

# Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund NEWSLETTER



Aapravasi Ghat  
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015 No. 12

## STATE VISIT OF HIS EXCELLENCY NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

On 12 March 2015, His Excellency Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India visited the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site as part of his state visit to Mauritius. The Prime Minister was the chief guest for the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence of Mauritius.

*Wreath Laying Ceremony at the  
Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site  
(Source: AGTF Collection)*



## OPENING OF BEEKRUMSING RAMLALLAH INTERPRETATION CENTRE

The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre was inaugurated on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014. The Centre is an exhibition area that offers educative tools to support the understanding of the history of indenture and of the World Heritage Site.

*Immigrants' Pictures displayed at the B. Ramlallah Interpretation Centre  
(Source: AGTF Collection from MGI Immigration Archives collection)*

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF FLAT ISLAND

The AGTF received a grant of USD 20,666 from the Embassy of the United States of America under the US Information and Educational Exchange Act for the project entitled "Documentation and Conservation of the former quarantine station in Flat Island, Mauritius". Two expeditions were conducted in July 2015 in collaboration with the National Parks and Conservation Services.

*Flat Island  
(Source: Mauritius Wildlife Foundation)*



## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MONUMENTS AND SITES

The International Day for Monuments and Sites is an event organised every year by the AGTF since 2006. This year, the AGTF organised guided visits to the Government House, State House and Bras d'Eau National Park with the collaboration of the National Heritage Fund.

*Guided Visit at the Government House  
(Source: AGTF Collection)*

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- Pandit Basdeo Bissoondoyal – *Dr. Jimmy Harmon*
- In Memoriam Dr. Abdul Kalam
- In Memoriam Prof. Karel Bakker - *Nicholas Clarke*

## Editorial Committee

Ms. A. Chummun	Chairperson, Ministry of Arts and Culture
Mrs. S. Ramlallah	Board Member, AGTF
Dr. A. Jahangeer-Chojoo	Representative of Mahatma Gandhi Institute
Mr. R. Ballah	Board Member, AGTF
Mrs. C. Forest	Head Technical Unit, AGTF
Mr. S. Peerthum	Historian, AGTF
Mrs. C. Miao Foh	Research Assistant, AGTF
Special thanks to Ms. B. D. Bahadoor,	Research Assistant, AGTF

# Editorial



On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is commemorating the 181<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers in Mauritius. This specific event refers to the arrival of the 36 Bihari contract workers on board the ship the Atlas who reached Mauritian shores after a long and harrowing voyage.

Sirdar Soorooop, Sabaram, his assistant, Dookhun, and their fellow immigrants signed a 5-year indenture group contract to work for George Charles Arbuthnot, a British planter, on Antoinette Sugar Estate, also known as Phooliyar, in the Rivière du Rempart district. Little is known about this indenture site. As a result, this 2<sup>nd</sup> November, AGTF is inviting all Mauritians to discover the rich history and heritage of important sites such as Antoinette through the publication of a booklet.

Our built heritage is an important witness of the past. The preservation and valorization of heritage sites are primordial for the recognition of national landmarks resting on the development of a deeper knowledge of Mauritian history. The Aapravasi Ghat World Site is a tangible and paramount symbol of Mauritian identity since the ancestors of the majority of the present-day population arrived on the island through this immigration depot.

In July 2006, the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List was an honour and prestige because Mauritius was recognized as a key place on the international cultural heritage map. As a World Heritage Site, the Aapravasi Ghat does not only belong to the Mauritian people, but also to humanity.

It is a unique site which embodies key values for mankind. As a *lieu de mémoire*, it is playing a crucial role in bolstering our national unity and preserving our values. Thus, the Aapravasi Ghat forms a cornerstone of our Mauritian cultural heritage.

Ever since 2001, the Mauritian government has given greater consideration to saving and preserving this unique heritage site. Between December 2014 and October 2015, several projects have been initiated with a view to preserving this site of national, regional and international importance for future generations.

As part of its actions to better integrate heritage in the lives of Mauritians, AGTF is implementing the Local Economic Development Plan Project which will identify economic opportunities in the Aapravasi Ghat Buffer Zone. To preserve our heritage, the Trianon Barracks Conservation Project is still in progress to restore the former lodging for the indentured labourers. After restoration, the Trianon heritage site will be part of a cultural trail on indenture. This project is part of the Indentured Labour Route project establishing a network of 26 countries who have experienced indenture. The Indentured Labour Route project will also include the results of research on elements of intangible cultural heritage that have been thoroughly documented with more than 800 oral interviews from descendants of indentured workers.

AGTF has also undertaken pluri-disciplinary research, with the support of international scholars, on important indenture sites such as Bras d'Eau, Flat Island, Antoinette (Phooliyar), and Bois Marchand Cemetery. The results of 10 years of research were the basis for the display of the newly-opened Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) that has received more than 34,000 visitors to date including tourists, school children and elderly citizens. In accordance with the AGTF Act, BRIC is playing a key role in the dissemination of knowledge about the Mauritian experience with indentured labour among our fellow citizens.

Lastly, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is committed to fulfilling its mission statement and to promoting the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site as a local, regional and international site.

