

Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund NEWSLETTER

Volume I No.7

2 NOVEMBER 2009



Aapravasi Ghat
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006

AAPRAVASI
GHAT
TRUST FUND



Pergans, 357364



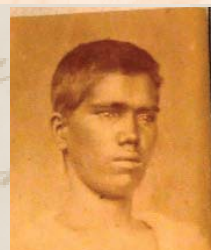
Ramanah, 357884



Munisami, 401237



Varada Reddy, 400631



Madarun, 379178



Bappoo, 394914

**Indentured Children Arrested as Vagrants and Imprisoned
at the Vagrant Depot of Grand River North West Between 1877 and 1886**

Archaeological Findings in the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Warehouse in August-September 2009



Steps uncovered where the "Port Slip" was indicated
on archival map dating from 1856



Brick flooring of the first
warehouse erected in 1866

Boorup, Andar.	X	Lungor	X
Latham, Mole	X	Calachand.	X
Rhodhor	X	Nolali	X
Champak	X	Lisara Rhodhor	X
Khoruthor	X	Sichur	X
Lithoncorin	X	Chota Rhodhor	X
Julio	X	Donnam	X
Chota Rhodhor	X	Budhor	X
Wachor	X	Muggor	X
Erjor	X	Karek	X
Rannocher	X	Choytan	X
Lothman	X	Chalungo	X
Shiram	X	Phaggor	X
Ghaupor	X	Gungoram	X
Whosoun	X	Chota Muggor	X
Chota Chomulali	X	Chota Shiram	X
Nigra	X	Donkor	X
Arkhaly	X	Rhamarah	X

4th The 4th of the must be responsible to give a
receipt that the Native shall not be a
burden to the Colony in the event of their
leaving their employment. 1. Paper for receipt
shall be returned from the pay of each
indentured till there shall be no different
from the present a passage for each indentured
shall be each contingent take
place the money shall be returned at the
end of the 5 years.

5th In addition to the pay for above first four
indentured shall be applied to each as follows
for each man per day.

2. The of the, and each indentured for the
1st of the.

2. of of the, and each indentured for the
and annually for each indentured as follows

4. The of the

1. The of the

2. The of the

3. The of the

6th Each indentured shall receive 6 months
pay in advance from the 1st of the year
acknowledgment from the pay to commence

175th Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius

Historical Documents from the Mauritius
National Archives showing the names
and labour contract of the 36 Indentured
Labourers who arrived in Mauritius from
Calcutta on the ship 'The Atlas' on 2nd
November 1834 and worked at
Antoinette Sugar Estate near the
present-day Village of Piton.

EDITORIAL

Incredible Journeys: From Harigaon to Mauritius

I was given the opportunity to travel in the Prime Ministerial delegation that visited Harigaon, the Prime Minister's grandfather's native village in February 2008. The day the Prime Minister alighted from the helicopter in Bihar was a historic moment: Harigaon does not appear to have changed much for most of the century: little running water or electricity and most people living in absolute poverty. These were probably the same conditions that existed when the Prime Minister's forbear left India, as one of thousands, seeking a better life elsewhere. In doing so, he joined the thousands who had filled the streets of Calcutta, entered the Bhowanipore depot, embarked on a journey of no return, aboard a ship filled with other Indians of all castes and creed. What must have been the thoughts and emotions of Harigaon villagers in February 2008, to see and touch one of theirs returning as the Prime Minister of an independent country? Within such a short space of time, just over a hundred years? It is an incredible story which deserves more than a mention in an editorial.



PM waving to crowd in Harigaon
(Photo Courtesy of Dr. V. Teelock)

I asked the Prime Minister what he thought he had brought to the village. Hope, he replied.

Acceptance of one's fate is what many believe causes many Indians and particularly Biharis to remain poor, despite its immense economic and cultural potential. Those who did not accept their fate, left and have achieved so much elsewhere in India and in the diaspora.

What lesson can we learn today from that? Hope is one of the characteristic features of indentured labourers and their immediate descendants. Had they not had hope, they would not have left to accept starvation wages elsewhere or sacrificed and saved to buy land or educate their children.

103 years later, in 1937 was another historic moment when the petition of hundreds of small planters and labourers marked the beginning of descendants of indentured labourers' formal claim for political recognition. They too had hope and they fought to attain this goal, culminating in independence of Mauritius in 1968.

Today 175 years later, what is the situation of the descendants? Mauritius has changed rapidly over the past decades, too fast for some resulting in the break-up of our social fabric and family life becoming increasingly fragilised. Families who were once united are no longer and villages where people lived in peace and harmony are becoming hotbeds of violence and crime. Somewhere, our system has failed to provide many adults with the psychological and emotional tools to cope with the hazards and dangers of modern society.

If we need to fight for anything, it should surely be to end not only the poverty and dejection that so many still live in but also to end once and for all, these servile jobs which slaves and indentured labourers and their descendants have been performing for hundreds of years. It is time to do away once and for all with these expressions of servility, these 'ancestral' jobs that make families force their young daughters to leave school to earn a few meagre rupees as servants. It is time to start teaching people to respect the rights of others to a decent living, to stop exploiting the weaker and illiterate members of their own families and for parents and grandparents to spend more quality time with their children.

The enemy is no longer the 'colonial' or the 'gran blan' but within ourselves. A return to the ancestral values of our indentured forebears and their children: spirit of hope, of sacrifice, spirit of the pioneer, the adventurer, spirit of unity in the face of adversity, the courage to speak out in face of injustice are the values which need to be taught to our children. The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has launched this year a major project involving collection of archaeological and oral history which will ensure that the lived experiences and the values of the immediate descendants of indentured labourers will never be forgotten.

Associate Professor Dr. Vijayalakshmi Teelock, GOSK

Chairperson, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

23 October 2009

MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

I am thankful to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for associating me with the publication of this Newsletter, to mark the celebration of the 175th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has been instrumental in commemorating the 2nd of November to revive the memories of our ancestors who migrated to Mauritius as part of the Great Experiment initiated by the British Colonial Government.

Mauritius is unique in history as it is the place where indenture started. This uniqueness was recognized internationally when the Aapravasi Ghat site, the symbol of indentured migration, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2006.

These memories should serve as an inspiration to the younger generation to work harder and make of Mauritius a still better place to live. Equal Opportunities to each and every child should be a birth right.

Our heritage, our culture and our language should be preserved as these give us our true identity. Coming generations should know the truth and the difficult stages of life that we have been through before making of Mauritius what it is today.

I wish the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund plenty of success in its mission of preserving these monuments.

Anerood Jugnauth
The Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth,
G.C.S.K., K.C.M.G., Q.C.
President of the Republic

13 October 2009

PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE



Many people are interested in the historic importance of the Aapravasi Ghat. This annual publication represents an update on progress achieved in the preservation and upgrading of this World Heritage Site.

A hundred and seventy-five years ago, the sailing ship Atlas disembarked the first boatload of indentured labourers from India at the Aapravasi Ghat. The arrival of these haggard and bewildered labourers was to transform, not only the demography of the country, but its very destiny.

We, their descendants, are duty-bound to preserve their memory and to perpetuate their indomitable spirit of adventure and enterprise.

Beyond our innate moral obligations to honour their memory, we now have contractual commitments towards UNESCO. I am happy that works are proceeding apace to meet those obligations.

I will continue to take a keen interest in the enhancement of the visibility and legibility of the site.

Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP
Prime Minister

15 October 2009

MINISTER'S MESSAGE



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

I am pleased to convey my warm greetings to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund on the occasion of the issue of its annual newsletter. This publication will obviously shed light on projects undertaken by the Fund during the outgoing year and also give an indication of future plans.



I am glad that the Fund is doing its utmost best to complete all tasks that need to be attended to, following the inscription of the World Heritage Site. In that connection, I understand that the setting up of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) has to be prioritized.

The recent archaeological finds on site have yielded some hitherto unknown historical facts. This should prompt our team to continue research in order to consolidate the World Heritage Site further.

I have noted with much interest the strategy adopted by the Fund to secure the buffer zone. The implementation of the Planning Policy Guidance should impart more seriousness to the endeavour and also ensure that unfortunate and irreparable acts such as the pulling down of the Merchant Navy Club building are not repeated. Moreover, the idea of sensitizing the people belonging to or occupying the area, is a laudable initiative. Enterprises must be aware of the set objectives of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

No efforts should be spared in valorizing every part of our national heritage especially in view of the objective of making Mauritius a cultural destination. On the other hand, my Ministry is inviting proposals on the concept of an Artistic Corridor which will rope in our two world heritage sites thereby imparting them added cultural mileage.

I hope the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site will witness several developments in the coming year.

Hon Dr. Vasant K. BUNWAREE
Minister

20 October 2009

MESSAGE LORD MAYOR OF PORT LOUIS



Commemorating the arrival of Indian indentured labourers every second day of November has become highly symbolical, the more so because of its national and worldwide importance since the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage.

Year 2009 marks the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the first batch of Indian labourers, all the way from India in extremely difficult conditions, at the 'coolie ghat' on Sunday 2nd November 1834. That day, a new page had turned in the history of Mauritius, another phase of 'disguised slavery' begun but which laid the foundation stone of the future independent Mauritius. It is said that, between 1842 and 1870, more than 525,000 Indian labourers emigrated to British and French colonies, the majority having come to Mauritius. Those Indians, above 450,000 in number, chose to stay in Mauritius in spite of the harsh conditions of life at that time, and built, with their sweat and tears, even their blood, the foundation of Mauritius. All they had was their religious faith, their courage and a very strong will to work for a better future for their children and other generations to come.

To-day all Mauritians whose ancestors were among the indentured labourers are reaping the fruits of the very hard labour of those ancestors who have also left an invaluable heritage in terms of customs and traditions which has enriched the cultural background of Mauritius. Mauritians of Indian origin, like their counterparts in other countries which had known the Indian Indentured System, now form part of a powerful entity: *the Indian diaspora*.

Every second day of November is therefore a day of remembrance, full of tangible emotions, when we have to pay tribute to the memory of all those indentured labourers who, as it has been reported, were lured to leave their motherland "Bharat" in the hope of a better life in a country where 'gold were to be found under rocks' but who had known disillusion, right from the start, due to inhumane conditions of the voyage.

Port Louis, having witnessed the first steps of Indian labourers on Mauritian soil and the Municipal Council of Port Louis, having been closely associated with the project of inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as world heritage, will continue to support all endeavours for the protection of this historical site. Preserving this site is the best way of remembering and honouring all those 'aapravasis'.

Mahendra GONDEEA

21 October 2009

A Unique Place in Time and Space: The Historical and Heritage Value of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site

Raju Mohit - Officer-in-Charge, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

16th July 2006, Aapravasi Ghat was elevated to the status of a World Heritage Site, due to its historical significance and the outstanding universal value attached to its existential contemporary survival. Regardless of minor tangible importance, the intangible inheritance was recognised to be of tremendous value and concern for the decision makers of the World



Heritage Committee. Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed under the criterion (vi) of the World Heritage Convention, where by the physical and substantial remains of the site were not the issue of focus for endorsement as a World Heritage Site, rather the intangible components weighed heavier in the decision making process of the World Heritage Committee members. Mauritius as the first and foremost place where the Great Experiment was experienced by the colonial masters was indeed and in essence the determining factor that guided the decision makers of the World Heritage Committee. The sixteen steps of Aapravasi Ghat were the stepping stones that have led to our present plight. We feel dignified of these steps that have destined us to this present presence of factual realities. Our identity on the world cultural map was simply due and awaited.

Our Prime Minister and his team deserve the gratitude that is inherent in gratefulness, for having supported the cause of cultural heritage and its protection and preservation. A budget of Rs750 millions voted for the coming ten years is concern coated as regards to the importance that this government is entrusting for the preservation and recognition of the intrinsic tremendous value that history of Mauritius represents in the global history of humanity. Words are just descriptive, the un-described is the driving force that culminates in forceful and daring decisions.

Various projects are in the pipe line at AGTF, yet the most important and relevant in the light of its inscription is the Oral History Project, that is the intangible inheritance – which is so vast and oceanic that we need extra and voluntary contribution and participation other than our official inclination. Hundreds and hundreds of our elders who lived in the sugar camps and those days of hardships and anguish are being interviewed and recorded audio-visually. History is not confined just at archival records – the crux of the indenture experience is deeply unrecorded, that which we are trying to record. Our most beloved and experienced elders are passing away gradually. Before their experience fades away, let us record them. Please do help without any official request and approach us to legitimate your demarche.

Another important project is the setting up of a museum - usually defined as an Interpretation Centre. This Interpretation Centre will be under the name of Beekrumsing Ramlallah, who indeed and in wisdom understood the symbolic and historical significance of Aapravasi Ghat and did what should have been done to preserve AG and its importance in the history of Mauritius. Due to limited artifacts, this Interpretation Centre will be authenticated and dignified by the outcomes of the Oral History Project, thus providing visitors with an in-depth insight into the experience of the indentured labourers and the importance of the Aapravasi Ghat Site in the

Continued on Page →

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shaping of Mauritian and the World Economic History.

Over the past four years, it has been government policy to actively promote cultural tourism with the view of attracting hundreds of thousands of tourists from all over the world, not to the Mauritian shores only, but equally to discover its culture, traditions and history.

