Fund, as per Act no. 17 of 1994

The management of the Sugar Planters' Cane Nursery at Pointe-aux-Sables was transferred to the Mauritius Sugar Authority (established in June 1984) temporarily.

Following poor management of the Cane Nursery at Pointe-aux-Sables, a Bill was presented in Parliament to enable the Mauritius Sugar Authority to transfer all the immoveable property, previously belonging to the Sugar Planters Development Fund, (ex- Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund) to the State Land Development Company Ltd.

Transfer of Land to “The State Land Development Company”

Since the taking over of all land belonging to the Sugar planters Development Fund purchased from accumulated unpaid ‘cess’ monies, levied on small planters’ share of sugar during the years 1948 and 1958, the S.L.D.C. has been parceling, renting and has already disposed of most of the land to the public.

Meanwhile, planters, in general, faced all sorts of difficulties to obtain cane planting materials for their plantation, and due to high inputs and labour costs, they had no alternative than to leave their land fallow.

Following certain deficiency in the management of almost all the service-providing institutions, the Government has instituted the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority to look into the day to day activities of the following institutions connected with the sugar productions: The SPMPC; M.S.A.; M.S.I.R.I., and F.S.C. Control Board.

Conclusion

Following the evolution of the Cane Industry in Mauritius, my thinking goes to my forefathers and grandfathers who came to Mauritius bare handed during the year 1870 as Indentured Labourers. They were provided housing accommodation (wooden camps covered with dry cane trash tied in bundles). Their wages varied between Rs 5 to Rs 10 per month. Following a lot of sacrifices and hardship they have encountered during their engagement period with the estate, they have been able to purchase some lands during the Morcellement Movement. I still remember those days in the year 1940, when my grandfather took advantage of the share cropping arrangement with the estate.

During the year 1952, they were able to purchase a 5-ton lorry to transport sugarcane directly to the mill from the award granted by the Sugar Planters Rehabilitation Fund, through the cess monies levied on sale of sugar.



Estate workers loading sugar cane during the 1940s. Source: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture



The transportation of sugar cane during the 1940s. Source: Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture

A UNIVERSAL OUTLOOK OF A BARRISTER

MR MANILAL MAGANLAL DOCTOR

M.A LL.B

The World History is shaped by the migration of peoples. Our forebears, the coolies/Indentured Labourers/Girmityas were transported in inhumane conditions from the seaport of Calcutta, India, on account of trickery recruiters of sugar plantation to the colonies of the British Empire after the abolition of African slavery. With their sweat, tears and blood, they created history in the making of the foundation of their countries of adoption. Our present comfort, decency and position today are the result of the extreme pains and suffering they survived. Homage to those poor people, the greatest heroes of history, who survived the test of time. We owe a deep gratitude to them, their saviour and leader, especially Manilal Maganlal Doctor, M.A. LLB, an Indian who has graduated as Barrister in London.

9 September 1834 witnessed the earliest emigration of Indian labourers from Calcutta to various parts of the world, beginning with Mauritius. *The Atlas*, a ship loaded with the first batch of 36 coolies/indentured labourers reached Mauritius on 2nd November 1834. Out of 498 Girmityas only 463 survivors reached Fiji, Levuka, after a 72-day sea journey on 14 May 1879 on board *The Leonidas*.

Mauritius is the first place where the *Great Experiment* of the indentured system in 1834, as a cheap source of labour, was experimented by Great Britain. The indenture system in Mauritius formed the basis of the Natal (South Africa) and Fiji Islands system, which subsequently underwent several modifications. The fate of indentured labourers in Fiji and other British colonies were the same as in Mauritius.

Mr Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, also known as Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Manilal Maganlal Doctor, both have been very instrumental in the liberation of Indian immigrants from



*Statue of Manilal Doctor in
Jardin de la Compagnie in 2010
(Source: Mr V. Ramkissoon)*

*Vinai Ramkissoon, Founder-Chairperson
of the Manilal Maganlal Doctor
Memorial Foundation*

the clutches of the indentured labour system – “a new system of bonded labour worse than slavery”. Beating and ill-treating of Indians, over-tasking work, unauthorised pay cuts, suicides, rapes, sexual violations and killings in sugar cane fields on sugar estates, the inhumane criminal and villainous acts of those colonial rulers were very common. Manilal Maganlal Doctor was the man who fought against all these injustices which our forebears survived.

The hard work, contribution and struggle of Mr Adolphe de Plevitz in Mauritius, Pundit Totaram Sanadhya of Fiji and others in British Guiana, Trinidad and Tobago, Natal and West Indies in the emancipation of the indentured

labourers from the grip of hardships administered by those inhuman colonialists, should not go into oblivion.

Manilal Maganlal Doctor, was an inspiring ideal leader outside India. He had to face large opposition from the ruling power of the colonials in Mauritius. His bold stand taken in the Supreme Court of Mauritius regarding the Indian custom and dress – (wearing of turban and *fez*) gave Indians confidence that he was a learned lawyer. He hinted at the lack of impartiality of the magistrates whenever they had to deal with cases in which Indians were implicated.

Barrister Manilal’s struggle and task of opposing the exploitation of man by man, especially the mass of working classes, his fight against the ruling power of the white oligarchy, and the conservative press made the Indian immigrants reckon that Mr Manilal Maganlal Doctor was a cultured and highly educated person.

The evidence of grievances, the miscarriage of justice against the defenseless immigrants, the importance and necessity for education of the children of the Indian immigrants and the

influence he brought before the Royal Commission in 1909 in British Mauritius were of a great importance. These had a remarkable effect in the life of Indian immigrants, planters and settlers in other British colonies.

On 13 October 1907, Manilal Doctor, aged 26, arrived in Mauritius at the request of Mr M. K. Gandhi. Four years later, he left Mauritius in 1911. Afterwards, he was asked to go to Fiji by Gandhiji who was the editor of "Indian Opinion" at that time. He reached Suva, the capital of Fiji, on 27 August 1912. He was the first Indian lawyer to arrive in Fiji. This 178th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius coincides with the centenary arrival of Manilal Doctor in Fiji. Manilal was warmly received by the Indian community as well as by the natives Fijians. Pundit Totaram Sanadhya and his friends organized all arrangements for Manilal housing and travel expenses. He stayed for nearly eight years. During his stay in Fiji, he struggled very hard for the dignity, welfare, political, social equality and justice of the Indian immigrants. He attempted to bring unity with the aim, to work for common ideals and general interest among Hindus, Moslems, Parsees and Christians.

In Mauritius, Manilal published "The Hindusthani" which carried the motto "Liberty of Individuals! Fraternity of Man!! Equality of Races!!!". In Fiji, he edited "Indian Settlers". Both papers which were the mouthpiece of those helpless, poor, docile Indian immigrants, raised concerns on the atrocities sustained by the working mass, the labourers, planters and Indian merchants. He fought for the right of citizenship with dignity for the Indians in the colonies they had settled, especially in Mauritius and Fiji. Manilal fought for the termination of Indian indentured labourer system. Fortunately this inhumane system was brought to an end in 1921.

In Fiji, Manilal was assaulted by the British police, arrested and deported without any trial from Fiji. He was considered as a messenger of Gandhiji with a revolutionary mind. He was not allowed to practice in New Zealand and Australia. He was refused entry permit in other colonies. Even in his homeland, India, he was not allowed to practice in Bombay and Madras High Courts. The British Government went further by getting his name struck off the list of Barristers of Middle Temple in London. In Gaya and Bihar, in the early 1922, Manilal started to practice in the District sessions courts due to the fact that he was the holder of LLB degree from an Indian university.

Manilal Maganlal Doctor, led his mission in a very effective way to the noble cause of the downtrodden, helpless and poorest of the poor people despite the difficult conditions he had to undergo with his family. Manilal earned universal recognition by the descendants of the overseas Indians. His life and work are exemplary inspirations to the leaders and decision makers of the world. Manilal's work should not be forgotten, ignored or neglected.

Manilal Maganlal Doctor is a name worthy of being connected to the progress, prosperity and success of Indians outside India. Manilal Maganlal Doctor Memorial Foundation is doing a laudable action since the past fourteen years in creating awareness about his life and work by organising activities and creating awareness among the people of Mauritius. Each 28 July marks his birth anniversary celebration.

It is a matter of pride for the Republic of Mauritius that today the Apravasi Ghat, formerly known as "Coolie Ghat" is inscribed on the list of World Heritage Sites.



A copy of the Hindustani from the Mauritius National Library

LIFE AT THE IMMIGRATION DEPOT

Indira Devi Gyaram, Programme Coordinator

In the nineteenth century, the Immigration Depot, today known as the Apravasi Ghat, welcomed armies of immigrants and bid farewell to those leaving. The Immigration Depot was meant to be a temporary phase in the lives of indentured labourers as technically they were supposed to spend an average of forty eight hours whilst the administrative procedures were carried out after their traumatic voyage at sea.