Dharam Yash Deo Dhuny  
Chairman,  
Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund,  
2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015





*The President of the Republic of Mauritius*

### **MESSAGE**

I am pleased to be associated with the publication of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Annual Newsletter which marks the 181<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers in Mauritius, an event which forever altered our country's history, demography, economy and politics.

The 36 Indian immigrants who arrived in Mauritius at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, on board *The Atlas* on 2nd November 1834, were the pioneers and the precursors of almost half million immigrants who, eventually, called this small Indian Ocean island their home.

Through their sweat and toil, they all collaborated to contribute to make our country a peaceful multi-ethnic, democratic country which serves as a shining beacon to the rest of the world.

I invite our modern generation to take inspiration from these people who came to this land with the hope of a better life for their children and fought for their freedom.

The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site is a place of shared history and shared memories. It is a unique place which provides us with a tangible example of our common heritage and our national unity.

I take this opportunity to commend the Chairman, the Board, and the Staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for the various projects and initiatives they have taken to preserve this World Heritage Site.

I wish them success in their future endeavours

**Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, G.C.S.K., C.S.K., PhD**  
**President of the Republic**

29 September, 2015





Prime Minister  
Republic of Mauritius

Message



*I am delighted to be associated with this special annual issue of the newsletter of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund in the context of the 181<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured immigrants to Mauritius.*

*With the Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne Cultural Landscape, Mauritius is the only country that has two World Heritage Sites related to slavery and indenture, the two most painstaking mass labour movements in the world.*

*The Aapravasi Ghat stands as a major historic testimony of indenture. It is one of the oldest surviving entry and transit points associated with indentured labour and symbolizes the story of some 500,000 indentured labourers recruited to work in the sugarcane plantations in Mauritius after the abolition of slavery. These half million men, women and children came to our shores after a long and perilous journey through the unknown.*

*The Aapravasi Ghat represents the memories, traditions and values that these men, women and children carried with them when they left India and which they subsequently, bequeathed to their descendants. The sixteen steps of the Aapravasi Ghat have a great significance in the history of our country as they have been the initial steps forging the destiny of today.*

*The Aapravasi Ghat has over the last decades witnessed the visits of eminent personalities. The most recent visit is that of Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India on 12 March of this year and his message for the World Heritage Site was as follows:*

*Quote*

*"I am honoured to have the opportunity to pay homage to the brave Aapravasis who left India's shores nearly two centuries ago. Aapravasi Ghat is an eloquent tribute to the indomitable human spirit, and also to the enduring links between our people. It is our sacred duty to treasure and preserve this site".*

*Unquote*

*This message gives us indeed an idea of the magnitude and importance of this site and its outstanding universal value. I am confident that the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund will leave no stone unturned for the fulfillment of its mandate throughout succeeding generations.*

*I take the opportunity to congratulate the Chairman, members and staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for their unwavering and unflinching commitment to the protection, promotion and advancement of this world Heritage Property.*

The Rt Hon Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC  
Prime Minister

15 September 2015





REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

**MINISTRY OF ARTS AND CULTURE**  
*(Office of the Minister)*



**181<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius**  
**AGTF Newsletter 2015**

It gives me great pleasure to be associated with the publication of the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Newsletter to mark the 181<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius.

Since the year 2001, this commemoration has become a national event to pay tribute to those who came as indentured labourers from Asia and Africa to work on the island's sugar estates. These labourers have painstakingly, through their sweat and sacrifice, contributed to the socio-economic and cultural development of Mauritius.

The Aapravasi Ghat symbolises the landing place of those labourers in Mauritius and the migration of 2.2 million indentured labourers worldwide to work on the plantations established in the colonies.

Since its inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2006, the Aapravasi Ghat has further contributed to promote this part of history that was hardly known worldwide. The recent opening of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre also helps in raising awareness on the experience of indentured labourers and the key role of Mauritius in the history of indenture.

The projects undertaken by the AGTF underscore the necessity to care for our heritage both tangible and intangible. The backbone of these projects is research which further documents the development of our nation and its contribution to the history of humanity. These projects will soon become an integrated part of the Indentured Labour Route project supported by UNESCO and which aims at further promoting a culture of peace, cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue.

Indeed, the objective of the Indenture Labour Route Project is to set up, implement and promote projects on indenture including an international database which will be accessible worldwide. This project, implemented in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), is complementary to the Slave Route Project initiated by UNESCO and the General History of Africa.

It is, therefore, important to work together to support the development and enhancement of our cultural values, thereby, further promoting our heritage which reflects our identity.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Trust Fund, the Board and the Staff for their achievements throughout the years and wish them success in their future endeavours.

Hon. S. Baboo  
Minister



## LORD MAYOR'S OFFICE



### MESSAGE FROM MR MOHAMMAD OUMAR KHOLEEGAN LORD MAYOR OF PORT LOUIS

This year marks the commemoration of the 181<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers at the Aapravasi Ghat. This anniversary has now become a much awaited event as Mauritius will be paying tribute to all those labourers who had left India with the hope of a better life and a better future for their children in the sugar cane island.