The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site combined with the Le Morne Cultural Landscape are trademarks in themselves for the promotion of cultural tourism. The MTPA has to see the touristic potential hidden in our national history. If the seer could see the forecasted seen, the rest could take care of itself.

AGTF has its focus on financial autonomy and one day we shall be. The opening of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre – a full-fledged interactive historical centre - a high tech multimedia phenomena depicting historical experience shall give AGTF its financial independence. Foreigners will be charged to go through the pathways of our history. Mauritius was the first platform of experience for the indentured labourers and thereby the base of the economic order that prevails on this globe- has simply to be marketed.

Over the past years, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, with the full support of its Parent Ministry and other relevant stakeholders, is successfully implementing several projects such as the Planning Policy Guidance, the Signage Project, Visitor Management Plan, the Conservation works at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, the Risk Preparedness Plan, Archaeological Excavations at the Aapravasi Ghat Site and other Indenture Sites, the Vagrant Depot Conservation Project, the Vagrants Database Project, and the inscription of the Indenture Immigration Archives on the Memory of the World Register. As per our commitments towards UNESCO, AGTF is divinely respecting the implementation of our Management Plan which was endorsed by the World Heritage Committee during the inscription process.

Today, Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site is not only the private property of the Mauritian government - today it belongs to humanity - it belongs to the evolution of world history. Today, it is thanks to the toils and sacrifices of the indentured labourers that our country is – what it is - a peaceful multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and a plural democratic country - a shining beacon to the rest of the world. People wonder and perhaps envy our pacific co-existence.

The Aapravasi Ghat and the Le Morne Brabant Mountain are important lieux de mémoire for the Mauritian nation. These two sites are special places of 'shared history' as well as of 'shared memories' for all Mauritians. The inscriptions of Le Morne and Aapravasi Ghat are clear global recognitions of the unique and diverse history of Mauritius and its great contribution in the shaping of modern world history.

History is not a story. It is the womb of the past from which the present is born. And it's now our duty to impregnate the womb of the present with deep respect of human rights and prepare the birth of the future.

TANGIBLE OBJECTS BROUGHT BY INDIAN IMMIGRANTS

Mr Bhuruth Dinand - Board Member



Original Hanuman Carving
(Photo Courtesy of Mr. Dinand)

I was surprised to see a rectangular piece of rock having an area of 0.18 m² in which the Hanuman's figure was carved in front of the yard of Pertaub family at La Clemence, Riviere Du Rempart. This holy piece of rock is worshipped everyday as done by the ancestors of the family. According to Mrs. Nurupa Pertaub, widow of Gian Pertaub, it was brought by her in-laws' ancestors from Pune, India. She relates an anecdote of Immigrant Pertaub who was once in distress trying to pull his cart out of the river but could not succeed until he chanted the "Hanuman Challisa".

Our ancestors were very pious and believed in Hanuman, the follower and staunch devotee of Lord Rama. It is also worth noting the difficulties surmounted by the Indian immigrants in those days travelling in a ship under harsh conditions and yet not forgetting to carry tangible objects which they used to worship in India. Some of them brought their holy books like Ramayana and Gita. Temples like the one found at Gokhoola, founded in 1867, were constructed to disseminate spiritual values and culture which are still preserved in Mauritius.

"We are proud to be the sons of immigrants".

A Profile of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site

AGTF Research Unit

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) was set up by an Act of the Mauritian Parliament in December 2001, under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture. In July 2002, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board was established.

The Vision and Mission of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund are:

- To establish and promote the Aapravasi Ghat as a national, regional and international memorial site
- To preserve and restore the aesthetic and architectural aspects of the Aapravasi Ghat
- To set up a museum at Aapravasi Ghat and create public awareness of the history of the site
- To promote social and cultural aspects of the Aapravasi Ghat
- To encourage and support projects and publications related to the Indentured Labour system
- To establish links with appropriate national, regional and international organizations and
- To identify and acquire sites, buildings and structures linked with the history of the arrival of immigrants in Mauritius

The Aapravasi Ghat Site is an important symbol of Mauritian identity since the ancestors of the majority of the present-day Mauritian population arrived on the island through this immigration depot. The depot's name was changed in 1987 from 'Coolie Ghat' to 'Aapravasi Ghat' when it was decreed national monument by the Government of Mauritius.

The Aapravasi Ghat was constructed in 1849, on the shore of Trou Fanfaron Bay in Port Louis harbour, in order to receive indentured immigrants who came mainly from India. During the 1850s and 1860s, the depot was enlarged and part of it even reconstructed to handle the thousands of immigrants who arrived each year. Between 1849 and 1910, more than 400,000 indentured labourers, from various parts of the Indian subcontinent, transited through the Aapravasi Ghat. During that period, this historic site played a central role in the day-to-day functioning of the indenture labour system as well as in the lives of the immigrants and their descendants in Mauritius. In 2001, the Government of Mauritius decreed 2nd November a public holiday to honor the memory of the indentured labourers. Each year, this special public holiday is commemorated at a national level at the Aapravasi Ghat Site. In July 2006, it was inscribed on the prestigious World Heritage List of UNESCO.

Indentured Labourers and their Experience

Prof. Soodursun Jugessur, GOSK, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius

The arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius marked a new page in the history of this once forgotten island, the casual refuge of pirates and adventure seeking seamen. Posterity will remember this country as a place that helped contribute to the building of global inter-racial and inter-religious harmony that the world values so much. The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) newsletter can be instrumental in publicizing the experience of those makers of history, a history marked not only by the sweat and blood, but also by the foresight and visions of those brave people.

Stories, accounts and documentation of the experience of those indentured labourers, as is being compiled from available literature and artifacts by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund make a rich collection for the present and future generation. The modern generation is often ignorant of such accounts, and is easily influenced by the gloss and glamour of the technological age. Ancestral values are being fast forgotten, and the stress on work-oriented and professional certificates has led to the development of cadres that are attracted mostly by material gains. Globalization is also contributing to the development of a culture that values foreign concepts, fashions and trends that are ephemeral, shallow, and have little or no respect for eternal values inherent in the life and spirit of the indentured ancestors.

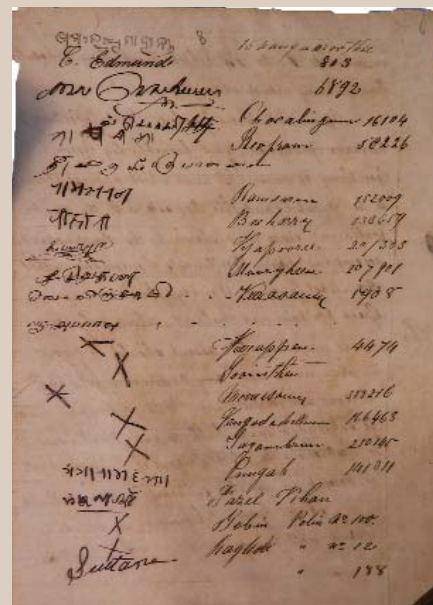
The indentured labourers brought with them a rich experience of their own culture that has helped us shape our present Mauritian culture. This culture was reflected not only in the food, songs, music, dress and literature brought by them, but also in the millennium old genetic memories that marked their perseverance, struggle, and aspirations for a better world for

themselves and their progenies. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute in the island is preserving much of this through its library and museum, and the AGTF, working in close collaboration with the Institute can be instrumental in bringing additional resources to enhance the value of this collection. It's a pity that in those days there was no technology for filming those experiences and making them accessible to a wider audience.

We can now do it through indirect means by recording the stories and accounts of the older generation, by producing plays reflecting such stories, encouraging educational institutions to do research in relevant areas of interest, organizing national competitions for the best productions, and enacting the past lives of those ancestors. And for this we need the foresight of the people at the helm, with the provision of adequate resources for facilitating such activities. We are easily influenced by the pressures of economic development and our priorities get flawed. Of what use is a high economic development index, a high standard of living, when basic human values are left as museum relics only to be extolled in academic conferences and international fora in a context where the quality of life is pitiable?

Indeed, the present global climatic change coupled with the recent financial crisis triggered by the greed of the producers and consumers, is only a prelude to what catastrophes we should expect in the days ahead. The simple lives of our ancestors who were sharing their joys and sorrows, living in harmony with their surroundings, adding to nature what they were taking out of it, are now to be the examples of future development scenarios. As an

example, how many fruit-trees and useful plants have the last generation of people planted in their surroundings? How many acres of reforestation has the Government added to our denuded and vanishing forests? How many new species of plants and animals have the development



The Names of Old Immigrants in the Petition of Adolph de Plevitz

(Source: Mauritius National Archives)

ministries brought into the country?

It is in this context that we have to do everything possible to promote the activities of the AGTF. We have the privilege of belonging to a race that never boasted of forceful and violent colonization and conquest, but of a race that bore with fortitude the injustices of those colonizers, but contributed to modern development by imparting to it the values of love, hard labour and mutual solidarity. It is our duty to rekindle this flame in our new generation so that we construct a better world for all.

COMMENTS OF VISITORS AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN 2009

Compiled by Praveish Rugho - Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer



Delegation from National Defense College, Kenya
12 June 09

"You have and are doing a labor of tremendous value to Mauritians and to all of Humanity".

P. Larson, Dept of History, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA – 20.01.09

"This is a very good history for the new generation".

Hon. Loveness Gondwe, Member of Malawi Parliament, Malawi – 11.02.09

"Very moving! Hope this brings us much closer, more conscious about our shared legacy".

Amit Mishra, University Of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India – 14.05.09

"An amazing important and moving monument to a site of huge historical importance".

David Vine, Dept of Anthorology, American University, Washington DC, USA – 19.06.09

"This site has been restored and has become a symbol of memory, to be cherished for ever, in the minds of the present and future generations of the emigrants. This historical site should be given utmost respect like a temple of God".

Prof. Mohan K Gautam, Chancellor European University Of West & East
Ledenbezchsnat, Leiden, Netherlands – 03.07.09

"A fantastic site that is important to conserve and develop".

Dr Anna E.Leask, Great Britain – 07.07.09

The Aapravasi Ghat : A Matricial Site

Dr Khal Torabully, Writer & Semiologist

Nobody would question the validity of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage site of utmost importance for Mauritius and the region, and we hope, in a nearby future, beyond the Indian Ocean. Even though much has still to be done to meet its promises and implement fully its buffer zone requirements, one has to admit that through the first three years of its classification by Unesco, the Ghat has acted as a matricial site, in at least two respects.

The humane impetus set by the Ghat

When the Aapravasi Ghat was added on the World Heritage Site List in 2006, many in Mauritius were dubious about its real significance in a multicultural island where the components of the "rainbow nation" have often been pitched against each other. Many deemed that the Ghat's classification amounted to the recognition of one segment of the Mauritian population, mainly, the Hindus, and that instead of fostering a nation-building impetus, this event would further strengthen the claims of one part of the population as "more historically prone" to benefit from its construction and prosperity. Indeed, the temptation was great to use the site as the justification for one community to "get the lion's share" by engaging in a "victimising competition" with other sections of the Mauritian population.

This temptation, even if it lurks time and oft, has not been the main result of the inscription of the Ghat on the World Heritage List. Instead, much vigilance and wisdom have prevailed. For one part, we authors, historians, artists, semiologists have produced enough counter-narratives and non exclusive poetics to engulf an open approach to otherness. This has been the core of my engagement in fostering the coolitude dynamics into the Ghat. I would just add, that as a result, there is a more polysemic definition attached to the word indentured or coolie, as opposed to its monosemic texture in the past. The indentured comes from a mosaic, as the 2nd November show posited last year : Hindus, Chinese, Muslims, Tamils, Marathis etc were jahaji bhaïs (brothers and sisters of the ships). I had also brought this semantic shift in earlier articles, that indentured is not ethnical in its core meaning, but judicial (labour with a 5 year contract), that Ethiopians, Japanese, Chinese, Malagasy, Europeans... were also indentured (approaching 5 per cent of the total indentured labour force that was engaged in the "Great Experiment"). Dr S. Peerthum and the historians attached to the site clearly demonstrated this stance, which, if fully understood points to one enduring fact: that even though people of Indian origin formed the bulk of indentured labour, nobody who is objective would contend that indentured

labourers were not exclusively Indians. This statistical datum nullifies any exclusive or communal views on indentured labour.

In that sense, the Ghat, while celebrating the Indian component of indentured labour, cannot be the basis of any ethnical construction that would turn a blind eye on the fact that indentured labour was a cosmopolitan experiment that harbingers modern labour migrations in the post-slavery period. And that if India provided the bulk of this form of wage experimentation after slavery, this Indian element cannot turn a blind eye on other human elements, such as the Chinese or other migrations. Our coolitude is at this price. And as such, this indentured paradigm should be thought as a generic experiment engulfing Irish, Polish or any type of migration based on the contract, as the Indian element spearheaded the "Great Experiment". I would add that, in doing so, we would not belittle the Indian ethos, made of hard work and tolerance, that Mrs Meira, the Indian Minister for Social Justice developed here on 2nd November 2007. The Minister also added that openness to other cultures and philosophies is not incompatible with the values of Indianness.