Just like the 'Shahjahan', many other ships left India and travelled for three weeks to reach Mauritius. On their arrival the passengers had to stay at sea for a longer period of time than expected. Sometimes, the Doctor was not able to inspect the ships and passengers right away after their arrival and the immigrants had to wait helplessly. Clothes were distributed to the newcomers. After taking their bath on board and undergoing a thorough examination, they were allowed to land. If there was any doubt of infection, they were quarantined at 'Pointe aux Cannoniers' to be treated and disinfected.

The Depot was also an emotional space for the immigrants who shared their fears and hopes. It was also a cultural space where European, Asian and African people came into contact with different cultures, religions and languages of each other. Immigrants were anxious about the types of employers they would be assigned to. The new immigrants wanted to learn more about the country and the conditions of work from the old immigrants. However, for administrative purposes, they were kept separately.

The role of the Protector and the Immigration Depot

The Protector of Immigrants was the one in charge of monitoring the immigration system, including responsibilities like disembarkation of immigrants, registering and photographing them, allocating them to sugar estates, reporting on their living and working conditions, and overseeing their re-embarkation and return to India upon completion of their contracts. They could complain to the protector for being ill-treated on the sugar estates or for not being paid for their labour. At the Depot, they would be lodged and fed until their problems were solved. Thus, the Depot was an important place of refuge

for immigrants who were in dispute with their employers. It also served as a shelter for immigrants who were at risk of being condemned as vagrants or those being prosecuted for papers, which were not in order. Even the deserters who had abandoned their previous employment could come to the Depot to get enrolled on either a sugar estate, the Railway Department or Public Works Department.

Apart from the Protector, the staff consisted of a Chief Clerk, an Accountant, a Cashier, a Comptroller; together with five Clerks in the Ticket Branch and one in the Statistical Branch. The Distribution Branch consisted of the inspecting officer also known as the Distributing Clerk. There was also the Photographic Branch, Interpreters and Peons.

The Immigration Office acted as a Registry for the Indian Immigration population. The protector and the Stipendiary Magistrates were empowered to issue tickets to the old immigrants. The introduction of the ticket system was to check vagabondage, as previously, no provision was made in the law for a duplicate one.

Indentured Labourers at the Depot

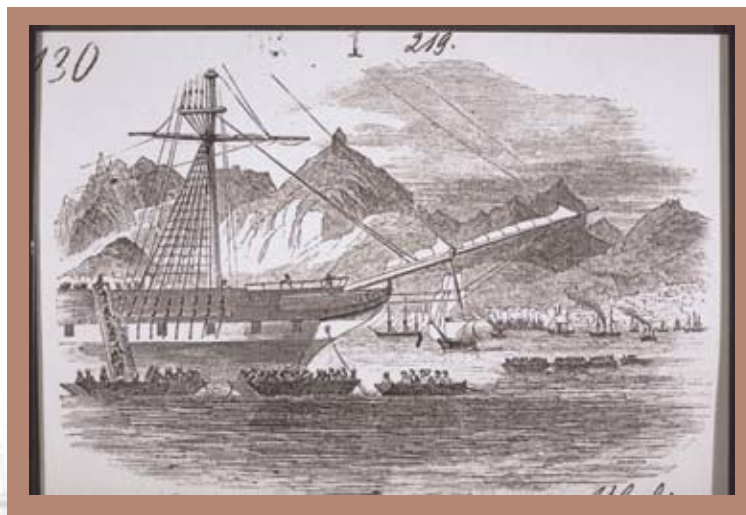
At the Depot, men and women were directed to separate sheds and the children stayed with the women. Some women were miserable as they had been tricked into going on board and they found themselves in a new, strange country, far from their loved ones.

The 'unattached' women had the possibility of finding a husband and the single males could apply to the Protector to have a wife and they could also mention their religious and caste preferences. Those who married religiously in India found that their marriage was not valid and that their children were illegal. Either before embarkation or when they landed, a declaration was signed by two witnesses with a payment of 2s to legalize everything. Colonial

authorities encouraged unions to be formed to avoid social problems existing on sugar estates owing to the shortage of Indian women.

As soon as the morning gun was heard, the activities started at the Depot. They were provided water and soap to maintain a hygienic condition and under the supervision of the Depot Keeper, they were served three meals a day. They then waited for their turn to be 'processed'. They were scared by the new sounds they heard around them, for instance, the train.

Photographing the immigrants was carried out to check false desertion and other offences of the immigrants, as it had been seen that some immigrants would steal or illegally use the papers of other immigrants. For that purpose, additional expenses were charged to the immigrants and they were given two tin mugs by the Depot. In this way, the authorities hoped to control the delinquency rate among Indians. The labourers were given four days by their employers for the reengagement purposes and to be issued tickets bearing their photographs. People like Hon Mr Pitot argued that the extra cost of photographs should have been borne by the Government and



Disembarking immigrants.

Source: Collection of Historical Photographs from the Basel Mission, Switzerland, from digitalibrary.usc.edu

not by the immigrants as it was a matter of maintaining law and order in the colony. The Ticket Branch was sometimes accused of undertaking illicit ticket transactions which were initiated by the clerks with no authority to do so.

There were also instances of violence at the Depot where Peons and Guards had been accused of using rattans on the immigrants who were treated as slaves. Abuses of such types forced the Protector to announce that they were not to beat the immigrants who were there as free people and anyone not obeying his orders was dismissed from duty. The Protector was also asked to intervene in issues such as land disputes, marital disagreements, physical ill-treatment and unpaid wages. The protector preferred that interpreters be selected among migrants waiting to return to India. This practice prevented impositions made by the *Sirdars* represented by the sugar estates at the Depot.

When the newly arrived immigrants felt sick at the Depot, they were examined by the Depot Medical Officer, and were sent to the Civil hospital for treatment. The employer had to bear the expenses of the treatment. The Depot Medical officer was also responsible to provide them with medicines, inspecting cooking equipment and submit reports before the ship left Trou Fanfaron Port. The Depot Medical officer had to prevent the spread of diseases, report to the Emigration agent by inspecting the Depot at least once a week so as not to endanger the lives of other persons.

After the completion of the administrative process, the distribution clerk was responsible for handing over the immigrants to the planters or the agent claiming them. Planters were anxious to secure new immigrants and used all forms of persuasive methods. They used the *sirdars* who promised higher wages and less time of work, to communicate with them.

Some liberated Africans who had been kidnapped from their homes, had been placed under the responsibility of the Protector, after the navy had seized their ship. Many died before reaching the island. Servants were seen attending to invalids and convalescents. The Clerks examined the immigrants' registrations; Guards had the vagrants in their custody, the boarding of ships in the harbour was left to an inspecting officer and the allocation of Indians was taken in charge by the Distribution Clerk.

To avoid gambling, the Protector shipped their belongings in boxes and had them insured at the expense of the Government. Those who died, left their belongings behind. Some of these are still preserved by the descendants.

The Immigration Depot is a rich historical structure where lots of stories and treasures are yet to be discovered.

MGR. AMEDÉE NAGAPEN

A SCHOLAR OF THE CHURCH

(23 October 1930 - 16 June 2012)



Photo of the
Late Mgr. Amedée Nagapen
(Source: Diocèse de Port Louis)

Ashvin Nemchand, Research Assistant

Mgr. Amedée Nagapen passed away at the age of 81 years. Late Mgr. Nagapen was the former Vicar General of the Diocese of Port Louis where he has had a rich career as Bishop and Historian.

Mgr. Nagapen was born in Port Louis. After his studies at the Royal college of Port Louis, he joined the seminary of Croix-Valmer, in France. Ordained in 1955, Bishop Nagapen studied Social Sciences at the University of St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish in Canada. He was also Vice-postulator of the Cause of Beatification of Mother Mary Magdalene of the Cross, Historian of the Diocese of Port Louis Founding father of the Co-operative Credit Union (2008), Grand Officer of the International Academic Order of Verbano (2000).

During his career, Mgr. Nagapen was also engaged in various social activities. He was the chief editor of the magazine *La Vie Catholique*, from 1968 to 1971, President of the Roman Catholic Education Authority (1971-1991) and, Director of the Home Mgr. Murphy (1971-1990). He was honoured as Grand Officer of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean for

his contribution to social progress in Mauritius on 12 March 2005. As a historian, Mgr. Amedée Nagapen published extensively on the history of slavery, marronage and the role of churches in Mauritius.