We need to remember the contribution of those labourers who, with their hard work and sacrifices, had laid the foundation for Mauritius to become a developed nation. The legacy left by these indentured labourers is inestimable. The exhibits at the *Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre*, within the Aapravasi Ghat compound, is testimony to the hardships endured by the labourers in their quest for a more comfortable life. They were not even aware that they were writing the history of Mauritius with their sweat and tears.

It is therefore justice done to the memory of these indentured labourers when the Aapravasi Ghat was proclaimed a World Heritage Site in July 2006, in fact one of the most important heritage sites located in Port Louis. The Aapravasi Ghat being a landmark in the capital city, the City Council of Port Louis has the duty to help in protecting and preserving the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat.

LORD MAYOR'S OFFICE  
BUREAU DU LORD MAIRE

Mohammad Oumar KHOLEEGAN  
LORD MAYOR

8 September 2015



## **BRIEF ON AGTF PROJECTS**

As per AGTF Act 2001 (amended 2006 and 2011), the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund was mandated :

- To establish, administer, manage, promote and maintain the Aapravasi Ghat as a national, regional and international heritage site;
- To preserve, restore and manage the Aapravasi Ghat and related sites;
- To set up a museum and create public awareness of the history of indentured labour;
- To promote social and cultural aspects of the Aapravasi Ghat and related sites;
- To encourage and support projects and publications related to the indentured labour;
- To establish links with appropriate national, regional and international organizations in line with the objects of the Act;
- To identify and acquire sites, buildings and structures associated with indentured labour;
- To encourage and support interdisciplinary scientific research related to indentured labour and to the Aapravasi Ghat and related sites.



### **The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site**

The Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List on 16 July 2006 because it is the symbol of the Great Experiment - initiated by the British colonial authorities – to evaluate the viability of a system of recruitment involving “free” workforce after slavery was abolished in 1833. Because this Experiment was a success in Mauritius, indenture – as a new recruitment system – was adopted by the colonial powers as from 1838.

As such, indenture led to the migration of more than 2.2 million people to more than 25 countries around the world. Globally, indenture formed part of the emerging new economic order still in existence today.



## The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre

The project was defined as an object of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Act 2001 defining the setting up of an interpretation centre under section 4 (c).

The project forms part of implementation policies undertaken by AGTF to fulfil the requirements stated in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention which stresses the need to promote World Heritage Sites and its Outstanding Universal Value while allowing access to the public.

The Interpretation Centre promotes the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site and presents the history and experience of indenture in Mauritius as a key component of a universal phenomenon. The Centre was inaugurated on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014.



## The Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat Local Economic Development (LED) Plan Project



AGTF received a total amount of USD 29,500 from the Participation Programme of UNESCO to enlist the services of an expert in Heritage Economics for the buffer zone. The preparation of a Local Economic Development (LED) Plan was recommended to identify economic opportunities in the buffer zone surrounding the Aapravasi Ghat and submit recommendations to achieve these opportunities for the consideration of the Government.

The objective of the LED Plan is to foster economic development. The goal is to consolidate and improve the existing framework by directing development towards the preservation, enhancement and adaptive reuse of heritage while diminishing the threat of its demolition. The purpose is to serve the vision for the development stated in the Planning Policy Guidance 6, to create a dynamic historic centre in the Capital City of Mauritius.

## The Conservation of the Old Labourers' Barracks at Trianon Heritage Site

The Conservation of the Heritage Site which started in May 2011 would be completed in 2016.

The purpose is to restore one of the rare examples of dwellings built for indentured labourers on sugar estates. The ultimate goal is to initiate a development project for Trianon Heritage Site including exhibition spaces for the public.



In 2016, the AGTF will carry on with the conservation of the building and conduct a feasibility study to assess the concept plan prepared for the development of the site.



## Indenture Labour Route



This project deals with the establishment of a network between countries which have experienced indenture. The purpose is to share data on projects - of all disciplines – related to indenture. This project is based on the model of the Slave Route Project.

The proposal from Mauritius was examined by UNESCO Executive Committee held from 15 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014. UNESCO offered its support for the project (decision Oct. 2014; 195 EX-p39). The Government of Mauritius is therefore proceeding with the project and established a secretariat for the indenture labour route project at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund. Contact with the governments of 26 countries will be made to initiate the selection of members to sit on the International Scientific Committee piloting the project and set up national committees in countries that experienced indenture.

## Intangible Cultural Heritage Project

So far, the AGTF has conducted several projects to collect elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage throughout the island. In total, 60 elements were thoroughly documented so far. In addition to this, more than 800 interviews were conducted to collect memories of people who worked on sugar estates.

This project will provide content for the exhibition space to be set up at Trianon Heritage Site in the future where the elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage including *Geet Gawai*, will be promoted.



## Flat Island



Following the grant received from the American Embassy, the AGTF is planning the implementation of a project proposal entitled “the documentation and restoration of Flat Island” in collaboration with the National Parks and Conservation Services.

The purpose is to document the remaining structures of the Quarantine Station for indentured labourers at Flat Island. Once the documentation is completed, a restoration and conservation plan will be prepared to allow the preservation of the cultural heritage resources which are a key asset for Mauritius.