In that sense, the Ghat is matricial in its essence. This open attitude entails that one can view Mauritian History, and modern migrational History in a more diverse, variegated way, fraught with a post-modern, post-structuralist conception, more tuned to comprehend the complexity of multicultural and transcultural processes at work in modern hybrid societies. It offers a humane foundation for the exploration of our History. The Ghat highlights this reality and holds further promises to me.

The Ghat: a matricial site for articulating memories

Acting as the first site to be classified by UNESCO in the Mascarene islands, setting the institutional pace and symbolical guideline for Mauritius, the Ghat has been able to inspire an overall global policy aiming at *articulating and not opposing* specificities of Mauritians. In that respect, when the Le Morne was inscribed on the WH List, a work on memories was duly set up to link the memory of slavery to indentured labour. I personally made this recommendation in a preliminary committee that met at Parliament for the setting up of Justice and Truth Commission triggered by the Prime Minister and my articles clearly advocated this point to avoid any "competition of memories". I had discussed about this with Mr Ali Moussa Iyé, Head of the Intercultural Division of UNESCO, in order to achieve this unique mission Mauritius could initiate:



The Aapravasi Ghat Site and The AGTF Warehouse in 1928
(Source: A. Unnuth & S. Selvon, Port Louis Harbour: A Historical Survey)

articulating slavery and indentured narratives and humanities. As the Ghat was classified first, and that indentured labourers were not all Indians, as stated earlier, there was ground to work on this hybrid imaginary of articulating these two paradigms, without impoverishing them, without negating their specificities, but articulating both to bring a sense of awareness that both episodes negated humanity and bore major meanings to nation-building in Mauritius. This nucleus can be extended to other countries, intellectual and social constructions that need the ability to go beyond racial, ethnical or geographical barriers.

The Government has so far been very wise to follow this consensual trend, and I bet it will undoubtedly create **a route of memories**, going from the Ghat to the Morne, or vice versa, indicating that History is more complex than we think, and that reducing it to one group pitched against each other will just blot out the lessons learned from it.

In that respect, the Ghat is a symbolical matrix, pointing to the fact that indentured labour, even if it resorted massively to Indians and Chinese, was the result of a particular historical context, and more human groups were engaged in it. And that, even if slavery resorted mostly to Africans, the first slaves in Mauritius and La Réunion were of Indian stock. This should be enough to make us read History from a more humane angle, warding off exclusive, sometimes, unjustified views construed from major human tragedies that have framed our *coralian*, complex, variegated societies.

I believe in this matrix. Recently a group of young Mauritians called The Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne Facebook group contacted me to help them to develop this humanism of diversity, ready to promote a dialogue between these two memories. I think that by promoting this awareness these young persons have proved that through the right decoding of their past, their future is already at hand. And in that dynamics, the Ghat will act as a referent for future constructions so necessary in times beset by speculations of all sorts.

Ile aux Bénitiers: The South West Quarantine Station

Raj Boodhoo - Senior Lecturer, Mauritius Institute of Education

This note is on an islet little known today as a quarantine station during colonial times: Ile aux Benitiers or Ile Bénitiers and also known as Ilot du Morne. During the French period, it was Ile aux Tonneliers, found at the mouth of Port Louis harbour that was used as a quarantine station during the different small pox outbreaks.

regulations were passed and stations were guarded by soldiers. In 1836, one Indian was shot dead at Ile aux Bénitiers while trying to evade quarantine regulations.

In the 1840s and 1850s not only smallpox but also cholera



Aerial View of Ile Aux Bénitiers - (Courtesy of Maya Essoo)

During the early British period, maritime traffic grew as soldiers, traders and immigrants coming from different parts of the Indian Ocean landed at Port Louis. The cholera epidemic of 1819, the first of a series of such outbreaks in the mid nineteenth century, caused an uproar among the inhabitants. Diseases divided the community into two groups, those who believed in contagion and those who did not.

When Indian immigration started in the 1830s, several ships with infected passengers arrived at the harbour. These people were lodged in a camp at Tonneliers Island, and a government practitioner was in charge of them. When the camp was full of sick Indians, port authorities ordered more incoming affected ships to carry out

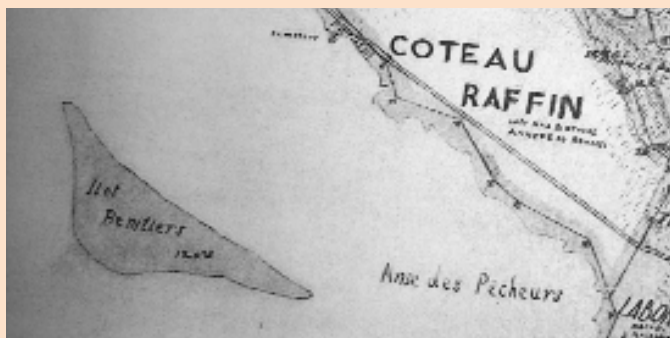
threatened Mauritius; these decades also witnessed the highest arrival of Indians in the colony. Then the authorities turned their attention to Flat and Gabriel islets to the north of Grand Bay, closer to Port Louis than the remote Ile aux Bénitiers. Cholera outbreaks of the mid 1850s and the death of about four hundred Indians at Flat Island provoked the suspension of immigration and also caused the colonial authorities to react; thus better buildings, stores, hospital and camps were built and a new station at Pointe aux Cannoniers started. All these islets: Flat, Gabriel and also Bénitiers which had been conceded earlier had to be bought back by government. Bénitiers Island had been occupied by one Mrs Frichot.

By early 1860s, the quarantine system became a highly organized institution, with government steamers moving to and fro between Port Louis and the northern stations. Food, medicine and stores were sent there regularly. The main constraints were lack of drinking water on the islets and the dangerous landing of immigrants during bad weather. By the mid 1850s, Tonneliers Island ceased to be a quarantine station, while Bénitiers Island was still used, especially when the northern stations were full.

The inhabitants did not accept to have quarantine stations close to the main land and in 1862 they sent a petition to the government to close the existing stations and open a new one at Rodrigues. The authorities disagreed, stating that Flat and Gabriel islets were found at a safe distance, while the station at Pointe aux Cannoniers was used for less serious cases and also by European ship passengers who were found sick.

Moreover, Bénitiers Island was very much active in the 1860s when several cholera ships arrived. It became less used only when cholera threats died down in the latter part of the century. Although a report by Dr Barrault, government practitioner, recommended the southwest quarantine to be retained as a smallpox station, the authorities, by the end of the century, decided to lease Ile aux Bénitiers as a concession to one Comtesse de Lamarque.

More research is required to know about the place and may be archaeological research on the northern side can reveal remains of the old quarantine station.



An Archival Map of the Ile Aux Bénitiers - 1910

(Source: Mauritius National Archives)

quarantine 'under sail'. These ships anchored to the leeward side of the port; food and medicine were sent on board until they were given pratique. A yellow flag was flown on the ships and at Ile aux Tonneliers while quarantine was on. Ship captains strongly objected to this form of quarantine 'sous voiles'. The need for permanent stations started to be felt.

It was then in the mid 1830s that some ships were sent to Ile aux Bénitiers, an islet of 165 acres to the south west of Mauritius. Food and medicine were conveyed by boat for the sick and a medical practitioner attended to them. Stringent port and quarantine

Beekrumsing Ramlallah and the Aapravasi Ghat

Dr. Sarita Boodhoo, PhD

President - Aapravasi Ghat Indian Arrival Celebration Committee

It was during family gatherings that Beekrumsing Ramlallah would initiate us children into the labyrinths of our history. The innumerable conversations we had with him would definitely shape our growing, inquisitive mind and nurture a deep urge for recognizing the immensity of the work that lay ahead. He used to take us children in his car to visit the historical places in and around Port Louis and elsewhere. He was always eager to share his knowledge and was one of the greatest living libraries and repository of oral history. To me, he was not only uncle, but mentor and guide. Whereas many children would have the tendency to run away from such talks, I and others in the family would sit patiently and eagerly imbibe those precious information. It was thus that since our childhood we were made familiar with the Aapravasi Ghat then known as the "Place l'Immigration" and we considered it a privilege and an integral part of our being.

If today the Aapravasi Ghat has been the first historical place in Mauritius to gain recognition as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, it is undoubtedly thanks primarily to the inspired action undertaken by Beekrumsing Ramlallah several decades ago and which started taking a definite shape in the 1970s.

I have been particularly lucky to have been, together with members of the family and to be a privileged witness of his incessant moves, petitions, writings and campaigns.

Beekrumsing Ramlallah was a man of grit, determination and conviction and he dared to voice his opinion, he dared to act and dared to stand by his principles.

He would pursue a matter till he achieved his goal. Thus it was that when Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India was to visit Mauritius for the first time in June 1970, he moved heaven and hell to get the Place l'Immigration inscribed on the protocol list of her programme. He was not only a freedom fighter but a staunch parliamentarian. He pleaded desperately with Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam the then Prime Minister. Comments like "Beekrum, qui li oulé? Ki lipé rode?" were heard. But Beekrum was farsighted. He had a distinct vision about the aureole that would be created around the place by the visit of the Grand Lady. It would be the symbol of the historical bond between India and Mauritius, and thus give it a historical status. It would be a tribute and testimony to the toil, sacrifice, immense endurance and

determination of the 450,000 indentures from different parts of India who crossed the "Kalapani" as "Jahajia Bhais" and move up the steps of the Aapravasi Ghat to make of alien surroundings a new home.

Beekrum wouldn't give up in the face of indifference. He petitioned. He wrote letters. He used persuasion. He exhorted several like-minded Cabinet Ministers, his colleagues in the Government to prevail upon "Bolome la". Above all, he wrote in the *Mauritius Times* of which he was founder-editor. Eventually, good sense prevailed and two days before the visit of the Grand Lady, the Place l'Immigration was included in her official programme. The wilderness around the dilapidated buildings was cleared in all urgency by Beekrumsing Ramlallah and a group of the 4th Mauritius Hindu Boy Scouts, children of the family and friends. The visit of Shrimati Indira Gandhi on 4th June 1970 would be a historical landmark. I had the privilege of lighting a symbolical diya with Shrimati Indira Gandhi at the Coolie Ghat. That spot would mark the place where we conducted the annual sacred ceremony Yaj till the place became inscribed as a World Heritage Site. It was at that time, prior to the visit that Beekrumsing Ramlallah gave the name Coolie Ghat to the Place l'Immigration. Thereafter, the visit of Shrimati Indira Gandhi to Aapravasi Ghat gave it international recognition. Her visit would be followed by dignitaries not only from India, but from all over the world. It would gain immense media coverage in India and Mauritius and sensitize public opinion.

It would also trigger the movement for the crystallisation of the concept of Indian Diaspora. It would also lead Mother India to declare the Aapravasi Ghat as its first heritage site outside India along with eight other sites on the Indian soil.

Another action which I remember very well is when he petitioned Government to give official recognition to Aapravasi Ghat as a national historical monument. In 1978 he wanted to have a commemorative plaque placed on the doors facing the landing steps. The commemorative marble plaque was unveiled by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam on 4th June 1978. The Government would eventually decree Aapravasi Ghat as a national monument in 1987.

It was a happy occasion when the Government took the decision to hold an official commemoration on 2nd November 1978 and which would become a tradition and annual event. Though, the Government started the official celebration on 2nd



Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Former Prime Minister of India, Visiting the Aapravasi Ghat in June 1970
(Source: Government Information Service)

November 1978, the Yaj ceremony would continue as a separate symbolical gesture to pay tribute through prayer to those who climbed those steps 175 years ago to create the wealth of the country.

One day in the early, 1970s Beekrumsing Ramlallah discovered that thousands of historical documents that lay neglected in the dilapidated buildings at the Aapravasi Ghat. The books of registers of immigrants, their marriage registers, various other precious documents, their photographs, the kitchen utensils recuperated from the site used for the catering of arriving immigrants who transited at the depot a few days before being contracted by plantocrats, all lay in a total state of abandon. Nobody was aware that a big chunk of our history was on the brink of being erased. They were left to the vagaries of time and the whims and caprices of miscreants. What, if somebody had set fire to them? The dormitories that used to give temporary shelter to the Indian Indentured Immigrants were used as offices by the Public Assistance, later the Ministry of Social Security. These valuable and precious artefacts were simply dumped aside. The Commissioner of Public Assistance, Mr Ramnarain Ramsaha, was concerned about this state of affairs and informed Beekrumsing Ramlallah about it. Thereafter, he took up the cudgels again with his usual missionary zeal, and convinced the government of the valuable historical treasure that lay in a complete state of abandon. It was thus that Dr K.

Continued on Page 10 →

From Page 9

Hazareesing, the Director of the newly created Mahatma Gandhi Institute would arrange to retrieve them and ensure their safe keeping at the MGI in 1976. Thus was born the Folk Museum of Indian Immigration of the MGI.

Beekrumsing Ramlallah passed away on September 12, 2000. Two months later, on 2nd November 2000, I felt a terrible void, while conducting the annual Yaj at the Aapravasi Ghat. I was well surrounded by family, friends and supporters. Nonetheless, I felt alone. Beekrumsing Ramlallah was no more. I still hear his voice ringing in my ears, guiding me at the approach of 2nd November. Today, I am happy that: (1) the Aapravasi Ghat is not only now inscribed on the World Heritage Register but (2) a Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre has been created (3) that the 2nd November is a public holiday as from 2nd November 2001.