Before his demise, Mgr. Nagapen contributed to the chapter entitled 'The Indo-Christian Community- A component of the indentured population', to be published in the forthcoming publication of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

I had the privilege of working with Mgr. Nagapen as a young Research Assistant on this chapter. Mgr. Amedée Nagapen provided unexplored avenues of research with regards to the immigration of Catholic indentured labourers. It was under his guidance that research was carried out at the Diocese of Port Louis and the Indenture Immigration Records at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund wishes to pay homage to the memory of Mgr. Nagapen and addresses its deep condolences to all those affected by his demise.

AGTF PROJECTS IN 2013

C. Forest, Head Technical Unit

In July 2010, the AGTF initiated the project of setting up an Interpretation Centre in the historic warehouse adjacent to the World Heritage Property. As at September 2012, 22% of the works have been completed. These works comprise the completion of the rehabilitation of the roof, the detailed plans for interior and landscaping designs, the restoration of some 50 artefacts to be displayed and part of the conservation of the archaeological features. The parts consisting of multimedia and interior graphic designs are being finalised. The opening of the Interpretation Centre expected for next year, will significantly change the relation of the audience with the World Heritage Property. The Interpretation Centre will be a major opportunity to develop consolidated links with the audience and the local community. The objective is not only to improve visitor experience at World Heritage Property, but also encourage the full integration of World Heritage Property in the capital city.

The proclamation of the Planning Policy Guidance 6 – *Urban Heritage Area*:

Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property in June 2011 set out a new vision for development in the area focusing on the consolidation of the country's assets to ensure sustainable development of the city centre. Heritage was identified as one of the main assets for the revitalisation of the city. The AGTF therefore wishes to initiate the preparation of a Local Economic Development plan for the buffer zone. The plan aims at consolidating local economic activities and identifying new opportunities for the area.

The Local Economic Development Plan was identified as one of the objectives of the Management Plan for the World Heritage Property that was reviewed in the course of 2012, in consultation with stakeholders and the local community. The Management Plan is the overarching document for the preservation, management, enhancement and promotion of the World Heritage Property and its buffer zone. It also includes the Conservation Manual and the Development Plan completed in 2012 aiming at offering further support for the revitalisation of the area into a vibrant city centre.

The development of the heritage Site is also the guiding objective for the conservation of the Trianon Old Labourers' barracks located in Saint Jean, Quatre Bornes. After the completion of the conservation project, the AGTF intends to create an exhibition area and propose cultural activities to visitors. To this end, research will be pursued to document further the history of indenture in Mauritius and the functioning of the former Sugar Estate of Trianon.

In 2013, the AGTF team wishes to focus on the completion of the Interpretation Centre which is the second major projects for AGTF following the Aapravasi Ghat Conservation Project. The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre will be an opportunity for visitors to interact with their heritage and history through guided visits, educational activities for children and heritage trails. In this undertaking, AGTF hopes to support a better appreciation of heritage and the revitalisation of Port Louis.

LA RESTAURATION DU MOBILIER ARCHÉOLOGIQUE DU SITE DE L'AAPRAVASI GHAT

Renaud Bernadet, Conservateur-restaurateur

Après la fouille archéologique du site dit du « warehouse » à l'emplacement du futur *Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre*, conduite entre novembre 2010 et janvier 2011, un programme de conservation-restauration a été mis en place. La première intervention a porté sur un lot de petits objets et principalement sur des monnaies retrouvées dans différentes couches stratigraphiques. Ces objets ont été envoyés en Italie pour y être restaurés. La grande majorité du mobilier était en alliage cuivreux, recouvert de couches de corrosion et de sédiments qui le rendaient illisible. Un nettoyage mécanique a été effectué sous loupe binoculaire à l'aide de petits outils pour ôter les couches de corrosion, tel une micro-fouille, afin de retrouver la surface d'origine porteuse de toutes les informations permettant leur étude. Les monnaies, une fois lisibles, ont immédiatement permis une datation plus précise des couches archéologiques qui les contenaient (fig. 1). Les autres objets restaurés ont aussi permis d'obtenir des informations très intéressantes, comme par exemple, (fig. 2) le numéro de régiment anglais sur la face d'un bouton d'uniforme, et sur l'autre, le lieu et le nom de la société de production.

fig.1: Face et revers, après restauration, d'un *Halfpenny* anglais datant de 1843 trouvé pendant les fouilles archéologiques.



fig.2: Bouton en alliage cuivreux après restauration. Produité par la société Smith, Kemp & Wright fondée en 1840, il pourrait appartenir au 49^{ème} régiment d'infanterie anglais (Princess Charlotte of Wales).



Au cours du mois d'avril 2012, une seconde intervention de conservation-restauration a été entreprise sur place, dans les locaux de l'Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund situé à Port Louis. Il s'agissait de restaurer principalement des céramiques et des objets en verre choisis en fonction de leurs significations historique et archéologique pour être prochainement exposés dans le *Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre*. Cette mission fut aussi l'occasion d'accueillir des stagiaires de l'Université de Maurice afin de les initier aux premiers gestes de la conservation-restauration d'objets archéologiques.

Le lot choisi pour la conservation-restauration se composait de différents types de récipients et de contenants provenant de France et d'Angleterre: des assiettes, des plats et des bols en faïence, des bouteilles de différentes dimensions en verre (fig. 3), des lampes à huile et une jarre de fabrication indienne (fig.4). Tous ces objets étaient fragmentés et très lacunaires (fig.5), vraisemblablement parce qu'ils provenaient d'une zone de rejet adjacente à l'ancien Hôpital du « warehouse ».

fig.3: Bouteille en verre très fragmentée après remontage et consolidation.



fig.4: Jarre lacunaire de production probablement indienne après restauration.



fig.5: Assiettes en faïence fine lacunaires et divers fragments d'origine anglaise de type *Willow pattern*.



Préalablement à la restauration, les archéologues ont effectué une première division typologique pour reconduire les fragments aux différentes formes de céramiques en considérant une série d'indicateurs comme la composition et la coloration de la pâte, le type de décor, les traces de fabrication, l'état de conservation ou les éventuels défauts de production. La tâche du restaurateur fut alors de recomposer les multiples fragments afin de redonner aux objets une lisibilité dans le but d'assurer la compréhension du public. Toutes les interventions ont été effectuées en suivant un code déontologique très précis. Les matériaux utilisés lors de la restauration (consolidant, adhésifs, produits nécessaires aux intégrations) ont été choisis pour leur grande réversibilité, stabilité et compatibilité. Il a été choisi de limiter au maximum les intégrations des lacunes. Seul un bol peint d'origine anglaise présentant une instabilité structurelle a dû être en partie intégré. Dans ce cas, l'intégration fut soulignée grâce à un ressaut d'un millimètre et une mise en teinte « neutre » basée sur la coloration de la pâte.

Prochainement, une dernière intervention de restauration débutera sur un lot d'objets ferreux. Il s'agira avant tout de lutter contre la dégradation qui peut s'accroître après l'exhumation des objets lors des fouilles archéologiques, les objets en fer étant particulièrement sensibles au changement d'environnement. Des traitements de stabilisation permettront d'arrêter le phénomène de corrosion, de limiter de nouvelles altérations et de favoriser leur conservation sur le long terme. Les objets seront ensuite restaurés afin de permettre leur étude techno-typologique et leur exposition dans le futur *Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre*.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON NEW PERSPECTIVES ON INDENTURED LABOUR

(1825 – 1925)

Babita D. Bahadoor, Research Assistant

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Research Council organised a 4-day International Scientific Conference on *New Perspectives on Indentured Labour (1825 – 1925)* from 5 to 7 December 2011. Forty one international historians and scholars of indenture from Réunion Island, India, South Africa, Mozambique, France, UK, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname and the USA participated in the conference. The objective was to share current knowledge on indentured labour systems from around the world, foster new perspectives on these systems and deepening our understanding of the indenture experience in all its complexity.

The conference provided a forum for researchers, historians, anthropologists, literary scholars and young academics to present and discuss their research and views on the indenture system.

After a 4-day fruitful deliberations, the resolutions presented included the establishment of an *International Indentured Labour Route Project* (IILRP). An International Scientific Committee consisting of members from all participating countries was created to implement and monitor this project. The first undertaking of the International Scientific Committee would be the development of the *Indentured Labour Global Database Initiative* (ILGDI).

The conference demonstrated that there is the emergence of new historical approach and methodologies in the study of indentureship globally. In addition to new concepts, there was better understanding of how the system of indenture really functioned in various countries. The history of indenture can be understood not only through historical writings but also through oral history and other scientific disciplines.

The conference culminated with a cultural programme promoting the intangible cultural heritage held at the Trianon Indentured Labourers Barracks.



Launching of the book of Mrs Leela Gujadhur Sarup entitled 'Colonial Emigration' and 'Facts about Indian Indentured Labour' by Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee, Minister of Arts and Culture. © AGTF



Souvenir photo of the closure of the International Scientific Conference during a cultural programme at Trianon Indentured Labourers Barracks. © AGTF

Rapporteurs' report

The international conference offered to focus on new perspectives for the research on indenture traditionally limited to the period 1825-1925.