## Bras D'eau

At the request of the National Parks and Conservation Services (NPCS), the AGTF and the team of Dr Seetah from the University of Stanford (USA) provided assistance and undertook a preliminary survey at Bras d'Eau National Park. The project included historical research on Bras d'Eau National Park.

Preliminary research revealed that Bras d'Eau has the potential to become one of the rare sites in the world that has kept evidence of the lives of slaves and indentured labourers on a plantation. The collaboration with the NPCS is continuing to allow further documentation of this key site for Mauritian history.





## Antoinette Sugar Estate at Barlow



As part of the research on life in the sugar estates, the AGTF is conducting research on Antoinette (Phooliyar) Sugar Estate where the first indentured labourers went to work in 1834.

Preliminary research was initiated to document the experience of the first indentured labourers on Mauritian sugar estates. The research strategy intends to draw a comparative perspective on indenture in Mauritius through the study of several sites related to indenture.

### AGTF Projects 2015 – 2016

Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit

The Aapravasi Ghat has celebrated the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its inscription on the World Heritage List in July 2015. Since 2006, the AGTF has relentlessly worked on projects to document and promote the heritage related to indenture with the concern to share this knowledge with all.

This year, specific attention is given to the surroundings of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site where the planning policy guidance 6 issued in 2011, has established planning norms to encourage architectural harmony. To foster the rehabilitation and regeneration of the area, the AGTF in collaboration with the City Council of Port Louis and the Ministry of Arts and Culture is working on a Local Economic Development Plan for the Buffer Zone. The purpose is to identify development opportunities and relevant measures to foster sustainable development in the area. A well-defined LED Plan that addresses short as well as long-term development opportunities and measures would help to steer and secure development at the local level in a way that would benefit the country at large. With the financial support of UNESCO, the services of two consultants were hired to undertake an assessment of the zone and identify potential measures for regeneration. It is expected that the final report of the consultants be completed mid-2016.

This project supports the vision of ICOMOS and UNESCO that advocate the use of heritage to foster sustainable development, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) where culture is identified as the fourth pillar of development. In a world of globalization, local identities and specificities tend to disappear to the benefit of standardized services and merchandising. This vision encourages the regeneration of local specificities in order to preserve Mauritian identity and culture and add value to the city as a unique place in the world.

In the past years, research has shown that Mauritius is not like any other place. The experience of indenture on the island has proven to be of international importance when Mauritius was recognized as the crucial test case for the indentured system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Our current research further demonstrates this fact: the AGTF has initiated research at Flat Island, the former quarantine station for indentured labourers located 12 km off the north coast of the island, as a key component of the indentured system developed in the 1850s.

In collaboration with the University of Stanford (USA), the AGTF hopes to document further this former quarantine station so that it can be studied in the perspective of the global indentured system set up in the Indian Ocean region and also, in the world. The site at Flat Island will be considered within the local system established by the colonial authorities as from 1842. This is why research at Bras d'Eau, a former sugar estate that stopped operating in 1900, will be important to further document the organisation and functioning of the indentured system. In the same manner, research at the former sugar estate of Antoinette will provide further insights into the lives of the indentured immigrants within the operating framework for indenture. The research data will be used to further appreciate the extent and scope of the indentured system worldwide as per the recommendation of UNESCO (Decision 30 COM 8B.33, 2006) and substantiate further the key role played by Mauritius in the setting up of this system.

Such research will support the Indentured Labour Route Project recently supported by UNESCO. In these undertakings, the AGTF intends to contribute significantly to the research on indenture and highlight the significant role of Mauritius.

## The Opening of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre

The project of setting up a museum at the Aapravasi Ghat was first initiated in the 1970s. Following the decision to establish a place dedicated to the history of the former immigration depot, the Government set up the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund in 2001 with the mandate to "Set up a museum at Aapravasi Ghat and create public awareness of the history of indentured labour".

From 2010 to 2014, the AGTF team in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture worked on the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre project estimated at MUR 86.8 Million rupees to achieve to this objective. The Interpretation Centre was named after Beekrumsing Ramlallah in 2006 to pay homage to his efforts to get the Aapravasi Ghat recognised as a key site for the history of Mauritius. The social worker and journalist would have celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 2 september 2015.

In the context of the 180<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers in Mauritius, the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) was inaugurated on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014 and opened to the public.

The opening of the Interpretation Centre marks an important step in the life of our institution and in that of the country: it is the first place dedicated to the history of indenture in Mauritius and among the rare ones in the world.

The Interpretation Centre is a permanent exhibition area that retraces the experience of indentured labourers in Mauritius and the key role played by Mauritius in the history of indenture.

Since its opening, the Interpretation Centre has received a total number of 34 000 visitors as at 30 September 2015.