Truly, the Aapravasi Ghat is not only a national and international historical site, but also a sacred place of pilgrimage. And Beekrumsing Ramlallah stands as the pioneer who triggered it all, way back in the early 1970s.

Mr. Ramlallah, the 4th Mauritius Hindu Scouts and Volunteers
Cleaning the Aapravasi Ghat Site in June 1970
on the Eve of the Visit of
Shrimati Indira Gandhi
 (Photo Courtesy of the Ramlallah Family)



Mrs. Sarita Boodhoo, Mr. Beekrumsing Ramlallah, Mrs. Sadhna Ramlallah, the daughter of Mr. Ramlallah and others members of the Ramlallah Family at the Annual Yaj Commemorating the Arrival of the Indentured Labourers in Mauritius on 2nd November 1834

(Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Sarita Boodhoo)



CONSERVATION & RESTORATION OF AAPRAVASI GHAT 2009

Devendra Singh Sood - Conservation Engineer



Mr. Sood at Work at the Aapravasi Ghat Site
 (Source: AGTF Collection)

The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site has historic and universal outstanding values. The conservation and restoration project launched in focused on the conservation of features identified on maps dated 1865 and on the removal of later additions and intrusive elements which did not relate to the indenture immigration period. The main aim is to restore important features of the site and preserve them for future generations. Authentic materials

and traditional techniques were adopted in order to allow the conservation and restoration of the original features.

During the year 2009, tarfelt floor of guard room and privies area were re-strengthened scientifically by stitching and aging with fresh tarfelt.

The lime in the Privies area was strengthened with glue and fresh coral lime. Sirdar Quarter's plinth wall was re-aligned according to original plan and water tightened from the top to allow its preservation in the long run. Guard room flooring was re-laid with lime mortar as it was original. The cement pointing and modern paint on the high walls of

privies area were removed. The lime plaster was also been consolidated. Stone to stone documentation of inclined wall was carried out and completed for future records.



AGTF General Workers at work on the Roof of the Hospital Block of the Aapravasi Ghat Site
 (Source: AGTF Collection)

Newly excavated drain in the New Shed area was re-laid according to its original alignment and water tightened with lime mortar. Lime flooring was also consolidated. Natural deterioration agent i.e. salt was removed from many places to stop further decay caused by salinity. The conservation work was carried out with the input of trained skilled workers required to produce conservation works responding to scientific standards.

Commemorating the Making of Our History The Last Indentured Labourers In British Mauritius

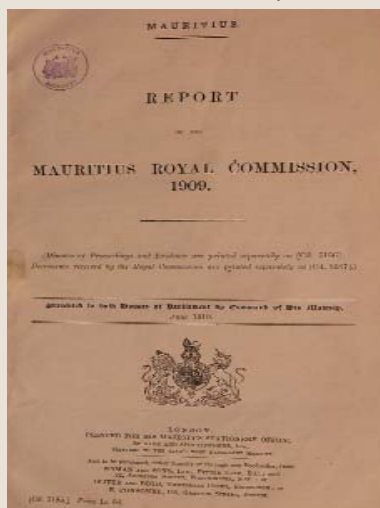
Dr. Satteeanund Peerthum, Senior Historian, &
Satyendra Peerthum, Researcher & Historian, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

2nd November 2009 marks the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers in Mauritius. This specific event was a major milestone in the evolution of Mauritian history because their gradual introduction over a period of more than seven decades forever altered the demography, society, economy and politics of the island.

The indentured labourers played a central role in the process of transforming a little known and rugged Indian Ocean island into the most important producer of sugar in the British Empire by the mid-nineteenth century. In modern Mauritian historiography, there has been a tendency of focusing mostly on the genesis and establishment of the indentured labour system in British Mauritius. While, at the same time, the decline and the eventual demise of this system as well as the arrival of the last indentured workers have rarely been explored by Mauritian scholars.

The Sanderson Committee Report

In 1909, the Council of Government of Mauritius requested for a royal commission of inquiry from the British imperial government in London in order to secure a loan for the revival of the local economy. The Royal



The Report of the Mauritius Royal Commission of 1909

(Source: Mauritius National Archives)

Commissioners discovered that there was still widespread abuses in the sugar industry such as the double cut system, the non-payment of wages of the indentured workers and they were being mistreated.

As a result, one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1909 was for the abolition of the importation of indentured



Pictures of Indentured Labourers Taken at the Aapravasi Ghat or Immigration Depot in 1887

(Source: MGI Immigration Archives)

immigrants into Mauritius from India. In 1910, as a direct result of the Commission's findings, the Earl of Crewe, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the support of the British imperial government, appointed a special committee consisting of members of the British Parliament under the chairmanship of Lord Sanderson.

The Committee investigated into the social and economic conditions of indentured workers who were sent from British India to work in the various overseas European colonies. During the course of the same year, the Sanderson Committee Report was published and it recommended that the exportation of indentured labour to British Mauritius should cease. It partially based its recommendation upon the fact that between 1900 and 1909, there was a gradual decline in the number of new indentured immigrants who were being brought to Mauritian shores.

The Last Indentured Workers

The *Mauritius Almanac of 1913* provides important statistics on the last decades of the indentured labour system in the colony. Between 1906 and 1910, more than 1700 indentured labourers arrived in Mauritius, while more than 3400 former indentured workers actually left the island. This clearly shows that there were twice as many former indentured immigrants leaving Mauritius than the number of new indentured workers arriving. In addition, during the 1910s, thousands of former Indian sugar cane workers left Mauritius for India or for other sugar colonies such as Natal, Guyana and Fiji.

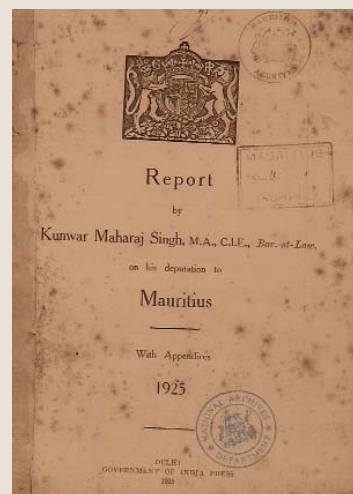
Between 1923 and 1924, around 1395 labourers were landed in Port Louis harbour and in May 1924, the last batch of indentured workers set foot on Mauritian soil. Most of these labourers came from the United Province and they had already worked in other British territories such as British

Guyana, Trinidad and Natal in South Africa.

By December 1924, more than half of these Indian workers were not satisfied with their working conditions and opted to return to British India. It is interesting to note that in June 1978, Sir S. Ramgoolam, the then Prime Minister of Mauritius, had unveiled a plaque at the Aapravasi Ghat in order to commemorate the arrival of the last batch of indentured workers to Mauritius.

Maharaj Singh's Report

In January 1925, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, a high-ranking officer of the Civil Service in the United Province in India and an aristocrat, was sent by the British Government of India to Mauritius. Hugh Tinker, a British historian, eloquently observed: "At last an Indian official of standing had been deputed to examine the situation of overseas Indians".



The Report of Kunwar Maharaj Singh
(Source: Mauritius National Archives)

Maharaj Singh's objective was to investigate the social and economic conditions of the Indian immigrants settled in Mauritius. The key question which he needed to answer was whether the colony still needed to import additional Indian labourers for the local sugar industry?

On 27th February 1925, Maharaj Singh submitted his report to the British Government of India. He mentioned that the Indian labourers and their descendants had achieved a lot in terms of social and economic progress and the indenture system should be terminated. A few weeks after, the British colonial authorities in India accepted his recommendation and no more indentured workers were sent to Mauritius.

Celebrating the achievements of Indian Immigrants

The central market of Port Louis – a stepping-stone to success

Dr (Miss) Nagamah Gopauloo - MGI



The Port Louis Central Market in 1938

(Photo Courtesy of Mr. Guimbeau of Domaines des Aubineaux)

The inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List by UNESCO was a defining moment in the history of Indian indentured immigration to Mauritius. The Ghat has thereafter emerged as a powerful symbol of human endurance. It was not only the final destination of a trip but the beginning of a new one to the plantation estate. And the impact of the indenture system on immigrant settlers can be appreciated through the social and economic institutions linked with the Aapravasi Ghat and plantation life.

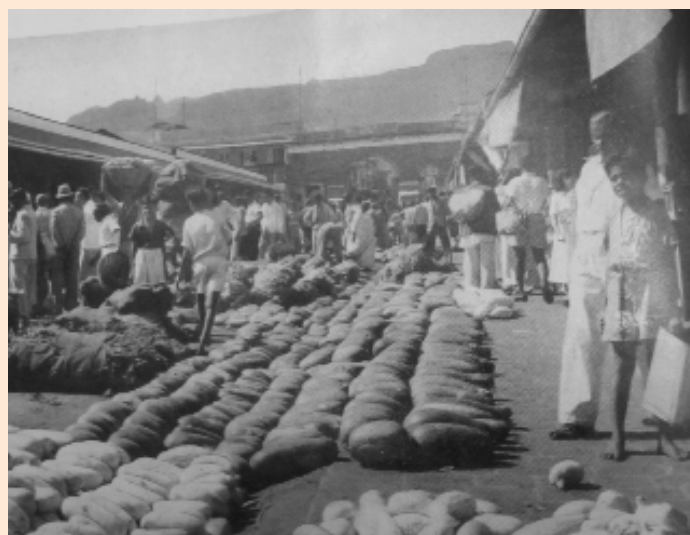
The history of the Central market, located in the Buffer Zone, is intricately interwoven with that of the Aapravasi Ghat. It encapsulates the history of Indian indenture immigration in Mauritius. Visitors' accounts and oral narratives collected by descendants of former immigrants working in the central market reveal the strong links that existed between indenture and the plantation economy as well as the *Grand morcellement* and the Port Louis market-place.

Built in 1845, the market attracted a large number of people seeking alternative means of earning their livelihood. It became a promising source of income for Indian immigrants. Life-histories collected among ancient market sellers, planters, carters and market auctioneers whose grandparents and parents had worked on the market reveal that there was a continuous movement from the estate camps to Port Louis. A large number of Old Immigrant settlers in the first place, moved in the vicinity of the town of Port Louis to work at the market.

Subsequently, whole families left the estate camps to settle in the suburbs of Port Louis at Cassis, Vallée des Prêtres, Plaine Verte, Vallée Pitot. They were helped by relatives, friends and fellow estate camp dwellers already settled in these areas. Many families sent their young boys to relatives and friends already settled in town for apprenticeship on the market-place. Descendants of sellers later branched out into market auctioneering and purchased land in the commercial streets adjacent to the market to set up retail and even wholesale shops. More than 80 per cent of families issued from the indenture system, working on the market for several generations, have emerged brilliantly in all economic spheres. The market is a living testimony to the success of the indentured labourer.

On the other hand, immigrant settlers who purchased land close to their estate camps in the countryside moved out to nearby villages and engaged in vegetable production. They sent the produce of their land by bullock carts, and later the lorry, to the central market.

Oral narratives give a picturesque scene of bullock carts transporting vegetable especially from villages such as Cottage, Vale, Goodlands, Terre Rouge, Grand Gaube etc. in the North of the island. The carters left their respective villages at around midnight and waited at Solitude or Rosalie for fellow carters elsewhere. So as not to be molested by thieves, they made their way together with the help of lantern light to the market in Port Louis, halting at one or two places to refresh and feed their animals. An identical scenario is provided for the southern hinterland of Port Louis. The narratives reveal the social solidarity and the bond of kinship that existed among those settlers and also among subsequent generations.



Traders Selling their Goods in Port Louis Central Market in 1949

(Source: Thorton White, Port Louis: A Master Plan)

The market is also a monument of traditions, cultural beliefs and practices. It embodies notions and systems embedded in the culture of the plantation economy that thrived on the indenture system. Colourful expressions such as *faisance*, *faire valoir*, *piastre*, *baksheesh* characterized the links that have existed between indenture, the plantation economy, and the market-place, now an integral part of our intangible cultural heritage.

The market provided immigrant settlers with opportunity to leave the harsh conditions of life on estate camps and the constraints of the plantation life to look for economic and social prospects. The market has played a significant role in the economic and social mobility of the Indian immigrants; it led them from bondage to freedom and prosperity, serving both as stepping-stone and leverage.

The Aapravasi Ghat occupies a place of pride in the collective cultural memories of the descendants of Indian immigrants. It celebrates strength and fortitude in the face of adversity.

Periodic reporting on the state of conservation of the World Heritage Site

Corinne Forest - Head of Technical Unit

Since 1997, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) launched a periodic reporting exercise every six years to assess the application of the World Heritage Convention by State Parties and monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage properties. This year, the second cycle of Periodic Reporting was launched for Africa during the 33rd World Heritage Committee held in Seville (Spain) from 22 to 30 June. Mauritius as a signatory state of the World Heritage Convention in 1995, is expected to prepare a periodic report on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the management and monitoring of World Heritage Properties located in Mauritius. The World Heritage Committee will examine the regional synthesis report for Africa and respond by formulating recommendations to State Parties and also consider the conclusions of the periodic exercise in the elaboration and review of its policies and decision making. The periodic reporting exercise is also the opportunity for the State Party to assess its strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and allow a review of policies and projects to respond favourably to a well planned heritage preservation policy.