- It showed that periodisation may be explored through new perspectives: papers presented showed that research turns to explore earlier years to better understand the scope and extent of indenture.
- The 11 sessions of the conference proposed to approach indenture through various themes to better appreciate the indentured phenomenon.

Theme 1: The notion of indenture itself and that of unfree labour`

- a. It seemed important to revisit the notion of indenture to highlight the fact that the traditional topics of research may in fact be enlarged to incorporate new perspectives that were never envisaged before such as the relation of indenture to the history of convicts and other migrations brought to various colonies just before the full development of indenture;
- b. Revisit the link of indenture to slavery away from the Tinkerian tradition and explore furthermore what was the nature of the continuity between slavery and indenture and their relations;
- c. It was also noted that it was imperative to include the views of the descendants in historiography;
- d. This session highlighted the need to develop new methodologies for the study of indenture including the involvement of descendants.

Theme 2: Indenture System

- a. The papers presented the indenture system and shift in the identity of indentured immigrants from India to other colonies of adoption. It showed how immigrants managed to negotiate their identities as members of the diaspora. Brij Lal used the term "banished" to refer to this shift;
- b. Health, ill treatments and medical policies at the time of indenture

showed how the research on health could shed a new light on indenture by exploring the involvement of the colonial state in the health policies and open up to a wider understanding of indenture in local context such as in La Reunion. It was also noted that the theme of health could offer interesting comparative perspectives of indenture in various colonies;

- c. The results of research presented in this session also highlighted the existence of a tangible heritage of indenture that is worth preserving as a way to sustain the society and foster its identity.

Theme 3: Exploring the experiences of indentured immigrants:

- a. Papers presented the ship experiences;
- b. The theme resistance was deeply analysed;
- c. The presentation of rites and rituals highlighted the modes of transposition of traditions in new contexts and also, the dynamics of adoption of new cultural practices by indentured labourers;
- d. Indentured labourers also reconstructed their own traditions and adopted other cultural practices to allow the continuation of their traditions;
- e. 'Other' indentured immigrants are those who came from other countries than India;
 - i. The indentured experience was not a static and established system between India and other colonies, it also incorporated a wider dimension including populations traditionally victims of slavery.

Theme 4: Research on the contemporary memorial framework of indenture:

- a. Representations and memory of descendants mainly focused on the various representations of the indentured labourer in contemporary context and is informative of how the contemporary population perceives its past;

- b. It was noted that India as the motherland, appeared finally as a far away imaginary place and that the representations of indentured labourers were considered within contemporary dynamics carrying current demands in the portrayal of the indentured worker;
- c. This session also highlighted the complexity of the diaspora dynamics: can we speak about diaspora when most descendants now live in various countries and have adopted different cultures?
- d. It also showed the need for cultural and artistic exchange to be able to share this idea of diaspora and representations of the motherland.
- e. Creolisation and interculturality were also discussed in this context:
 - i. This session first brought forward the situation of the descendants of indentured labourers;
 - ii. Traditions have survived through time and have integrated other cultures' practices and believes to survive. Language is one example of this. This session also showed the impact of globalization on the traditions and how these traditions still serve the definition of a specific identity and also contribute to nation building;
 - iii. In the undertaking of these studies, we may also want to move away from the euro-centric concept and let the population voice out their position;
- f. Another dynamic was "memorializing leisure": work and play in plantation time.

Theme 5: Setting up of the indenture labour route project.

- a. Creation of an international committee for the elaboration of an international database of indenture migration.

In conclusion, the conference particularly highlighted the need to join and collaborate all together to focus on ways to open up new perspectives on indenture. One step towards this goal is to materialize the project of Indenture Labour Route.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION OF ICOMOS EXPERT TO AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit

Following the decisions adopted at the World Heritage Committee at its 35th Session held between 19 and 29 June 2011, a UNESCO Reactive Monitoring mission undertook an evaluation of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property from 19 to 22 March 2012 “to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the Planning Policy Guidance in sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property”.

The reactive monitoring mission was conducted by Dr Muhammad Juma, ICOMOS expert and Director of the Department of Urban and Rural Planning in Zanzibar. His task consisted in assessing the progress achieved by Mauritius since the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List in 2006, and in supporting Mauritius in the enhancement of the management system for the monitoring and management of heritage in the buffer zone of the World Heritage Property.

The report of the Reactive Monitoring Mission presented at the World Heritage Committee in July 2012, acknowledges the effort conducted by the State Party to put in place significant tools for the conservation and management of the



Dr Muhammad Juma at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site © AGTF collection

Property as well as the setting up of a Technical Committee under the aegis of the Municipal Council of Port Louis to assess applications for development permits.

UNESCO invited Mauritius to continue its efforts to strengthen capacity in heritage conservation and secure the necessary resources for the effective operation of the managerial framework in place for the Buffer Zone.

DEVELOPMENT VISION FOR THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY BUFFER ZONE

Natasha Kheddoo-Ramcharitar, Research Assistant

After the proclamation of the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG6) for the Buffer Zone (BZ) of the World Heritage Property in 2011, it became imperative to have a consolidated approach of development in the heritage area.

The BZ comprises many important landmarks that are highly significant for the history of the country. It is located in the economic centre of the Capital City and partly in the Port Area. Development could be further encouraged with the improvement of basic elements which are also key points in the area. The first element that could be considered is the improvement of the streetscape and urban design. The heritage area can be linked to the rest of the Capital through

connections to other landmarks such as the Company Gardens, China Town and Citadelle. There are already successful ventures such as the Caudan Waterfront which can be complementary to the development of the BZ. Improving the pedestrian accessibility and reorganising some places such as the Granary, Immigration Square and Military Hospital (Ex-DWC) would certainly help in enhancing the quality of life in the area.

In order to make this development vision a reality, the AGTF took the initiative to organise Consultative Committee meetings with the objective to collect the views of the local population and relevant stakeholders on potential and viable

development in the BZ. Following the responses obtained, Dr François Odendaal, AGTF Consultant, drafted a Development Plan (DP), elaborating a draft vision for the BZ.

"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."

In the Consultative Committee organised in February 2012 at the City Council of Port Louis, Dr F. Odendaal presented a Ten-Point Plan to revitalise the area in a sustainable manner.

Point 1: Private Property Incentives to restore, and possibly Incentives to move certain Business Activities

Incentive schemes such as grants and loans could be considered to encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of historical structures. Heritage buildings could be rehabilitated to undertake activities in new economic sectors such as cultural tourism to generate income in the Buffer Zone.

Point 2: Street Upgrades (Sir William Newton and Farquhar)

Proposals to uplift streets such as Sir William Newton and Farquhar to enhance the Buffer Zone 2.

Point 3: Public Infrastructure (Bus Terminal, Market and More)

Both the Central Market and the bus terminal at Immigration Square are in need of upgrading. Their upgrading should be responding to sensitive design instilling architectural harmony and add value to the area. To reduce the traffic flow at *Gare du Nord*, the current bus terminal or at least the side of it, closest to Apravasi Ghat, could be converted into a 'drop and go' or pickup zone while the buses are stationed to wait in another location.

Point 4: Urban Design for Buffer Zone

Minor urban design improvements can be undertaken for the Buffer Zone which will mitigate traffic problems and optimise the use of space. Such design can be part of the development of an Area Action Plan or may be achieved through an intense planning workshop in which architects and planners would participate. ICOMOS has expressed its willingness to participate in such a design workshop.

Point 5: Long Term: Current Harbour uses, Fishing Port Section and Adjacent Properties

In an ideal situation, the vision described in the Development Plan would include the port area. Its insertion into the city as a core attraction would add significant value. However, the relocation of the fishing port cannot be considered in the short term considering the importance of the fishing industry.

Similarly, the area where the cold storage facility is located would be a prime location to rehabilitate in order to open up access to Apravasi Ghat along the shoreline.

Point 6: Long Term: The existing Motorway

The existing motorway divides the city centre in two parts and cuts off the waterfront from the rest of Port Louis. The vision for development in the area would encourage its conversion into a boulevard with much friendlier qualities for pedestrians. This proposal takes into consideration the opening of the Harbour Bridge and the Ring Road.

Point 7: Tourism Development

Planning of tourism trails and a heritage trail by the City Council of Port Louis would add significant value to the area and raise awareness on its cultural significance. Trails can also be designed in such a way that the complete history of Mauritius would be communicated at various key locations.

Point 8: Making use of Statutory Planning Frameworks and Tools

In order to accommodate finer details and have specific actions fleshed out as well as parties responsible for undertaking them, an Area Action Plan is recommended for the Buffer Zone and its surroundings.