### Some comments extracted from the visitors's book:

*"A museum that touched my heart. How our people faced the difficulties and hardships. My tribute to all those Indians who came here as indentured labourers."*

*"Very interesting and instructive for our youth. I am proud that our small island has such an amazing history."*

*"A high profile site connecting today Mauritians to their roots. Perfect explanation by our guides. Keep it up. "*

*"The best Interpretation Centre I have ever been to. "*

*"Très beau musée, Merci!"*



*"C'était très bien. J'ai bien aimé la visite et ce que j'ai surtout aimé c'était les activités pour les enfants. "*

*"Un très beau témoignage pour commencer à comprendre Maurice aujourd'hui. "*

*"Very interesting museum. Takes a visitor back in time. Modern devices enable a visitor to go through the whole visit at ease. Overall very satisfying"*

*"Lieu symbolique et empreint d'émotions fortes. Je pense bien évidemment à mes ancêtres venus du Bihar et de Bombay. Merci aux autorités d'avoir pu faire exister ce mémorial"*

*"Eye opener - History well recorded. Impressive. Will recommend friends to visit"*

*"Nice idea Kids Corner"*

*"Très joli musée, instructif, +++ émotion. Bravo ! "*



## International Day for Monuments and Sites

Vijaya Beejadhur-Poteah, *Heritage Guide* and Vedita Jha, *Heritage Guide*



Since 1983, 18 April is declared the "International Day for Monuments and Sites" following the decision taken during the 22<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference. This year, ICOMOS also celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1965-2015). The purpose of this event is to celebrate our National Heritage and also, to take part in this international movement of Solidarity in favor of strengthening and safeguarding Heritage world-wide.

On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the AGTF proposed activities at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property and at the recently opened Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC). Activities proposed consisted of guided visits, educational activities for children (storytelling, pottery making and construction techniques), film projection, an exhibition on Le Morne Cultural Landscape, and heritage walks (Walk 1, 2 & 3) in the buffer zone of the Aapravasi Ghat. The AGTF also organised guided visits at the Government House and at Bras d'Eau National Park.

To assist the AGTF in this undertaking, a team of 30 volunteers from the University of Mauritius and Ecole Hotelière Sir Gaëtan Duval received a training by the AGTF to conduct guided visits in Port Louis, at the State House in Reduit,



*Educational activities of about 45 minutes with children to explain traditional techniques of construction and storytelling.*  
(Source: AGTF Collection 2015)

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) first took part in the International Day for Monuments and Sites in 2006. Since then, activities are organised every year in the context of this event. For the AGTF, the International Day for Monuments and Sites is the opportunity to promote the World Heritage Site (WHS) and raise awareness on the history of Port Louis in collaboration with sister institutions such as the National Heritage Fund (NHF) and Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund (LMHTF).

and in Bras d'Eau. The volunteers were very dynamic and helpful.

The AGTF recorded a total of 2,734 visitors who took part in the activities over the two days. Interactions between the staff and the visitors were very fruitful. It was also observed that children participated enthusiastically in the educational activities. In the case of pottery making, it was noted that parents did not hesitate to come forward to help their children. It was indeed an opportunity for both Mauritians and tourists to discover and enjoy heritage with their family.

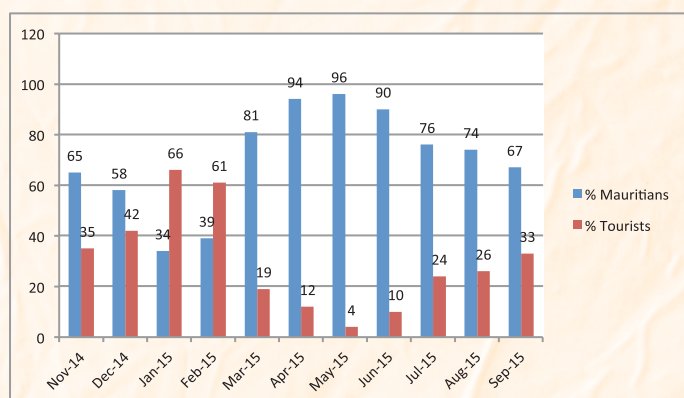


## Visits at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site

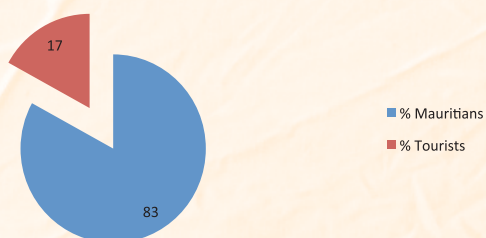
*Urmila Ramkissoon, Heritage Guide and Soonanda Nankoo Bhadye, Heritage Guide*

Since its opening on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014, the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and its Interpretation Centre have received a total number of 34 000 visitors, comprising of students, tourists, senior citizens, scholars and eminent personalities as at 30 September 2015.

The peak season for Mauritian visitors was the period between April and July when students visited the WHS during outings. It is to be noted that students represent more than 90% of Mauritian visitors. The peak season for foreign visitors was for the period of January to February when more than 60% of the visitors were tourists compared to 40% Mauritian visitors.



Percentage of the total number of visitors  
November 2014- July 2015



Besides guided visits of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre, there were also pedagogical activities, heritage walks and the realization of school projects. A total number of 1,200 visitors participated in the educational activities such as Storytelling, Construction Techniques and Pottery Making. A conference on 'La préservation du passé' was organized in May 2015 by students of École Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval at the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre.