As part of this process, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund will produce a report on the management and state of conservation of the World Heritage Property. The objective will be to report on the actions undertaken by the AGTF to retain the historical significance of the World Heritage Site. In this respect, a number of projects were set up to develop and sustain heritage values justifying the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List. This year, the main objective in this respect is to proclaim the Planning Policy Guidance before the end of the year to give a legal status to the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site as required by UNESCO. The Planning Policy Guidance formulates measures to retain the historical context in which the Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot has evolved and thus, protects the historical significance of the World Heritage Property.

The same objective guided the Conservation project launched in 2004: the AGTF set its priority on the preservation and conservation of the World Heritage Site, now restored according to international standards of conservation. Throughout this major project, the AGTF has trained local professionals and optimized capacity building to develop technical competence that are scarce in Mauritius. The completion of the Conservation Project is the successful achievement of a young professional team in retaining the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage Site. The challenge is now to maintain high professional standards at the World Heritage Site by reinforcing the existing competence which substantiates the technical recommendations and ensures their implementation in accordance with strategic plans and guiding documents. During the periodic reporting exercise, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund will have the opportunity to report on these fulfillments and on its knowledge in the production of well planned strategies and actions implemented by a trained technical team which gained a significant experience in heritage management through the development of the first World Heritage Site in Mauritius.

AGTF Conservation Manual

Avril Paterson - Architect & AGTF Consultant

Historic buildings and urban centres stand as physical evidence of past events, embodied in it a lesson of historic lifestyle, social economic circumstances, culture, technology and many other glimpses not necessarily still evident in contemporary culture. As Ruskin said: *'Great nations write their biographies in three manuscripts, the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last'*

By nature, architecture would fall under the latter and stand as the authority in heritage evidence, even though historic structures are not completely frozen in time and grow and change continuously with society, adapting itself to its users and new technologies.

Through appreciating and studying the past, a deeper understanding of contemporary society is gained and projections of the future can more accurately be made. One's heritage should thus be preserved as a resource. The need for conservation in the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site Buffer Zone arises as heritage resources are threatened by unsympathetic development. A study needs to be done on the historic building typologies and technology with influences of culture and socio economics. Through this investigation, many past events are revealed. Perspective is gained on how the built environment has evolved and adapted to socio-political events of the area. The purpose of conservation guidance is not to freeze development and museumify the Central Business District (CBD) but awaken an awareness of the richness and value of heritage and encourage the layering of cultures and development/modernisation.

The Conservation Manual will provide a study of typology with an analysis of typical changes, layering buildings and general urban landscape have undergone within the Buffer Zone, and how, in general the character has changed through the introduction of new technologies and changes in basic uses of land from residential use and naval trade to international corporate banking. One interesting change in the use of buildings that has become evident is the lack of contemporary context of use basements originally used as storage of goods and materials in commercial buildings. This change has possibly occurred due to lack of maintenance on the stormwater system of the harbour and surrounding areas, though this can only be proven on deeper investigation. Secondly, the Conservation Manual will include a detailed report on construction methods and materials used within the Buffer Zone in its 280 year history. The changing of timber shingle roofs to galvanised metal sheeting is a perfect example of how new less expensive and easier to use materials have been introduced, replacing the former ones and in so doing, altering the aesthetic of built environment, one building at a time. Thirdly, the Conservation Manual will provide the property owners with procedures to follow in implementing any work on existing or new buildings within the Buffer Zone. The manual will also provide information on the availability of historic data on structures as well as procedures for contacting the relevant authorities, in the event any additions or alterations be proposed on historic structures or procedures for demolishing any structures.

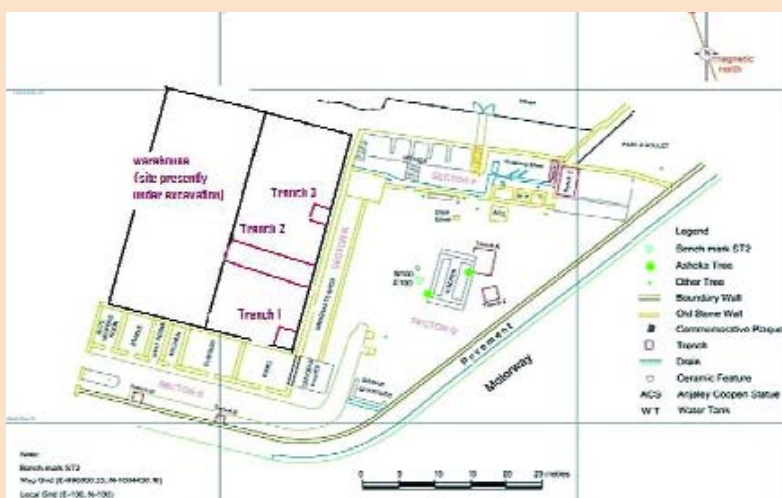
Information will be provided on the restoration of historic elements and materials and also how new materials & elements are to be introduced within historic buildings. Used with the Planning Policy Guidance, the Conservation Manual will guide the design of new buildings erected on open lots should demolition permits be in place, in regard to building form, construction methods and materials and any features that will have an effect on the surrounding environment.

Through the application of the Conservation Manual, development can continue to occur in a sympathetic manner while conservation work can be done to reveal and restore hidden layers of Port Louis history. In so doing this will enrich the built environment with a healthy balance between the historic fabric and contemporary uses of the area.

Archaeological Research at Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site

Initial Archaeological Investigation

Jayshree Mungur-Medhi, Archaeologist & AGTF Consultant



Site plan with Aapravasi Ghat site and the warehouse next to the site, where the 2009 archaeological campaign was undertaken (Map by J. Mungur Medhi)

Archaeological research at Aapravasi Ghat started in the year 2002. Surveys were first undertaken followed by excavation. The archaeological excavation on the site took place between December 2002 and January 2003. The second archaeological campaign started in May 2003 and was intensified after the visit of an ICOMOS team in June 2003 and continued non-stop for a whole year until May 2004, as from which work on the site was concentrated on conservation and restoration.

Aapravasi Ghat is one of the first archaeological sites of Mauritius; where intensive multidisciplinary research has been undertaken. Archaeology has much to say for this site. Before any excavation, intensive archival research was undertaken whereby all documents and maps were consulted. This is an important approach for Historical Archaeology: historical research serves as the desktop study for the archaeological investigation. Following exposures of the archival research, excavations were undertaken on different parts of the site. It has to be noted that about 60 to 70% of the immigration depot, as known in the 19th and early 20th century, was already destroyed by the end of 20th century, with the modernisation of Port Louis. Despite this major loss, excavations were undertaken on the remaining part which was already declared a National Heritage and much was revealed.

Major structures of the site were brought to light such as the *privies*, the *foundation wall of the kitchen*, the *sirdars' quarters* and the *drainage system*. These findings helped to understand the site, along with its daily functioning as an immigration depot.

2009 Archaeological Campaign

Despite all intensive work, the archaeological research did not end there as there are much more to be discovered and studied. In August 2009,



Excavating Trench 1, uncovering part of a wall
(Picture Courtesy of J. Mungur Medhi)

archaeological investigation has been re-initiated. An archaeological campaign was undertaken for the season of August to September 2009. Excavation was conducted in the warehouse, adjacent to the WHS, earmarked for the setting up of Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre. The objective of the archaeological research was to investigate into archaeological potential of the historic warehouse before its major rehabilitation.

Several historical maps and plans were carefully studied before any intervention on site. As per the historical research, a warehouse was built by 1865/66, to store sugar. However, it was found that before the warehouse, a structure similar to a dock dated back to the French period existed on this site until the 1860s. Hence, it was presumed that some of these early historical features may still exist underneath the present building. Historical and modern plans of the Trou Fanfaron region were carefully superimposed and compared trying to get maximum information on the evolution of this site.

Thereafter, 3 spots were chosen to excavate trenches.



Steps and wall uncovered in Trench 3
(Picture Courtesy of J. Mungur Medhi)

floor. As we excavated deeper, walls and steps were uncovered. The walls and steps are actually indicated in historical maps since early 1780's and they pertain to the dock like structure.

One of the hypotheses is that it is a landing place used during the immigration period, even before the Immigration Depot (As the latter was constructed in 1849 and the new discovery dates back to 18th century). It is quite sure that even in the 1850's, the structure was used as a landing place since it is clearly indicated in the 1856 plan.



1856 Plan of Trou Fanfaron Bay showing the 'dock' or Port Slip Structure and 'Entry to the Depot'

(Source: Mauritius National Archives)

However, it is also presumed that if the structure did not exist in the 18th century, that is, before the arrival of indentured labourers, it may have been used for the disembarkment of slaves and goods. Hypotheses put forward for these findings are highly promising and challenging and will definitely contribute to the understanding of the Immigration Depot, the port area and even more. Nevertheless,

research has just started and presently excavations for 3 weeks were undertaken. More historical and archaeological research will have to be continued to answer to our hypothesis.

The benefits of the World Heritage Status for urban sustainable development

Corinne Forest - Head of Technical Unit

The inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat National Monument on the World Heritage List contributed favourably to the development of heritage consciousness in Mauritius. This international recognition gave the opportunity to focus on the preservation and enhancement of Mauritian tangible



Quebec City, Canada

(Source: Bureau de l'Information, Quebec City)

heritage in Port Louis through the development of a vision for the World Heritage Site and its buffer zone addressed in the Planning Policy Guidance. The preparation of the planning document required substantial research in archival and historical documents to understand the evolution of the urban planning and dynamics in Port Louis from the French period to nowadays. This set the base for the elaboration of measures to re-vitalise the urban area in the immediate surroundings of the World Heritage Site as a condition for its long term preservation. Giving the historical significance of the buffer zone, planning guidance was set up to maintain architectural harmony and to address precise guidelines for built developments implying the respect of architectural styles and the enhancement of the area as the historic centre of Port Louis where French period buildings stand by later colonial constructions.

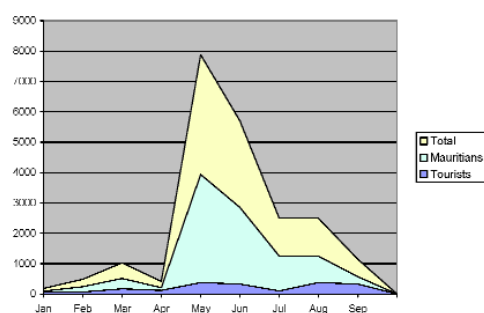
The revitalisation of the city also enhances the development of activities related to cultural tourism and to the implantation of local services beneficial to local residents. These measures are essential to

retain the local community in the city centre since their presence is essential to succeed in the revitalisation of the city. The participation of the local community will help in the valorisation of heritage through the re-appropriation of underused or empty buildings for commercial activities, office use, educational facilities, cultural activities etc. Their involvement is a fundamental aspect of city's revitalisation considering that the local community is the major actor in the reinsertion of heritage in the daily life of the city. The local community will appropriate heritage buildings for social use and ensure their preservation in contemporary context.

Through the effect of city revitalisation, the cultural industry would appreciate the enhancement of tangible heritage giving full expression to Mauritian cultural authenticity which in turn, would bring a significant dimension to the economy of the city. Several World Heritage Cities benefited from investments in heritage aiming at reintegrating heritage in people's lives. Cities like Quebec underwent deep transformation to become dynamic urban centres with prestigious image. Since its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1985, Quebec has involved residents and owners in the decision making for the development and planning of the city. The revitalisation succeeded as it benefited from a full collaborative approach consisting in offering a professional technical support and financial incentives to owners and operators for the preservation of their buildings. After thirty years in operation, the measures set up for urban revitalisation brought significant changes in the city: urban landscapes respond to the best standards in terms of quality of life, traditional architectural features of the city are preserved and maintained, the number of residents has increased significantly giving a secure and lively urban environment, the prestige of Quebec has now reached international level and the tourist industry has developed in a significant manner with 7 million tourists a year.

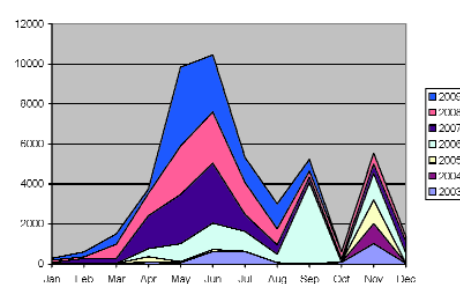
The case of Quebec as World Heritage City is worth examining in the development of our buffer zone as its evolution into a prestigious international city renders what challenges imply such achievement. It is precisely these challenges that the AGTF, the local community and stakeholders will address to reach a high urban quality environment in the buffer zone through the implementation of the Planning Policy Guidance.