Point 9: Improving the Situation related to Hawkers

The issue of hawkers is recurrent. To tackle this issue towards beneficial development, it would be proposed to hold a workshop involving the hawkers and small shop owners, as well as the City Council of Port Louis, the AGTF and relevant Ministries to address key issues and propose sustainable solutions.

Point 10: Buffer Zone 1 Development

The Buffer Zone 1 is perhaps the biggest heritage-aligned development opportunity in Mauritius. The granary and suit of old historical building have seized the imagination of many promoters and developers. It is proposed that a call be put out without delay to interested parties to come forth with proposals and that this opportunity be made widely known. If this area is rehabilitated, it would add value to the whole Port Louis city centre and ultimately impact positively on the Buffer Zone 2.



Consultative Committee Meeting. Source: AGTF photo collection

REVIEWING THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABILITY

C. Forest, Head Technical Unit

Following developments brought by the proclamation of the Planning Policy Guidance in 2011 and the progress of work since the inscription on the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has undertaken the review of the Management Plan (2006) for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property.

The Management Plan is an overarching document required by UNESCO to ensure the preservation and sustainability of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property. The Management Plan describes the World Heritage Site, its outstanding Universal Value and related significances, and analyses the issues affecting the conservation and management of the World Heritage Property.

“A “management plan” may come in different legal and operational forms but is always a coherent instrument that takes into consideration the specific characteristics not only of a site but also of the area around it. The plan, bringing together all the players and instruments involved in a site and the surrounding area should serve as a development coordination tool; (..) in the long term it is meant to be a sustainable development tool integrated into the environment.”

(UNESCO about WHP in Syria cited in the Presentation of Christophe Graz on Management of Heritage Sites and Artefacts, Euromed Heritage, Petra, Jordan, 17-19 May 2010).

The objective of the Management Plan is to describe the approach to the management of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site that will retain and strengthen the balance between conserving the historic environment, enhancing the local character and amenities of the World Heritage Property and its surroundings, with the need to develop the area into a vibrant heritage area.

The contents of the Management Plan are elaborated upon a vision for the future for the World Heritage Property and its surroundings, and contain key principles and objectives that guide the implementation of this vision. In this respect, the Management Plan is a key document.

Vision for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property

The Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site will be maintained and promoted for future generations.

Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property will be a cultural landmark fostering urban heritage management and conservation in close interaction with the local community to support national unity and identity.

The review of the Management Plan provides the opportunity to update the progress of work on projects completed by AGTF in collaboration with stakeholders since 2006. Most of those may not be visible to the public but the achievements indicate that the AGTF worked hand in hand with stakeholders to set up a legal and managerial framework in response to the needs established by the World Heritage Status.

The completion of major projects highlighted the need for an integrated approach to heritage management. Therefore, the strategy adopted to prepare the Management Plan was to define key themes and organise workshops with stakeholders to address specific issues in anticipation. A workshop was organised by the AGTF and the Ministry of Arts and Culture on Thursday 14 June 2012 with the specific aim of presenting the overall Management Plan to stakeholders. The objective was to collect views and inputs on the proposed Management Plan 2012 and on the Development Plan for the Buffer Zone.

A survey revealed that the workshop helped in understanding the purpose of the Management Plan and 100% of participants supported the proposed vision for the World Heritage Property. 85% of participants also replied that the Management Plan would help supporting their professional undertakings. The outcome of the workshops was integrated in the Management Plan: the plan is therefore the result of the synergy with stakeholders and the local community.

This integrated approach for the preparation of the Management Plan aimed at encouraging the participation and contribution of all in the management and promotion of the World Heritage Property and its surroundings. The involvement of all is the key to ensure the sustainability of the World Heritage Property.



PICTORIAL PRESENTATION OF THE BUFFER ZONE IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

Not only is the Buffer Zone (BZ) the curtilage containing the former 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.

The Buffer Zone 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 Aapravasi Ghat 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 Aapravasi Ghat 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. The continuity in land use is also coupled with the continuity in the nature of commercial activities stressing the existence of long commercial and ownership tradition.

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 present 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.



Aerial View of the Aapravasi Ghat Buffer Zone from Signal Mountain in 1890 (Source: *British National Archives*)



The Customs House and General Post Office in 1870 (Source: *British National Archives*)



The Ex-Waqf Building in Place d'Armes in 1890 (Source: *British National Archives*)

NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE INDENTURED DIASPORA: BOIS MARCHAND CEMETERY

Dr Krish Seetah, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University, Dr Sasa Caval, Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies, Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian, Dr Diego Calaon, Department of Economics and Environment, IDEAS, Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia 30121, Italy.

The indentured diaspora has had a lasting legacy on Mauritius. Studying the complex movements of peoples to and from the island involves a truly multidisciplinary approach, and brings together historical and archaeological traditions to uncover new aspects of labourer life-ways. Archaeological works have been used extensively at the Aapravasi Ghat, to study the details of site organisation and building construction, as well as Trianon Barracks, adding new dimensions to our understanding of labourers' daily life. Pushing into new territory, a project was initiated in 2011 focussing on Bois Marchand. Initially under the aegis of the Truth and Justice Commission, a health Committee headed by Benjamin Moutou, the research showed such significant potential for furthering our understanding of indenture. It has since been brought under the umbrella of the AGTF and continued in 2012.

Bois Marchand, at the time of its creation, was the largest cemetery in the Indian Ocean. Historical sources indicate that this site was the final resting place for indentured labourers who had died from malaria. The smaller cemeteries of the capital city were overcrowded due to the great numbers of people dying from various epidemics, causing considerable problems for local communities and the colonial government. At that time, the administration particularly health inspectorates, were unaware that malaria was in fact passed on by mosquitoes, assuming it was conveyed through 'bad air': hence *mal aria* (derived from Italian). This misunderstanding of the diseases aetiology, and relatively minor misnomer, had dramatic consequences. Resources were put into quarantine rather than sanitary infrastructure. Thus, the very causes of malaria, stagnant water, were not targeted, which ultimately exacerbated the situation and also contributed to outbreaks of cholera.

The above highlights the complexity and interrelationship between administration, infrastructure and 'on-the-ground' implications for local Mauritians during the colonial period. As unfortunate as the circumstances, the fact the Bois Marchand exists, offers a unique opportunity to investigate the life – and death – of labourers from the surrounding area. By searching in the collections of the

Ministry of Housing and Lands and other historical data provided by Mr Moutou, we were able to piece together a potted history of the establishment, development and changes that have occurred to this cemetery. Through our archaeological investigations carried out in 2011, we have recovered a small assemblage of eight individuals for scientific analysis. These skeletal remains are currently under osteological study to reveal details of life history and disease. We have so far completed an osteological assessment of the skeletal remains recovered, including digital scanning of specific bones to investigate palaeopathology. Figure 1 shows the type of condition, fusion of the lower vertebrae, which could be indicative of a hard working life. Ancient DNA and isotopic analysis will be performed to study racial affinity, migration and diet with results pending.



Fig.1: Digital scan of fusion of the lower vertebrae

While the practical details and objectives of our planned research have been met, a number of unanticipated but highly welcome results have been forthcoming. Through close collaboration with the Caretaker of cemetery, Mr Ramlall, and his work force, we had the good fortune to witness how closely the 'craft' of grave digging has perpetuated to this day, showing unexpected similarities in the idiosyncrasies of inhumation. Traditional methods employing hoes and picks are still favoured; the modern grave diggers could identify where the ancient graves

were to within a few inches, despite the fact that the ground was completely overgrown with no grave markers whatsoever and only a 'borne' stone as guide. This was made possible by the fact that the technique for laying out the dead has not changed, evidencing a socio-technical link that spans over 150 years of local knowledge and practice.

Bois Marchand offers an exceptional opportunity to link modern ethnographic, historic and archaeological data as yet unseen in any similar context in the Indian Ocean, and perhaps in the rest of the post-medieval colonial world. This cemetery has many secrets to reveal and we are certain that it will deliver many new insights into the conditions of life, and circumstances of death, of labourers interred in its hallowed grounds.

This work has been made possible through the financial assistance of the Society of Antiquaries of London. I gratefully acknowledge the support of this world renowned Society for furthering archaeological investigations in Mauritius.



Tombs excavated at Bois Marchand cemetery, July 2012.

Source: AGTF photo collection

KALIMAYES IN MAURITIUS

Mr Bhuruth Dinand, Board member

Mauritius, the Star and the Key of the Indian Ocean, abounds with diversity of culture at every ridge. In all corners of the country, multiple languages like Creole, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Urdu, English, French, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Chinese are spoken. The early Hindu immigrants who hailed from the same village or region in Bihar, often travelled in groups. Therefore, they were better able to set up the social structures and religious practices familiar to them at home. They brought with them small statues or images of their deities which they used for prayers and offerings, often installing them into small shrines. There were cases where indentured labourers brought along their sacred texts like the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad Gita* which were read in the *baitkas* and *shivalas* in all villages. Every village in Mauritius has a shrine known as the *Kalimaye*, which is always situated in its outskirt. One of the oldest *Kalimayes* is found at Antoinette Phooliyar.