## Activities

### Guided visits

Guided visits of Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (45 mins) and Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage site (20 mins). Free of charge.

### Guided visits of the Buffer Zone

Guided visits of the buffer zone of Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage property are available on booking on 217 77 70.

### Pedagogical activities for children

- Story Telling (3 – 6 yrs old)
- Construction Techniques (6- 14 yrs old)
- Pottery Making (6- 14 yrs old)
- Guided Visits for Children (3- 14 yrs old)
- In the footsteps of an immigrant at Aapravasi Ghat (6-14 yrs old)

*Advance booking is necessary for these activities*

## Opening Hours

Monday- Friday: 9.00 – 16.00 hrs

Saturday: 9.00 – 12.00 hrs

Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays

## Contact us

Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site  
Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre  
Quay Street  
Port Louis

Tel: 217 77 70

Email: [outreach.agtf@intnet.mu](mailto:outreach.agtf@intnet.mu)

Website : [www.aapravasighat.org](http://www.aapravasighat.org)

## LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROJECT

Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit

In its decisions 34 COM 7B.49 (2010), 35 COM 7B.41 (2011) and 36 COM 7B.45 (2012), the UNESCO World Heritage Centre requested the Government of Mauritius to take necessary action to preserve and enhance historical buildings in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property and to put in place mechanisms that ensure integrated management of the area. These two objectives were partially achieved with the proclamation of the Planning Policy Guidance for the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property (PPG6) issued in 2011 and the revision of the Management Plan in 2013.

The Vision of the PPG 6 advocates urban regeneration through heritage rehabilitation in line with the recent debates led by ICOMOS and UNESCO on the use of heritage as a driver for development. This concept to use heritage as a driver for development is a strategy at the core of the PPG6 and the Outline Planning Scheme for Port Louis (2013) that reflects the UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape Concept.

At a time when the UNESCO is preparing a policy document for the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention, the preparation of a Local Economic Development (LED) Plan is the next step towards the achievement of this vision. This project intends to foster the revival of the heritage located

in the City Centre as a means to achieve sustainable development. The objective of the LED plan is to propose measures to the Government to develop an enabling environment for sustainable development that advocates the adaptive reuse of heritage. In this initiative, the reuse of heritage is critical: it is a means to revive the identity of the city and prevent the world-wide standardization that gradually erases local specificities. The disappearance of local specificities to the benefit of a standardized world has an impact on the sense of place and its attractiveness because it renders a place like any other in the world.

A well-defined LED Plan that addresses short as well as long-term development opportunities will help to steer and secure development at the local level in a way that will benefit the country at large (such as promoting diversification of the tourism industry).



## Development Applications in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property

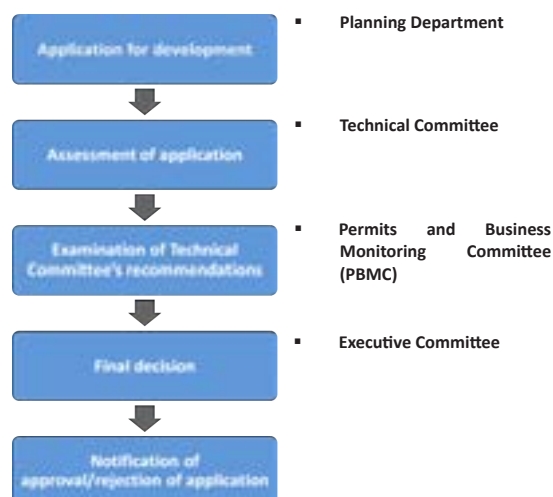
Natasha Kheddoo Ramcharitar

Following the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List, a Planning Policy Guidance 6 (PPG 6) was issued in June 2011 to ensure better management of development projects in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property (AGWHP). The objective of this planning document is to guide development in the heritage area so as to protect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), integrity and authenticity of the Core Zone and Buffer Zone of the World Heritage Property.

In order to meet the requirements of the PPG 6, a development vision was established. This vision for the surroundings of the AGWHP is to develop the place into a vibrant area that will add value to the City of Port Louis and to bring benefits to property owners, the business sector as well as other stakeholders in the area, and the nation at large.

With the adoption of the PPG6 the Local Government Act was amended in 2011 so as to set up a Technical Committee for the Buffer Zone (BZ) of the AGWHP. The role of this Technical Committee is to ensure the implementation of the PPG6 by the City Council of Port Louis (CCPL) and assess development applications in the BZ. The Committee is chaired by the Head of the Land Use and Planning Department and comprises of representatives from various Ministries such as that responsible for Arts and Culture; Housing and Lands; Public Infrastructure and Land Transport; Tourism and External Communications; Environment, Sustainable Development, and Disaster and Beach Management as well as relevant bodies such as the City Council of Port Louis (Chair); National Heritage Fund; Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and Mauritius Ports Authority.