Statistics Concerning Visitors at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site (2003-2009)



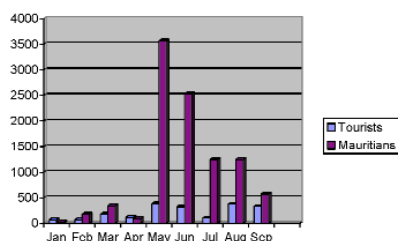
Number of visitors from January to September 2009

Source: AGTF



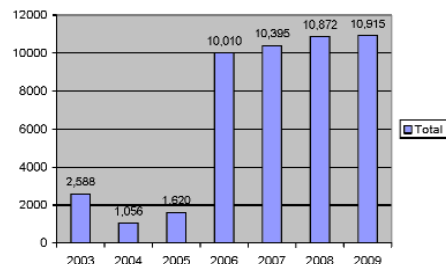
Visitation from January 2003 to September 2009

Source: AGTF



Portion of Mauritian and tourist audience at World Heritage Site from January to September 2009.

Source: AGTF



Total number of visitors a year from January 2003 to October 2009 - Source: AGTF

Consultative Committee for the Planning Policy Guidance

Natasha Kheddoo - Research Assistant



The First Consultative Committee held at the Municipal Council of Port Louis in July 2009 (Source: AGTF Collection)

The Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site is one of the most vital project upon which the AGTF team is currently working. The PPG aims at implementing guidelines in the area in respect of the UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Prior to the implementation of the PPG, relevant stakeholders, owners and registered operators in the buffer zone need to be consulted in order to secure their views and comments regarding the guidelines stated in the PPG. With this aim a Consultative Committee will be organized at least twice a year to register the participation of stakeholders and at the same time to record their comments. This will eventually help in better preparation of the PPG.

The main stakeholders of the Committee consist of the Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources, Ministry of Housing and Lands, Ministry of Local Government, National Heritage Fund, Municipal Council of Port Louis and the Mauritius Ports Authority.

The objectives of the Committee are:-

- To set up a network to facilitate communication and consultation with the local community regarding the implementation of the PPG;
- To determine the response of the local population towards the measures being proposed for the protection of the area; and
- To create awareness about the possibilities of the heritage industry creation and development in the area.

In this respect a first Consultative Committee was set up on 21 July 2009 at the Municipal Council of Port Louis. The Committee was chaired by the Lord Mayor, Mr Mahendra Gondeea.

Prof. Karel Bakker, consultant for the AGWHS, presented the aims and objectives of PPG, process of preparation of PPG and main guidelines of the PPG to the members present. The responses received from the audiences were encouraging. Questions and answers were frequent which helped in giving the members a clear vision of the PPG.

An informative booklet on Buffer Zone in both French and Kreole version were also launched and distributed to operators in the buffer zone with the endeavour to provide them with information which can help them in better understanding the objectives of the PPG.

The next Consultative Committee will be scheduled in November 2009 and hope to attract more members so that the latter can gain more information on PPG and its implications to new developments in the buffer zone.

Towards a Social Plan for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site Buffer Zone - Maurina Soodin - Researcher

Since the nomination of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has been working towards the fulfillment of the requirements for UNESCO's World Heritage Site (WHS), along with partners such as the parent Ministry, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Municipal Council of Port Louis and the National Heritage Fund.

This process has involved projects such as the conservation of the WHS and its promotion. In addition, it has led to more active interests in the WHS Buffer Zone, which will be legally recognised through the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) for the area. During the preparation of the legal text and its accompanying texts, various issues have been raised.

The necessity of developing a social plan (AGWHS BZ SP) was thus felt to enhance community participation in the protection and the promotion of the area. The main aim of the AGWHS BZ SP will thus be to facilitate community involvement for the implementation of the Management Plan, the PPG and other guiding documents for the area. The process was initiated through the socio-economic survey in 2007/8 and the Consultative Committee in July 2009.

The results of the 2007/8 socio economic survey have provided an indication of the opinion local population. Indeed out of the 150 people interviewed, •

- ◆ 64% think that the streetscape is weak
- ◆ 53% think that the architectural aspect needs to be reviewed
- ◆ 74% think that lack of parking was a major problem
- ◆ 85% think that traffic was too dense in the area
- ◆ 53% think that pedestrian access badly needed upgrading
- ◆ 80% think that Security and pollution were important issues

In addition, the Consultative Committee has indicated that the local population is apprehensive of the measures of the AGWHS BZ PPG due to the misguided belief that the legislation will prevent further development of the area, although during the survey, 80% of the interviewees were in favour of enforcing regulations for building height and scale for the use of architectural features, land use, building typology and floor area ratios to monitor development in the buffer zone. It is therefore clear that due to lack of information, the local population might not welcome the introduction of measures which already exist in other more developed countries. The plan will look into the creation of local support in the following manner.

The first part will look into the strategies for precinct branding for the area. A cost benefit analysis focusing on the cultural component will be carried out. The economic and cultural benefits of reviving ancient crafts and trades that were once typical in this area, will also be investigated, with the possibility of introducing trails such as the spice trail or the French trail or the worship trail. In addition, the potential of intellectual property management tools will also be tested as a facilitator for economic growth of the area as a single entity.

The second part of the proposed project will involve the creation of an annual calendar that will not only propose punctual cultural events such as festivals but also participatory events such as the schedule for Consultative Committees and public debates and lectures on relevant themes. These events, along with other techniques of conflict resolution will be investigated as means of creating social cohesion in the area while giving everybody the opportunity to voice out their feelings.

The third part of the proposed project will look at the financial implications of the above mentioned projects. The cost benefit analysis of projects that will be required for the success of this project in the long run such as upgrading of streetscapes, conservation of landmark buildings and upgrading of street infrastructure will also be carried out to determine the overall implications of the precinct branding. In addition, various possibilities for fund raising for the implementation of the projects will also be looked into so as to enable the preparation of a fund raising strategy.

The preparation of the proposed project will require the participation of the stakeholders mentioned above in addition to that of the local community.

The Pioneer Indentured Labourers of 2nd November 1834

Satyendra Peerthum, - Researcher/Historian

The Genesis of Indentured Immigration

Recent research at the Mauritius Archives has provided new information on the indentured labourers who came to Mauritius on the Atlas on Sunday, 2nd November 1834 or 175 years ago. The story of these pioneer Indian labourers began almost two months earlier in Calcutta, India. On 10th September 1834, 36 Hill Coolies of the Dhangar caste (originally from the hills of Bihar in eastern India who were then living in Calcutta) signed a five-year labour contract with George Charles Arbuthnot of Hunter-Arbuthnot & Company, a major British trading company in Mauritius, in the presence of C. McFarlan, at the Calcutta Police Head Office. MacFarlan, the Chief Magistrate of Calcutta, read and explained in detail the contract to the Indian labourers with the help of an Indian interpreter.

Once the labourers agreed to the terms and conditions, they placed their thumb mark on the contract and on a separate list, which contained the names of the 36 Coolies, they placed an 'X' next to their names. The sirdar of these labourers was called Soorooop who was assisted by Subaram. In all, there were 30 males and 6 females among Arbuthnot's coolies, some of their names were Callachaund, Dookhun, Bhomarah, Bhoo dhoo, Lungon, and Bhudhram.

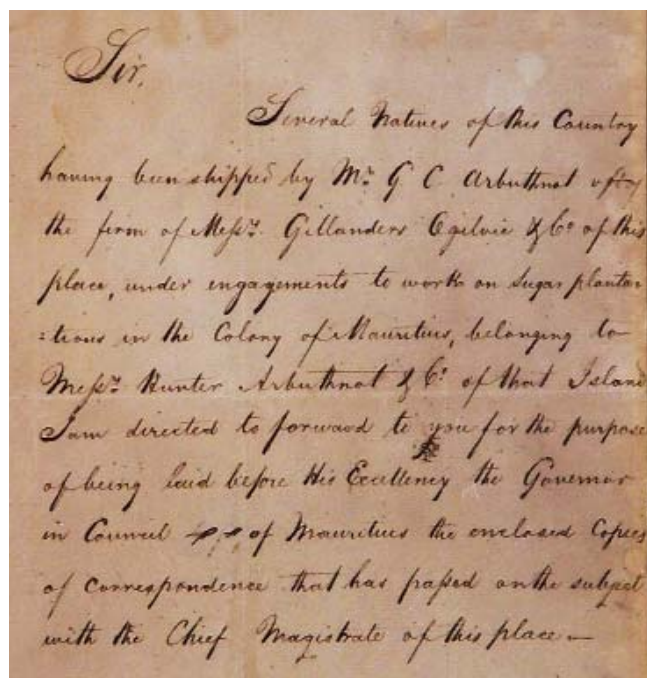
The labour contract, which these labourers signed, was written in Bengali. Furthermore, the salary for the males was five rupees per month and for the females only four rupees per month. The sirdar was paid ten rupees per month and the assistant sirdar around eight rupees per month. In fact, they all received six months' pay in advance before boarding the Atlas. It was Hunter Arbuthnot & Company that paid for their journey from Calcutta to Port Louis. As a result, one rupee was deducted from their monthly wages by that British company for the return passage to India and they were also going to be provided with food, clothing, lodging and medical care.

The Arrival of Arbuthnot's Coolies

On the same day that the labour contract was signed, MacFarlan sent a letter to H. Prinsep, the Secretary to the Government of the Bengal Presidency, informing him of the agreement. The Chief Magistrate requested the Vice-President and Governing Council of the Bengal Presidency to give their stamp of approval to the contract and to allow the labourers to sail for Mauritius. On 15th September, the Vice-President in Council gave his assent to the contract. On the very same day, the 36 Hill Coolies embarked on the Atlas and began their historic voyage to British Mauritius. The Atlas was under the command of Captain Hustwick and was also transporting George Arbuthnot and other passengers as well as a large cargo of rice.

After a long voyage of more than six weeks, the Atlas sailed into Port Louis harbour on Sunday afternoon, 2nd November 1834. However, George Arbuthnot had to wait until the following day before starting the formalities in order for his labourers to be landed on Mauritian soil. On Monday morning, 3rd November, Arbuthnot, wrote an official letter on behalf of Hunter-Arbuthnot & Company to Governor Nicolay, which requested that: "they be allowed to land 36 Hill Coolies from the ship Atlas, whom they intend to employ on their Estate, under guarantee that they shall not become a charge on the Colony".

Hunter-Arbuthnot & Company provided Governor Nicolay with a financial guarantee which was kept in trust by the local colonial government in the Colonial Treasury and would be returned to that British company after the five-year contract of the labourers had expired. As a result, during the afternoon of 3rd November, permission for the landing of the labourers was given by the British governor. However, it was only on Tuesday morning, 4th November,



A Colonial Despatch from the British Government of the Bengal Presidency to the British Government of Mauritius Regarding the Arrival of Arbuthnot's 36 Indentured Labourers (Source: Mauritius National Archives)

that the 36 Hill Coolies were landed close to the old Customs House, not far from the present-day Aapravasi Ghat.

The Journey to Antoinette Sugar Estate

Later that same day, Arbuthnot's coolies were taken to Antoinette Sugar Estate near present-day Piton, in Rivière du Rempart. In 1834, Antoinette was owned by Hunter-Arbuthnot & Company and it stretched over an area of 502 acres and had a workforce of between 190 to 200 slaves. The Indian labourers worked from sunrise to sunset, six days a week and they were also required to perform light duties on Sundays. Thus, they worked side by side with the slaves of Antoinette in the sugarcane fields.

1ST IMMIGRATION.

ARRIVALS of Indian Immigrants from 1834 to 31 December 1842, according to the Security Bonds given at the despatch of the Immigrant Immigrants at the expiration of their Five Years Engagement, which were transacted

YEARS	CHARTER				REBORN				REPEAT				TOTAL			
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1834	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1835	—	—	1,181	37	22	47	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,181	37	22	47
1836	—	—	2,207	371	76	17	942	12	2	—	—	—	3,047	174	79	18
1837	—	—	6,597	211	49	23	2,316	147	7	2	28	5	8,923	241	69	32
1838	—	—	6,227	539	86	14	5,212	79	14	20	208	—	11,273	691	111	29
1839	—	—	215	4	—	—	878	46	9	—	—	—	1,093	142	2	—
1840	—	—	16	—	—	—	19	8	—	—	18	—	43	5	—	—
1841	—	—	13	7	3	2	206	26	11	5	15	—	240	33	18	13
1842	—	—	54	8	2	1	40	1	3	1	—	—	108	11	4	2
	15,002	281	1,128	82	6,224	471	44	25	554	4	—	—	21,873	848	272	66

Extract from the Annual Reports of the Protector of Immigrants Showing the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius between 1834 and 1842 (Source: Mauritius National Archives)

The arrival of Arbuthnot's coolies is the particular event that is commemorated each year on 2nd November at the Aapravasi Ghat. In 1950, Dr Brenda Howell, a British historian, called these first Indian labourers "the pioneers of a migration which was eventually to transform the character of Mauritian life and industry". Furthermore, during the first period of the indenture system, between November 1834 and May 1839, around 25 468 Indians were introduced into this small Indian Ocean island.

Preservation of our ancestors' memory and of our Intangible Heritage

Kiran Chuttoo-Jankee - Research Assistant

The Oral History Project was initiated in 2005. As from this year, this project is carried out in collaboration with the Truth and Justice Commission targetting a total of 400 interviews to collect broad information from the descendants of indentured immigrants.

The objective of the project is to collect oral testimonies of descendants of indentured immigrants and of people involved in the life on sugar camps to have an overview of the indentured experience in Mauritius. The aim is also to identify elements of intangible heritage and collect artifacts and objects such as kitchen utensils, old jewelleries, and working tools pertaining to the indenture period for the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre.