The shrine consists of an altar containing seven stones, representing the seven sisters (or goddesses) of popular deities and some sort of marked stone or small shrine to the goddess *Kali*, the main goddess of the *Kalimaye*. *Kali* is represented as the consort of Lord *Shiva* on whose body she is often seen standing. The goddess *Kali* presents herself in different forms: *Durga*, *Devi*, *Draupadi Amen*. She is also known as the *Sato Bahini* (seven sisters). Around the skirts of the *Kalimaye* are usually found several trees that often house male gods, one of which is the protector god of the village, known as *Dhi* in Bhojpuri. The *Kalimaye* shrines were some of the sacred places created by the indentured labourers, for their own protection and their families in the sugar estate villages. The cult of *Kalimaye* is very strong today especially in rural Mauritius where the hindus offer “*kheer*” (made of rice, milk and sugar), *puri* (made of flour) and the non-hindi speaking hindus offer *canjee* (cooked rice) together with leaves of *Moringa* and coconut *chutney*.

Today many hindus and non-hindi speaking hindus offer prayers on Fridays in most of the *Kalimayes* in Mauritius.



Kalimayes at La Clemence, Riviere Du Rempart and Antoinette Phooliyar © B. Dinand

ACTING TOWARDS THE PROMOTION AND SAFEGUARDING OF THE LIVING HERITAGE ASSOCIATED WITH INDENTURE

Kiran Chuttoo-Jankee, Research Assistant

The living heritage of our country is the mainspring of our cultural diversity. With globalisation and changing lifestyles of Mauritian, these elements of intangible heritage are gradually disappearing. Along with this evolution, knowledge of the associated practices and traditions are gradually fading from living memory. The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund works towards the safeguard of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as Mauritius is a signatory

to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Moreover, the Aapravasi Ghat was also inscribed on the world Heritage list under criterion (vi) stressing the importance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in its cultural significance. Therefore, research on intangible heritage associated with indentured immigration constitutes undeniably a key research objective for the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

The traditions, practices, representations, expressions as well as knowledge and skills associated with indentured labour and the indenture experience have been transmitted from generation to generation. Many of these were passed on through oral traditions, either in their original form or in new forms incorporating changes resulting from modern practices and beliefs or from the influence of other cultures. Hence, the unique identity of Mauritius was constituted through exchanges of culture and traditions resulting from successive waves of migration of people from different cultural backgrounds.

According to UNESCO Convention, the intangible cultural heritage is manifested in five main domains: oral traditions and expressions including language as a vehicle of the intangible Cultural Heritage. The objective of the AGTF is therefore to conduct research aiming at documenting the following elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage:

- Performing arts (such as traditional music, dance and theatre);
- Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the Universe and
- Traditional craftsmanship.

Last year, the AGTF carried out a project partly funded by UNESCO to constitute an inventory of elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The inventory was an opportunity to consider the elements of intangible heritage on a global scale as well as to encourage their recognition at the national level. The objective was to identify elements with core cultural significance for the experience of indenture. The inventory has provided a basis to formulate concrete plans to safeguard the elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage concerned.

In line with the constitution of the inventory and with the recommendation of UNESCO to continue research on indenture, our institution organises on a regular basis, various activities to provide a platform for the promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Varshik Parampara Utsav* has now become an annual feature and this activity solicits the participation of the local community and encourages community involvement in the preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage associated with the indenture experience in Mauritius.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mauritius was also promoted during the International Conference on Indenture organised by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund when several delegates from abroad took part in the multicultural program on 8 December, 2011 at Trianon. It was a unique opportunity to showcase the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the various countries which experienced in indenture.

According to UNESCO Convention 2003, safeguarding measures must always be developed and applied with the consent and involvement of the local community. This is the reason why Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund always involves tradition bearers in all its activities. The constitution of an Inventory of elements of ICH is the first step towards the safeguard and the recognition of the ICH. The activities and research on Intangible Cultural Heritage at AGTF aim at identifying key elements and submitting a proposal for their inscription on the representative list of UNESCO.

RÉCRÉATION D'ANTAN

Au-delà de l'aspect ludique des jeux, ces activités qui regorgent d'imagination, renferment de façon sous-jacente les mécanismes de la construction identitaire et sociale de l'individu. Nous comprenons alors son importance dans le développement de l'enfant. Nous éprouvons la nécessité de faire un tour d'horizon des témoignages de personnes âgés entre 70 et 80 ans, au sujet de ces amusements auxquelles ils s'adonnaient avec passion, imagination et exaltation, recueillis entre 2009 et 2010. Les témoignages ont été recueillis dans le cadre du projet d'histoire orale « *From Camp to VRS* » initié par l'Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

Le faible revenu de ces travailleurs de l'industrie sucrière ne leur permettait pas d'investir dans ces récréations qui pouvaient paraître futiles. En effet, l'exigence quotidienne était de trouver le moyen de survivre en ces temps difficiles.



Photos prise lors d'une journée sportive organisée par nos interlocuteurs et membres du village de Plaines des papayes afin de nous montrer les jeux d'antan. De gauche à droite, Natchcheddy Vinod, Govindoo Mohit, Seewoo Radhamohum, Chumun Baldeo, Ramdewar Manilal. (Source: AGTF, 2009)

Le terrain de jeu de ces enfants était alors le lieu même de leur vie. Les jeux prenaient naissance dans leur imagination. Dans le Camp, coupé du reste du monde, entouré d'une nature florissante et surtout de champs immenses qui laissaient développer l'imaginaire, ces enfants avaient la possibilité de s'exprimer.

Aujourd'hui encore ces jeux comme le *Sapsiway*, *Servolan*, *Kanet*, *Lamarel*, et autres retentissent et ravivent la mémoire de plus d'uns. Certains moins connus, comme le *Gouli Danta* (*Gilli Danda*), sublimant par l'absence de mémoire. Ce jeu très populaire originaire de l'Inde ressemble beaucoup au cricket et au baseball. Le *gouli danta* se joue avec deux bâtons en bois ; un *gilli* (un bâtonnet d'environ 7 cm ayant aux extrémités pointues) et un *danta* (un bâtonnet d'environ 60 cm) utilisé pour frapper le *gouli*. Dans ce jeu, le joueur enfonce le *gouli* en l'inclinant dans le sol et laisse une extrémité en dehors ou le pose sur le sol. Le joueur utilise le *danta* pour envoyer le *gouli* le plus haut possible et le frappe ensuite aussi loin que possible. L'adversaire devrait alors attraper le *gouli* sans le faire tomber. Ce jeu quelque peu dangereux, était l'amusement préféré des enfants.

D'autres se rappelleront du ballon de foot fabriqué avec un pamplemousse enduit d'huile de coco. D'autres jeux d'enfant, comme les pistolets, étaient fabriqués à partir de tiges de bambous et les balles avec les graines de bois d'oiseau. Les colliers des jeunes enfants étaient fabriqués avec les graines de

Christelle Miao Foh, Research Assistant

Sipay et d'autres, avec les tiges de feuilles de manioc.

Ils exploraient leur environnement, créaient des jeux de rôle et fabriquaient des babioles entre autres. Ces jeux permettaient à ces enfants de se retrouver, découvrir ensemble leurs univers, développer des liens sociaux et culturels, vivre des situations qui leur permettaient de se préparer aux difficultés futures et à faire face aux situations réelles de la vie.

Beaucoup se retrouvent dans ces jeux. A travers les générations, une synergie se crée. La connaissance et l'expérience acquises à la fois en jouant et lors de la fabrication du jeu, se transmettent d'une génération à l'autre. Le contact entre les générations tisse des liens étroits entre les individus transmettant l'expérience vécue et ainsi, la culture et une partie de leur histoire.



Démonstration du *Gouli danta* par un joueur: Tenant de sa main droite le *danta* et posé au sol le *gouli*. (Source: AGTF, 2009)

A RECIPE FROM OUR ANCESTORS

KASSAR

Aartee Pydatalli, Field Guide

Culinary tradition is one form of Intangible Cultural Heritage which is part of the domain of social practices, rituals and festive events. In the course of a compilation of an inventory of elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage, we came across several recipes that are gradually forgotten by the new generation and only grandmothers still have knowledge of it. One of these recipes is Kassar. It is a special preparation of sweet, hot and spicy ingredients, given to women who has just given birth to a child. This cake is highly solicited but rarely available nowadays.