Applications for Building and Land Use Permit (BLP) in the BZ of the AGWHP are processed as follows by the City Council of Port Louis:



Since the coming into force of the PPG6, various types of development have been noted in the BZ:

Change in use: e.g. conversion from textile shop to restaurant

Minor: multiple small maintenance / single big repair

Moderate: multiple small repairs / single big replacement/whole repair

Major/substantial: whole replaced / including new floor/building

Demolition: new empty space / dismantlement and rebuilding

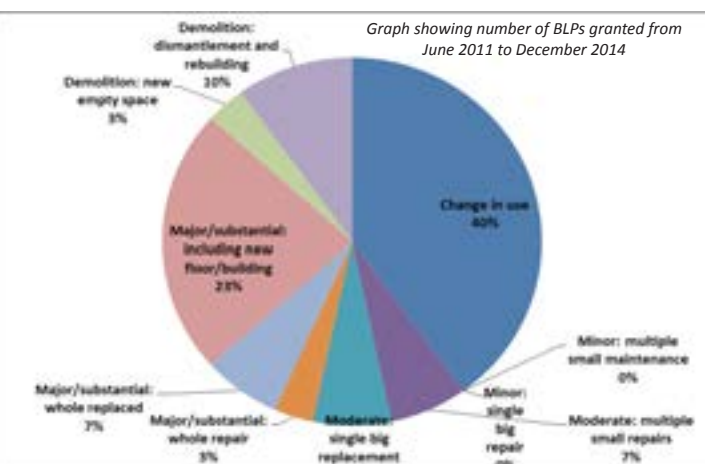
From January 2005 to June 2011, 47 BLPs were granted in the BZ out of 47 applications received at the City Council of Port Louis. After the issue of the PPG 6, 30 BLPs out of 31 applications received at the CCPL were granted in the BZ from June 2011 to December 2014.



Map 1 showing locations of BLPs granted from January 2005 to June 2011



Map 2 showing locations of BLPs granted from June 2011 to December 2014



More information on the BZ of the AGWHP and procedures for development applications are available on <http://www.aapravasi-ghat.org> or at the Planning and Land Use Department of the City Council of Port Louis.



# Chronology of Development in Historical Port Louis: from 1850 to 1950

*Kheeruma Cully and Nawshine Nazeerally, UoM*

*Maurina Soodin Runghen, Researcher*

The AGTF started the documentation on Port Louis' physical development. The objective of the project is to understand the dynamics of the city and identify the heritage component. The research undertaken on the physical development of Port Louis will allow a better understanding of the social and cultural environment in which the Aapravasi Ghat has evolved.

This research was undertaken by two interns from the University of Mauritius; namely Keeruma Cully and Nawshine Nazeerally, between June and July 2015. The works of Rivalz Quenette, former clerk of the National Assembly and author of several books on the Municipal Council of Port Louis, were studied. Below are some key dates and events in Port Louis during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Port Louis Municipal Theatre in 1935.*

*(Source: A. Toussaint, Port Louis deux siècles d'histoire)*

## 1850 -1875

- The Municipal Council suggested the setting up of night schools for workers at Port Louis.
- At that period, many epidemics were raging on the island, causing a lot of death. Due to these epidemics, it was necessary to open a new cemetery at Roche Bois and another one to west of Port Louis.
- The Civil Hospital could not accommodate the large number of patients so the Council decided to open a second hospital at Grande Rivière.
- The "Canal Bathurst" and "Canal Dayot" networks were the main city water supply.
- Various outbreaks of violent cyclones, fires and floods caused immense harm to the population, like the 1868, 1877 and 1892 hurricanes and the fire of 1893.
- Construction of an underground sewerage system.

## 1903-1923

- There was progress in installing city lighting.
- The Council improved existing lighting system. 153 wooden poles were replaced by iron lamps, and another 300 were erected or repaired and repainted.
- Two quinine dispensaries were installed at the markets of Plaine Verte and La Butte.
- The construction of safe and cheap housing for the working class was discussed at the Municipality.

- At the start of 1919, the country experienced a resurgence of malaria and Port Louis suffered the most.

- A municipal laboratory was set up to detect cases of food adulteration.

- While the markets, slaughter houses, street lighting, public parks, fire brigade and many other services remained under the control of the municipality, the Medical Department and the Public Works Department assumed responsibility for all sanitary services, water supply, control of food and care and maintenance of the streets of the town.

## 1924-1935

- One of the Municipal Council's major concerns was to construct, repair, maintain and clean the drains, sewers, gutters and cross-gutters in the town.
- Another major concern was the improvement of water services in the town. The Municipality decided to construct and maintain fountains, baths and washing places to which public had access and to ensure better quality of water. Filtration basins were constructed at Pailles.
- The 1929 flood destroyed the water works of Grand River North West.
- Fire stations were extended during these years.
- The Municipality was in favor of the renovation of the places of worship and granted free electricity to all those found in the town.

## 1936-1950

- The Municipal Council granted two requests for the construction of two cinema halls. One in Desforges Street, namely Rex and the other one, the Majestic cinema at the corner of Poudrière Streets and Desroches, which opened on February 21, 1940.
- Regarding the Municipal Library Guy Forget requested that the reading room be opened every night or at least three times a week from 19.30 hours to 22.00 hours and to purchase of a larger quantity of books and magazines.
- On 21 April 1948, Gabriel Martial proposed a motion to provide financial assistance to the municipality or to all builders, owners or companies providing guarantees, to help them undertake housing construction in the town so as to quell the housing crisis.