Three Research Assistants and eight Field Guides were recruited by AGTF to conduct the Oral History project on a three month pilot basis as from 15 June 2009 and was extended for an additional four months. Since the beginning of the project, nearly 300 interviews were collected in three major regions:

North of Mauritius: Ms Chrystelle Miao Foh, *Research Assistant*, and 2 *Field Guides* namely Mrs B. Busgeet and Mr N. Soomaroo collected interviews in Plaine des Papayes, Bois Rouge, Pamplemousses, Morcellement Saint André, Beau Plan Sugar Estate, Belle Vue Harel Sugar Estate and Labourdonnais Sugar Estate.

This part of the Island comprised not less than 40 sugar mills out of which only 2 are still operational: Belle Vue Mauricia commonly known as Belle Vue Harel and The Mount. Till now the team has focused on Belle Vue Harel.

East part of the Island: Mr Stephane Karghoo, *Research Assistant*, and three *Field Guides* namely Mrs J. Goolamun, Mrs V. Seednam and Ms. N. Kissoonah carried out interviews in Camp de Masque, St Julien Village, Brisée Verdière, FUEL Sugar Estate, Riche Mare, Quatre Cocos, L'Aventure, Beau

Champ Sugar Estate, Bonne Veine, Constance, Queen Victoria, Bel Etang.

The main focus in the Flacq district was the FUEL Sugar Estate and interviewees were identified from villages surrounding this Sugar estate. During the British period, the population of Flacq which was composed of various cultures was around 12 000. During the last Century, Flacq comprised of 63 sugar mills.

South region: Ms. D. Tilwa, *Research Assistant*, and 2 *Field Guides* namely Mrs. V. Vimbooly Moodely and Mr J. Aubeeluck collected interviews from people who worked at Deux Bras Sugar estate camp, Mon Trésor, Mon Desert, Union Vale, Sauveterre, Virginia; and also from people living in Plaine Magnien, L'Escalier, Le Bouchon, Camp Carol, Des Places and Trois Boutiques.

Conducting interviews requires abiding by a professional methodology primarily consisting in stating clear research objectives and sampling the work to be undertaken. The second step is the identification of interviewees. All men and women above 70 years old or more worked in the sugar industry at different posts as Labourer, Sirdar, sugar mill Worker etc. and experienced life in the sugar camps. Part of the people interviewed lived in places where the indentured labourers resided, constructed their lives and passed on memories and their living traditions to their children.

Interviews were also conducted with people who have not lived in sugar camps. Most worked in the sugar industry and had an important role in the daily life of the workers.

A questionnaire sets the base for conducting interviews and covers the following themes:

1. Biographical information
2. Childhood memories, education
3. Marriage
4. Description of sugar camps and life on the camp
5. Professional experience
6. Social gatherings and festivals
7. Women.

The Oral History proved to be a very interesting project in the sense that people interviewed find in the interviewer an interlocutor to share their best and worst experiences. They are overwhelmed to have an attentive listener, they feel healthy and happy to confide and share with us their most intimate moments of life. For most of them, they did not talk about these moments to anyone, not even to their spouse or children. At the end of the day, the interviewer comes back from interviews not only with the sense of fulfilment of having contributed to the preservation of memories of our ancestors and Intangible Heritage but also of having brightened the day of an elderly person who has already crossed the crescendo of life.



3rd row from left: J. Gooloomun, N. Soomaroo, J. Aubeeluck, S. Karghoo
2nd row from left: C. Miao, D. Tilwa, N. Kissoonah, V. Vimbooly Moodely
1st row: B. Busgeet, K. Chuttoo Jankee, L. Pydatalli
(Source: AGTF Collection)

Overview of Oral History

Lutchmee Pydatalli - Field Guide

Indenture in Mauritius is an essential part of Mauritian history. To better understand the role of Indenture in Mauritius, we must turn back to the British colonial period when Indenture was introduced. The indentured labourers were those people who came to work in sugarcane plantations on contract basis.

Oral History depends on human memory and on spoken words. By collecting Oral History, we have a precious sense of catching and holding something valuable from the past. It is becoming valuable to reconstruct the history of the indentured immigration through the descendants of the immigrants. It is a mirror of the past. If we do not preserve those memories and stories, then one day they will disappear forever. Immigrants have left here a deep imprint. They made their own island

that required their hard labour. It is finally recognized that Oral History is not just rich and famous but has historical importance.

Today, Mauritius is proud of its achievements. What is practiced by a limited number of human beings who live in this tiny island may well serve as a lesson to the inhabitants of much vaster lands, that of peaceful co-existence.

Mr. Fookyee of Plaine des Papayes was interviewed for the Oral History Project in 2009 (Source: AGTF Collection)



The Official Launching of the AGTF Vagrants Database Project

Satyendra Peerthum - Researcher/Historian



**Dr. the Honourable Vasant K. Bunwaree
Launching the Vagrants Database Project**
(Source: AGTF Collection)

On Thursday, 30 April 2009, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, organized the official launching of the AGTF Vagrants Database Project at the Vagrant Depot Site in Grand River North West. The Vagrant Depot is the second most important indenture site in Mauritius after the Aapravasi Ghat World

Heritage Site and it is the first indenture site in the country to have been declared a National Monument.

The programme consisted of:

- Speeches by Mr. Raju Mohit, Officer-in-Charge of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, Associate Professor Dr. Vijaya Teelock, GOSK, Chairperson of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, His Lordship Mr. Mahendra Gondeea and Dr. the Hon. Vasant K. Bunwaree, Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources
- The projection of a 3-minute clip on the History of the Vagrant Depot and Vagrancy in British Mauritius
- A powerpoint presentation entitled 'The Vagrant Depot and the AGTF Vagrants Database Project' was given by Mr. Satyendra Peerthum, AGTF Researcher, and Mr. Anwar Chuttoo, Lecturer at the University of Mauritius

The Vagrants Database was launched by Dr. the Hon. Vasant K. Bunwaree, Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources. The Honourable Minister and the VIP guests were provided a guided visit of the Vagrant Depot Heritage Site and of the exhibition panels.

A Better Appreciation of the Aapravasi Ghat through the Outreach Section of the Research Unit

Drishti Chummun - Heritage Educator



Archaeological Excavations during Heritage Week in April 2009
(Source: AGTF Collection)

"Education is the process through which intellectual and practical capacities of an individual are developed so as to make him a cultured person as well as a useful member of a cultured society".

Mauritius of today is changing very quickly. The change is visible in every aspect of our life. The concepts of yesterday may no longer hold good today and what is valued today may not be of the same importance tomorrow. The inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site has given the Outreach Wing of the Research Unit a serious thought to chalk out a constructive and effective educational program for the public. A country where we do encounter people of different ethnic backgrounds, creating awareness through educational activities is indeed a great challenge. A glance at the history of the Aapravasi Ghat makes it clear that although it has been just a few years since it has been inscribed as a World Heritage Site on the UNESCO register, the need to generate interest in the public is an ongoing process and this is best done through its educational activities. Today it is practically impossible for a student to acquire complete mastery in all the different branches of knowledge. The increase in the

total bulk of knowledge has given rise to compartmentalization which has resulted in specialization and small specific areas known as subjects. Each subject has got its own discipline and ways of learning. If a Museologist and a Zoologist sit together, they may be strangers to each other in respect of their fields of interest. It is true to say that one of the most important ways to judge the progress of civilization is to measure to which extent men are closer to each other and promote the feeling of unity. The Aapravasi Ghat where more than 70% of the Mauritian ancestors climbed the symbolic stairs without anyone giving thought to religion and caste is the symbol of the harmony that prevails in the Mauritian community. The World Heritage Site receives on a daily basis more than a fifty visitors on an average. Activities such as Archeological dig and Storytelling are targeted towards children thus, they find themselves with pleasure, excitement and enthusiasm digging a puzzled past that needs to be reconstructed. For a child, the objects that they dig- rare or common, ancient or modern, exotic or of local origin can be fascinating and the most rewarding educational experience.

The student group being a significant section of visitors which add up to around 7221 this year, is offered a wide range of activities which contribute to their all round development and better understanding of their past. The Outreach Wing has a definite purpose in visiting schools. The introduction to the topic of Aapravasi Ghat in relation to their syllabus gives them a better perspective of the site. A Power Point presentation and a virtual visit of the site have enabled students to appreciate better the past of their ancestors. The mission statement of why Aapravasi Ghat has been declared World Heritage Site is also emphasized.

A school kit for primary and secondary schools enables the teacher to have a pre visit session with the students and thus give them a general appreciation of the Aapravasi Ghat and its universal value. The film show is another educational feature with widespread public interest. There is a great demand for the film show especially from Senior Citizen Associations visiting the site on a frequent basis. The Outreach Wing of the Research Unit is also building effective educational programs such as Walkabouts and Identification of Archeological finds. A special summer curriculum for students will also be available and vacation activities will eventually be rewarding for the students.

All the schemes involve a constant rapport and exchange of ideas with the general public.

Guided visits of the site and Educational Activities for Children on booking on 217 31 59 or by letter to the Officer in Charge, AGTF, Quay Street, Port Louis

Visit of Senior Citizens at AGWHS

Vijaya Beejadhur - Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer



Senior Citizens Visiting the Hospital Block
(Source: AGTF Collection)

On the 17th September, a group of 30 persons from Ramayanath Mandali Senior Citizen Association of Laventure Flacq, visited

Aapravasi Ghat. They were guided by Shaineel (Trainee Student from l'École Hotelière) and myself, Vijaya (Heritage Guide). For many of them, it was their first visit to the immigration depot where once their ancestors landed. It was indeed a unique adventure.

They were very emotional when visiting the site. They were participating with the guides. They were telling their experience as the children and grand daughters of indentured labourers. Some remembered they were paid very few at that time. They were eating mostly simple foods like green vegetables or grains or their houses were made with woods or straws.

Some visitors could not hold their tears specially when they were climbing up the sixteen steps. At the end of the visit, they expressed themselves as follows:

"We are pleased to have visited the Aapravasi Ghat. At least we have got an idea of where our ancestors set their foot for the first time in Mauritius". (Visitors' Book II)



Senior Citizens in front of the Entrance Gateway of the Aapravasi Ghat Site
(Source: AGTF Collection)

Over the years, visitors for instance tourists, Mauritians, and students have visited the site. And all of them have been impressed with its past, so valuable and unique. The most important thing is that every visitor tries to make pictures of what was happening in the immigration depot 175 years back and they ask questions and make suggestions.

16th July 2009 Press Conference

Indira Gyaram - Programme Coordinator



The Press Conference of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Held on 16th July 2009
(Source: AGTF Collection)

To mark the 3rd Anniversary Inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on UNESCO World Heritage List, a press conference was held on 16th July 2009 at Ex-STC Building. As president of the Buffer Zone Committee, the Lord Mayor of the Municipal Council of Port Louis, Mr Mahendra Gondeea was present as chief guest.

The Chairperson, Dr Vijayalakshmi Teelock, welcomed all members present and made an exposé of the forthcoming projects of the AGTF. She brought to the notice of members of the press the importance of the Core Zone and the Buffer Zone and she stressed on the need for the collaboration of the Municipality of Port Louis. She made it clear to the public through the press that AGTF is not an obstacle to any economic development in the Buffer Zone. On the contrary, the AGTF is working on a Planning Policy Guidance which will aim at promoting cultural tourism. The Chairperson also

announced the creation of the Consultative Committee for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site where all stakeholders and well wishers can be properly informed for any development they would like to bring in the Buffer Zone.

The Mayor of Port Louis congratulated the AGTF team for the good work being performed to maintain the status of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. In his speech for the occasion, the Lord Mayor of the Municipal Council of Port Louis promised to extend the Municipality's support for future projects of the AGWHS. He also laid emphasis to promote our intangible cultural heritage. A booklet, "Livret d'information sur la Zone Tampon de l'Aapravasi Ghat, Patrimoine Mondial" along with a book "Musical Instruments" by Veena Balgobin were also launched on that occasion.

AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE RECEIVES THE VISIT OF MR ALTAMAS, JUDGE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Pravesh Rughoo
Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer



On September 24, 2009, Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site got the honour of receiving one of the major law protectors from India, His Excellency Mr. Kabir Altamas, Judge from Supreme Court of India. Mr. Altamas was

accompanied by his wife and by Ms Suja K. Menon, Second Secretary from the High Commission of India, Mauritius. The distinguished visitors appreciated the guided visit conducted by Mr. Rughoo of Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. Mr. Altamas was appointed judge, Supreme Court of India on September 9, 2005 and His Excellency wrote the following comment on the site Visitor's Book (Quote):

"The very fact that this site has been given the same status as the Taj Mahal speaks volunteers of its importance as one of the historic sites of the world. This was the site which symbolised the end of slavery and the beginning of the concept of indentured labour. It was a privilege to be here during our trip to Mauritius and to see the manners in which heritage is respected and preserved given the history of the island. I sincerely hope that this sentiment continues to last".