Kassar is eaten for many reasons besides nutrition. The main purpose of this cake is to provide heat to the womb of the mother to safeguard her against infections. However, Kassar is also beneficial to combat cold, cough, flu and fever.

Ingredients for the preparation of the Kassar:

2 cups of rice
3 Tbsp of methi
250 gm ginger powder
2 tsp gramme (chana)
1 Tbsp lentils
1 Tbsp dhol tips
1 tsp mustard oil
2 ½ cups brown sugar
2 cups of water
3 cardamoms (crushed)

Method

1. Roast rice, methi, lentils, gramme (chana) and dhol tips over low heat till light brown and blend well.
2. Prepare a syrup with 2 cups of water, 2 ½ cups of brown sugar and crushed cardamom.
3. In a large bowl, add the roasted ingredients, ginger powder and the mustard oil. Pour the syrup little by little and mix well.
4. Let the dough chill and make small balls. Store in an airtight container.

This simple recipe is good for the health. It is interesting to note that even though Kassar originated from India, yet the ingredients used in Mauritius and its purpose largely differ. Kassar is an after prayer offering to devotees mainly in the Northern parts of India. The sweet is offered in both Hindu temples and homes. Kassar, in India includes various fruits added to it and is usually offered with *channamrit*. It is mainly made on *Purnima* (full moon day).



Home made Kassar by Mrs Pydatalli

EVENTS AND OUTREACH

COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL

« ENGAGISME, DIASPORA ET CULTURE INDIENNE DANS LES ANCIENNES COLONIES : AGIR POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE LA COOPÉRATION AVEC L'INDE » UNIVERSITÉ DE LA RÉUNION, AVRIL 2012

Céline Ramsamy-Giancone, Secrétaire ODI-Réunion

Dans le cadre du colloque international initié par l'ODI-Réunion (Organisation pour les Initiatives de la Diaspora), l'Université de la Réunion, a accueilli des conférenciers indiens, ainsi que des chercheurs de la région Océan Indien : Ile Maurice, de New-Delhi, Pondichéry, Paris, Madagascar, Afrique du Sud, du 5 au 7 avril 2012.

En faveur d'un partenariat entre la Région Réunion, le Conseil Régional et le CIRCI (Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche sur la construction identitaire), l'ODI-Réunion a réuni historiens, juristes,

économistes, spécialistes des questions identitaires et de la culture indienne afin de débattre sur les liens passés, présents et à venir entre l'Inde et sa diaspora, présente dans les anciennes colonies. L'objectif que s'était fixée l'organisation était avant tout de dresser un bilan de ces relations, afin d'engager une réflexion sur des modalités de développement.

L'histoire de l'Engagement, une dominante du colloque :

Les aspects juridiques et économiques ont été abordés sous plusieurs aspects. Ains, Stéphane Law-Hang (Université

Paul Cézanne Aix Marseille France) a examiné le statut de l'engagé et son traitement par des colons expropriateurs d'esclaves. Ce statut n'aurait pu épargner l'engagé de mauvais traitements, au niveau des conditions de voyage, mais aussi de leur arrivée dans la colonie.

Jean-Régis Ramsamy (journaliste, président de l'ODI-Réunion) a retracé les diverses étapes de la vie de l'indien dans la colonie, tandis que Prosper Eve (Université de la Réunion) a examiné son intégration sous l'angle de l'appropriation foncière. En effet, cette



Les participants du colloque à l'Université de la Réunion, Avril 2012

intégration aurait été favorisée par la possibilité pour l'engagé de prolonger son séjour en payant une taxe, mais également par l'acquisition de terres agricoles.

L'apport de l'île Maurice et de l'Afrique du Sud

Durant cette période, la presse locale mauricienne a diffusé régulièrement des informations liées à l'immigration, une étude de Babita Devi Bahadoor (Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund) a été

consacrée et présentée sur ce sujet.

Govinden Vishwanaden (Institut Mahatma Gandhi) s'est interrogé sur les raisons de l'interruption de l'immigration en février 1939, en s'appuyant sur l'étude de neuf navires transportant des passagers durant cette période.

La contribution de l'Afrique du Sud a été apportée par le professeur Chetty Thiagaraj Dasaratha (Directeur DC Communication Afrique du Sud), qui a décrit les rôles historiques joués par les Africains du Sud indiens, le gouvernement et le peuple indien, dans la lutte pour la libération de l'Afrique du Sud.

Perspectives pour l'histoire de l'Engagisme

Celle-ci semble destinée à se développer, présageant de projets propices à la valorisation et à la sensibilisation des peuples au patrimoine lié à l'engagisme: Dehoutee Ballgobin (Université de Maurice) a ainsi pu présenter celui de

l'« Aapravasi Ghat », ayant permis de classer le port de débarquement des indiens au Patrimoine de l'Humanité.

Dans le même sens, l'éditeur indien Sayantan Chakravarty (magazine « India Empire », a rappelé que l'Inde se situe « à la croisée des chemins avec sa diaspora » et qu'elle lui ouvre ses portes aussi bien en termes de projets économiques que ceux en liaison avec le travail de mémoire. L'intérêt pour l'Inde de promouvoir ces relations a également été souligné par le Professeur Ajay Dubey (fondateur de l'ODI- Jawaharlal Nehru Université –New-Delhi)

Conclusions

Ce colloque à la Réunion est une des initiatives en vue de la nécessaire collaboration en matière de recherches et de formation entre L'Inde et les anciennes colonies.

En attendant d'autres actions-phares, l'ODI-Réunion favorise la diffusion des résultats d'études et de recherches liées à l'Indianité dans le cadre de conférences mensuelles à St Denis.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “LIVING WITH WORLD HERITAGE IN AFRICA”, SOUTH AFRICA

A representative of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund was invited to take part in the International Conference on the theme “Living with World Heritage in Africa” organised by the Government of the Republic of South Africa, in collaboration with the African World Heritage Fund and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre from 26 to 29 September 2012 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Head of Technical Unit presented a paper on “Involving communities for better conservation, management and enhancement of World Heritage Sites: the case of Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property”.

The International Conference was organised in the context of the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention on the theme “World Heritage and Sustainable Development: the role of local communities”. The objective of the Conference was to create an interaction between high level decision makers from African Governments, heritage institutions, local communities and development sectors. The outcomes of the conference will be presented at the final celebration meeting in Japan (6-8 November 2012).

The theme of the Conference directly addressed the questions and issues encountered in the Mauritian context.



THE OUTREACH UNIT OF AAPRAVASI GHAT TRUST FUND

Urmila Devi Ramkissoon, Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer

The aim of the Public and Outreach Programme of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is to deliver creative, stimulating and innovative awareness-creating programs about the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, other indenture sites and the global phenomenon of indenture. To implement the programme, the Heritage Guides/Public Outreach Officers to undertake the following:

- guided visits of the World Heritage Site and its surroundings; and
- educational activities in different organisations and institutions of the island.

The Outreach Programme is devised according to the different age groups and target audience. In primary and secondary schools, the program consists in presenting the history of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property (AGWHP) and its cultural significance through a power point presentation followed by a short film on AGWHP. The sessions conducted in schools end with interactive discussions. In pre-primary schools, storytelling takes the young students to experience the lives of the indentured labourers. To support this pedagogical programme, a school kit for teachers is provided to schools in order to prepare their visit to the World Heritage Property and offer further learning opportunities through classroom activities.

In the context of the heritage week organised by the Social Studies Department at the Mauritius Institute of Education, the AGTF made a presentation to sensitise primary teachers following the Teacher's Diploma course on the activities conducted at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property.

The outreach programme, mainly implemented in schools, is evaluated on a regular basis through audience surveys. The surveys are an essential element to improve the quality of our outreach programme and to determine the expectations of our visitors/audience. The surveys are a key indicator to elaborate new educational activities for the young audience and propose further events to a larger audience. The outreach programme will be a key component of the future Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre.

Some feedback of our audiences:

"Very good initiative. Should be encouraged and carried out more frequently at school level."

"Concise and clear information displayed. Relevant information supported by relevant visuals. Something which I like best about the programme - Questions at the end to check level of understanding."



Story-telling at AGWHS © AGTF



Outreach Programme at Mouvement Pour Le Progres de Roche Bois © AGTF

"The session should have been class wise where more questions could have been entertained and where more pupils could have been heard. Some pupils are really shy and hesitate to respond when classes are merged."

"Relevant and important information displayed massively and successfully. Children's interest was maintained-Very interesting programme. Arouse grateful attitudes towards our ancestors."

"Nothing to change for everything was appropriate."

"Very interesting programme. Advisable for pupils of all schools to benefit."

"Animated films will be better for children."

"The explanations given were excellent. The session was very informative. The pupils could hear very well the officers who have great communication skills"

"It would be good if a questionnaire is given to pupils at the end for evaluation purpose; to see to what extent learning has taken place. It can also be in form of a quiz."

"Very informative and help to develop children's knowledge and curiosity."

"Would be much grateful if brochures could be sent to pupils. Thank you."

"Excellent-At this tender age, new intervention, new faces are most welcome by children. Repeat if possible specially storytelling, children learn new virtues."

"Some hands-on activities to involve pupils to the delivery of information and to add up to questioning techniques."

"A very enriching experience for the pupils and teachers. We would like to learn more about the Aapravasi Ghat. The pupils did learn a lot."

"Rich in information, good initiative to inculcate a sense of belonging to Mauritian culture, importance of our history in our young generation."

"Pupils should interact a bit more. For instance pause the film or even pictures and let pupils interact among themselves and with the officers."

"Very informative. We got a true picture about the Aapravasi Ghat. The film brought a clear picture of the site. I didn't find anything to change because the lesson and the support materials are convincing enough."

"Very good presentation with use of simple terms. Hats off to the officers."



Outreach Programme for Trainee Teachers at MIE © MIE



Outreach Programme for Primary Students © AGTF Teachers at MIE © MIE

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MONUMENTS AND SITES AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

Soonanda Nankoo, Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer

Since the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage list in 2006, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund annually celebrates the International Day for Monuments and Sites established by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). This year, several activities were proposed to the public on 14 & 15 April 2012.

The objective was to work in collaboration with other institutions to open access to other historical places during these two days. The activities proposed were:

- guided visits of Aapravasi Ghat and of heritage buildings in its surroundings;
- Educational activities for children including storytelling and group puzzle making;
- Educational activities focusing on the traditional techniques of construction and archaeological excavations;



Students participating in Archaeological Excavations (Source: AGTF Photo Collection)



Students participating in Traditional Techniques of Construction (Source: AGTF Photo Collection)

- Film projections;
- Exhibition on the Buffer Zone.
- Heritage Trails:
 1. At the Vagrant Depot & its surroundings;
 2. From the Folk Museum of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute to Trianon former Sugar Estate, Vagrant Depot & Aapravasi Ghat; and
 3. In Le Morne Cultural Landscape with the staff of Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund.

On 18 April 2012, an exhibition was held at the Municipality of Quatre Bornes on World Heritage Properties worldwide.

The students from Sir Gaetan Duval École Hotelière offered their full support and collaboration in the events organised for the International Day for Monuments and Sites. They carried out guided visits, collaborated in the organisation of pedagogical activities and conducted audience surveys. The surveys revealed that the activities supported the development of visitors' knowledge especially the students. Parents showed deep interest in the activities and even some participated in the puzzle making and storytelling sessions. With the upcoming Interpretation Centre, a larger scope of pedagogical activities will be proposed.

THE 6TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INSCRIPTION OF AAPRAVASI GHAT ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST



1st prize drawing by Ms S. Khadoo

On the occasion of the 6th anniversary of the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund organised a national drawing and painting competition for students of Higher School Certificate. Participants were asked to express their artistic talents on the theme of Intangible Heritage pertaining to the legacy of the indenture system in Mauritius.

Miss Shivrane Khadoo of the Mahatma Gandhi State Secondary school of Flacq won the first prize consisting of a cash price of Rs. 12 000. The second and third prizes consisting of cash prizes of Rs. 8000 and Rs. 5000 were won by Miss Dhristee Hurruck from France Boyer Giroday State Secondary School and Ridheema Gangarum from Universal College respectively. A special prize was awarded by the Jury to Akshay Deenarain from Mahatma Gandhi State Secondary School, Flacq.



2nd prize drawing by Ms D. Hurruck



3rd prize drawing by Ms R. Gangarum

FLANBO LALIBERTE

Stephan Karghoo, Research Officer at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture

In the context of the abolition of slavery, the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office, organised a Cultural and Historical Rally on the 31st January 2012.

The rally made a significant halt at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property situated at Trou Fanfaron. This was the landing point for the French East India Company, which took possession of Mauritius in 1721 and begun the construction of Port Louis in 1732, using labour from India, Africa and Madagascar.

Between January 1856 and October 1869, some 2,365 Liberated Africans were landed in Port Louis harbour. At the Aapravasi Ghat, they were processed and allocated to various private employers by the Protector of Immigrants. During their brief sojourn at the Aapravasi Ghat, most of these Liberated Africans walked up the site's famous steps and passed through its main entrance as they began their new life in Mauritius.



Ex-Director of the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture and the Officer-In-Charge of the AGTF, holding the Flanbo Laliberte. (Source: AGTF photo collection)

VISIT OF DR FAROOQ ABDULLAH, THE MINISTER OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY OF REPUBLIC OF INDIA ON 18TH JANUARY, 2012

Soonanda Nankoo, Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer



Souvenir photo of the visit of Dr Farooq Abdullah at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property. (Source: AGTF photo collection)

***"This is the place where people from my land came.
Not know what was in store for them.
They made it.***

***Today, this is great democracy.
With hope for all."***

18th January 2012

Dr Farooq Abdullah,

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy of Republic of India

FEELINGS EXPRESSED BY SOME VISITORS AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY



AMB (Mrs) Mariam Y. Katagum.
(Source: AGTF photo collection)

"It is a great pleasure visiting this unique and historic site. Very impressed by the state of conservation and the professionalism of steps. I hope to return one day!"

AMB (Mrs) Mariam Y. Katagum, Permanent Secretary of Nigeria to UNESCO ---31 August 2012.

"We are very happy to have a guided visit to this historical site before the accomplishment of the restoration. As a visitor from the most ancient country of the world, we appreciate much the initiative of Mauritians to maintain the historical site. Best wish for Apravasi Ghat and best regards to all researchers and employees of the Apravasi Ghat Trust Fund". **Zhang Yiliang, Chinese Embassy --- 11th Feb 2012.**

"A reminder of the long journey of the Indian immigrants to Mauritius from slavery to political sovereignty – a journey of satisfaction and pride in their transformation. I salute the people of Mauritius." **Suresh Kgoel, DG, ICCR--- 31 March 2012.**

"A humbling and ennobling experience. A great reminder of the sacrifices of our forefathers" **Parvez Dewan, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, New Delhi, India ---7th August 2012.**

"Une visite émouvante. J'en suis reconnaissant." **Giocomo Afost, Acteur d'Italie – 15 August 2012**

"Very educative. Could know about the people of Indian origin. How they came to this country. They have undergone lot of hardship. But still they could retain our culture. We salute them." **Linesh Kumar Sanghi, Hyderabad, India --- 15 August 2012.**

"A very emotional moment to visit the "Apravasi Ghat," which actually received the Indian as Indentured Labour who contributed to the Mauritian economy there and even now through this later generation." **D. Purandeswart, New Delhi, India --- 31 August 2012.**

"A wonderful insight into history; a tribute to the "indentured labourers" **Brig S. J. Gracias, National Defence College, New Delhi, India – 11 September 2012.**

"Developed special feelings since I could connect to my people" **Brig A.P. Singh, NDC, New Delhi, India – 11 September 2012.**

Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

Ex-DWC Building, Quay Street, Port Louis, Mauritius
Phone: 217 3157 / Fax: 217 2481 Email: aapravasi@intnet.mu Website: www.aapravasighat.org

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Ms Babita Devi Bahadoor	Research Assistant
Ms Christelle C.C. Miao Foh	Research Assistant
Mr Ashvin Kumar Nemchand	Research Assistant
Ms Soonanda Nankoo	Heritage Guide/ Public Outreach Officer
Mrs Vijayalutchmee Beejadhur-Poteah	Heritage Guide/ Public Outreach Officer
Mrs Vedita Jha	Heritage Guide/ Public Outreach Officer
Mrs Urmila Devi Ramkissoon	Heritage Guide/ Public Outreach Officer
Mrs Lutchmee Pydatalli	Field Guide
Mr Kishan Doorgathian	Site Conservation Worker
Mr Sanand Gowressoo	Site Conservation Worker
Mr Deenesh Kumar Gungaram	Site Conservation Worker
Mr Mahesh Sharma Ramdhony	Site Conservation Worker
Mr Subhir Ramsurrun	Site Conservation Worker
Mr Louis Headley Ramyad	Site Conservation Worker
Mr Vivekanand Seechurn	Site Conservation Worker
Mr Arunagiri Sungaralingum	General Worker
Mr Varun Sharma Badoo	General Worker
Mr Ramdass Ravind Basoodelsingh	General Worker
Mr Mohunparsad Bahadoor	Watchman
Mr Hansraj Dhanookdharee	Watchman
Mr Vijayanand Mulloo	Watchman
Mr Sooraj Ranoowah	Watchman
Mr Mindranath Ramchurn	Gateman