Student Work Experience Programme 2009 at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

Satyendra Peerthum (*Coordinator of the SWEP 2009 Programme*)

Between 1st June and 22nd July 2009, eight students who are majoring in history at the University of Mauritius (UOM) followed the Student Work Experience Programme at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF). The students who took part in the training programme this year were: Mahendranathsing Bacchoo, Béatrice Adeline, Reema Bhatoolaul, Jayshree Maddhoo, Bheem Vanisha, Manorama Akung, Hansa Devi Kisthoo and Ashdevising Panchoo.

Over a period of eight weeks, they were involved in several AGTF activities and projects such as:

1. Guided visits of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site
2. Archival research for inscription of the Immigration Archives on UNESCO's Memory of the World at the National Library, University of Mauritius Library and the Carnegie Library
3. The conservation of artifacts
4. Helping with the preparation of the Aapravasi Ghat Buffer Zone Consultative Committee Meeting
5. Helping with the administrative work of the AGTF Research Unit
6. Helping with the preparation of the 3rd anniversary of the



SWEP Students from the University of Mauritius

(Source: AGTF Collection)

commemoration of the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on UNESCO's World Heritage List

7. Data entry for AGTF archival information related to indenture
8. Translation of AGTF Publication specifically the education booklet for the school kit

It should be noted that each year the SWEP students make an important contribution to the research work and projects of the AGTF Research Unit.

Jaantsar

(Song by B. Busgeet)



Senior Citizens Performing a Traditional Bhojpuri Song at Aapravasi Ghat (Source: Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Sadhna Ramlallah)

Pissou pissou jantwa, charhala bhayley gahouwa
Ajo bhaya aylan pahounaawa ho Raam
Machiya bayssaley hawein, sassou barhaytin
Ajou bhaya aylan jiwanarya ho Raam..

Kodon hi daribon ho bhatawaa jey rinjhiya
Uparey rahariyaa ke daliyaa ho Raam
Saag hi paat bahu rinjhiya balou diha
Ouhi hawein bhaya jiwanarya ho Raam..

Jeywan beysey la saar behnoya
Bhaiya ji key naina dharey lorwa ho Raam
Chand Souraj eysan bahini biyahli
Sehou bahini jarey sasourariya ho Raam..

Itna bachana bhaya, babaji se kahiya
Sabhaweme beyseley baba jhankhiyan ho Rama
Itna bachana bhaya, ammaji se kahiya
Sey jiya beysaley amma rohyan ho Raam...

Song Sung while grinding grains with Janta)

(Translated by Raju Mohit and Kiran Chuttoo- Jankee)

Those were the days, when the mother in law was domestically in command. The brother of the daughter in law had come to see his sister. The mother in law gave permission to her daughter in law to prepare food for the guest.

The daughter in law grinds grains and wheat in the janta to prepare food for his brother who has come at her place as guest.

She had asked her mother in law
who is sitting on her chair as supervising officer-
what dish should she prepare for her brother?

Mother in law replies and says 'grind rice in the janta
and prepare 'embrevades' with 'bredes'
that is what you will serve to your brother as meal.'

When her husband and her brother have sat together for lunch,
the eyes of the brother is filled with tears.
He is unhappy to see that the same sister
who was so much treasured in his home,
who was as precious as the moon and the sun;
after marriage,

A Glimpse Into The Indenture Sites of Mauritius

Mohit Dowlol & Shaineel Pothan - Trainee Students, Sir Gaetan Duval l'École Hôtelière

Indentureship dates back to the 1834 just after the abolition of slavery. In the wake of this decision, they had to find an alternative system which came to be known as Indentureship. To the difference of slavery, where slaves were bought and sold as objects, an indentured labourer was a man or woman who signed a contract to work away from his or her homeland for an employer, for a specified period of time, generally five years. Their contracts specified their terms of employment and outlined their general standards of living, wage rate, working hours, type of work, rations, housing and medical care.

Known as the "Great Experiment", the indenture system started officially on 2 November 1834 in Mauritius as a test case, with the arrival of 'Atlas' from India with the first 36 Indentured labourers on board.

With the success of the 'Great Experiment' in Mauritius, the British Government decided to replicate the system in its other colonies such as Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Fiji among others.

However during the years of suspension (1839-1842) and the peak period (1843-1865), tens of thousands of Indentured labourers were introduced from East Africa, the Comoro Islands, China, South-East Asia, Yemen, Reunion Island and Sri Lanka.

Centuries later, as from the 1870s, Indentured Immigration declined and finally came to a final end in 1910.

Since the Aapravasi Ghat and the Vagrant Depot have been subject of intensive writing and publication in previous editions, this year, we will try to focus on the historical values of other related sites where Indenture also took place. At the same time, this article aims to promote and attract interest in a new form of tourism in Mauritius, Cultural Tourism. These sites will include Trianon, Forbach, Union Vale, and Flat Island.

Trianon

Built during the nineteenth century, the Old Labourers' Quarters of Trianon was decreed

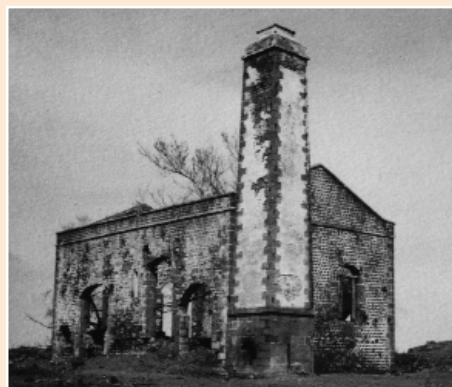


The Trianon Stone Barracks in 1950

(Source: Photo Collection of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture)

National Monument by the Government of Mauritius on 22 July 1974. It is located behind the Emerald Park, Trianon, some 13 km away from Aapravasi Ghat. Despite its abandonment,

this structure is one of the rare monuments in Mauritius which has remained intact through time and offers an insight into the living conditions of the Indian labourers. It is a spot



The Old Sugar Mill, Chimney and Windmill of Forbach Sugar Estate in 1940

(Source: Photo Collection of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture)

where the Indentured labourers continued their lifestyle and culture.

Other tangible part of Trianon which still exists to date includes a chimney in the yard of Margarine Industries Limited, a row of Barracks being used as store and a Bridge.

Forbach

Situated at a distance of 14 km from the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, landing place of the Indentured Labourers, the Forbach Estate is one of the well-known sugar plantations in the north of Mauritius. Its history dates back to January 1816 when Mr Joseph Staub, a former French army officer who



The Old Sugar Factory of Union Vale Sugar Estate in 1890

(Source: Photo Collection of the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture)

settled in Mauritius bought some 2 arpents and 44 perches for 75 piastres.

With successive acquisitions, the area of Forbach Estate reached 58 arpents in 1818 when a sugar mill of large stone structure was erected and 743 at its disposal in 1842.

Forbach Estate was one of the few plantations in the British Mauritius equipped with a windmill to process sugar canes. However this

windmill was formally closed down in 1852 and Forbach was taken over by labourdonnais Estate in 1975 as part of the Sugar Industry centralization process.

Archival records show that between 1840s and early 20th Century, its main workforce was indentured labourers who were well treated with adequate food, clothing and medical treatment. As at today, various structures such as the camp and barracks for the Indentured labourers, the windmill tower, the chimney and water tank still exist.

Union Vale

Formerly known as 'Mare du Tabac', Union Vale was incorporated in the Mon Trésor Mon Desert Estate in 1944 during the centralization process and still forms part of the group. According to archival records of 1854, it is attested that only 26 indentured men, along with 7 boys, 1 woman and 2 girls were required to work on the Union Vale Sugar Estate which covered a small area.

Despite the end of sugar production in 1944, the labourers continued to stay in the barracks and work for Union Vale Estate.

Among the several ruins which still exist today on the estate, we can find a row of 12 Barracks, a stone building and an associated chimney which formed the sugar factory, a Bell to inform inhabitants of the time, Garage for locomotives actually being used as offices and a canal used for water supply to the factory.

Flat Island

Flat Island is located at a distance of around 12 kilometres to the north of Mauritius. It stretches over an area of more than 300 acres and it is the largest islet off the Mauritian coast.

During the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, Flat Island was used as a quarantine station for indentured labourers and officers with cholera disease.

Among the buildings erected there were hospitals, quarantine stations, living quarters and offices for police immigration officers on duty, kitchens and stores. Ruins of these are still present on the island but the most important building is the lighthouse standing on a 100-meter high hill which started operation during the mid-1850s.

The research for this article was done under the supervision of Ms. Corinne Forest, Mr. Satyendra Peerthum and other Members of the AGTF Research Unit

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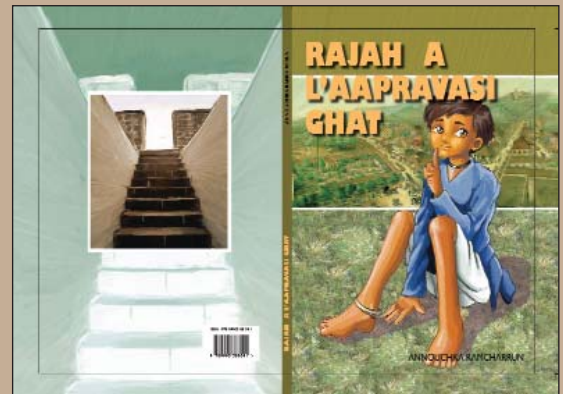
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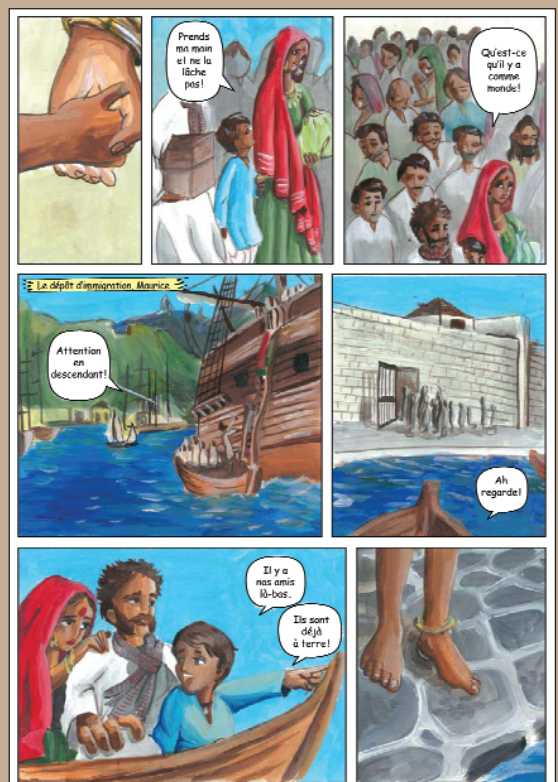
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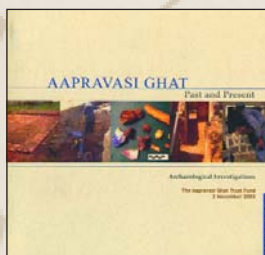
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**Rajah at Aapravasi**

Ghat tells the story of a little boy leaving India with his parents employed as indentured labourers in Mauritius. Rajah leaves Patna to embark on a ship in Calcutta for Mauritius. On arrival, he stays at the Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot for two days where he explores the different parts of the Depot: he is taken for a bath with his father and led to the courtyard before resting in the immigrants' sheds with his parents. He meets Flash, the most rapid horse in Mauritius who explains to him the functioning of the depot. He finally leaves the depot with his parents to start a new life in a sugar estate.

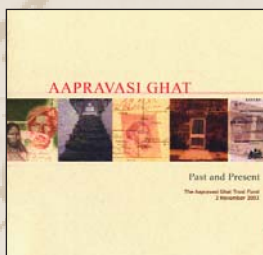


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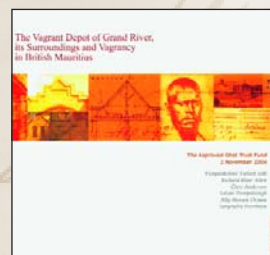
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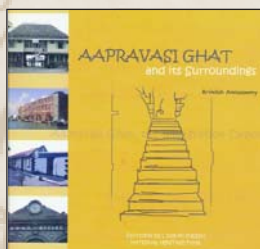
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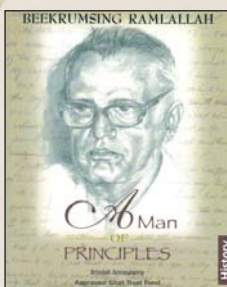
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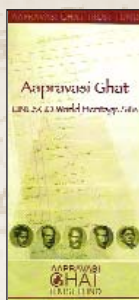
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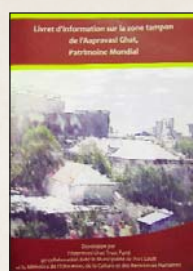


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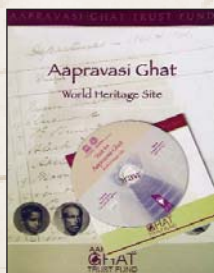


**Livret d'information
sur la zone tampon de
l'Aapravasi Ghat,
Patrimoine Mondial
(2009)**

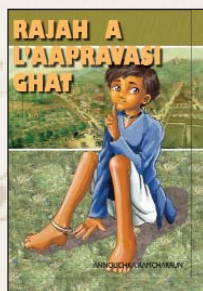
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**The Aapravasi Ghat
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**Rajah à
l'Aapravasi Ghat
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Ms N. Kheddo

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