A whole network was installed to provide potable water to urban dwellers.

# Flat Island

## Quarantine Station for Indentured Labourers

*Christelle Miao Foh, Research Assistant*  
*Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit*

Introduced in Venice in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to prevent plague epidemics, the system of quarantine has since been used worldwide as a means to prevent the propagation of contagious diseases. Under the colonial Governments, Mauritius also practised the quarantine system. The island was frequently affected by epidemics such as smallpox and cholera. These epidemics were frequent as from 1830s partly due to the growth of maritime trade and the movement of populations. The local Authorities adopted several laws to prevent the propagation of diseases. It adopted a bi-lateral approach to the problem which consisted in improving sanitation and health on land and the reinforcement of quarantine measures before ship disembarkation. In order, to prevent the spread of diseases, ships suspected of carrying epidemic diseases were sent for quarantine on uninhabited islets off the coast to avoid direct contact with the mainland.

Several places were used as quarantine zone. On land, Pointe aux Canoniers, located in the North of the island was decreed to serve as a general quarantine station as from 1857.<sup>1</sup> Sources also show the plans of a quarantine station at Pointe aux Piments and Butte aux Papayers.<sup>2</sup> The outer islet - Tonneliers Island near Trou Fanfaron - was one of the first islets to be used for quarantine together with Benitiers Island, located on the South West coast.<sup>3</sup>

Flat Island and Gabriel Island in the North of Mauritius were extensively used for quarantine during the peak of indentured immigration. They were considered to be far enough from the mainland to protect the latter from the introduction of infectious diseases. Flat Island together with Canoniers' Point were established as permanent quarantine stations by the Ordinance No. 3 of 1857. As from that time, Flat Island was reserved for persons undergoing quarantine for Cholera. In 1887, Flat Island was also used

as a temporary quarantine zone, besides Cholera, for the quarantine of cases of measles by the proclamation No. 6.<sup>4</sup>

Flat Island is particularly interesting as many structures associated with indenture still remain. In June 2015, a team from AGTF conducted a survey on Flat Island in order to better appreciate how quarantine functioned during the indenture period in Mauritius and further substantiate our understanding of the overall system of indenture. The study of the permanent structures erected on the island in 1856-1857 allows us to understand how the British Government implemented precautionary measures in order to prevent an epidemic outbreak on mainland.

The survey was performed under the project 'Documentation and Conservation of the former quarantine station in Flat Island, Mauritius'. This project is implemented through a grant of USD 20,666 from the Embassy of the United States of America. It was selected under Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) 2014 Competition. The survey was followed by two archaeological expeditions in July 2015 conducted by the team of Dr Seetah and Dr Calaan from Stanford University, USA.

The survey conducted in June 2015 allowed the identification of the structures present on Flat Island: the archaeological expeditions led to further analysis of the architectural features. The location of the structures identified during the survey and through aerial photography was corroborated with archival documents. The map hereunder shows an overlay of remaining structures onto an archival map of 1857 drawn by T. Corby, Government Surveyor. This allows a preliminary interpretation of the structures identified.

Reference	Presumed original use	Source
S1	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S2	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S3	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S4	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S5	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S6	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S7	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S8	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S9	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S10	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
S11	Hospitals/Doctor's/Superintendent's etc.	Corby, 1857
C	Points towards cemetery	
S12	Privies	Shirel, 1854
S13	Hospital Native Doctor	Shirel, 1854
S14	Police ?	Shirel, 1854
R1	"Coolie Camp" Rectangular structure no 1 (West Coast)	Corby, 1857
PR1	Path leading to rectangular structure	
R2	"Coolie Camp" Rectangular structure no 2 (West Coast)	Corby, 1857



<sup>1</sup> As per ordinance No.3 of 1857, general quarantine station stands for quarantine for any diseases except cholera.

<sup>2</sup> Mauritius National Archives – D6A/A5.7/No.2 Flat Island and Gabriel Island by T. Corby (1857).

The document shows construction plans of the different quarantines namely Flat Island and Gabriel Island, Pointe aux Canoniers, Pointe aux Piment, Butte aux sable and Butte aux Papayers.

<sup>3</sup> Raj Boodhoo, 2010. Health, Disease and Indian Immigrants in Nineteenth Century Mauritius.

<sup>4</sup> Proclamation No. 6 of 1887.

**Map:** An overlay of a modern map of Flat Island onto an archival map of 1857 drawn by T. Corby.

**(Source:** MNA/D6A/A5.7/No.2/Map by T. Corby; Flat Island/google earth 2015; Overlay map drawn by the author.)



# The Bras d'Eau Sugar Estate

*Babita D. Bahadoor, Research Assistant*

*Julia Jong Haines, University of Virginia*

As part of its on going research on the indenture system and sites in Mauritius, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has put emphasis on research on several indentured sites since the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Consequently, after a successful conservation work undertaken at the Barracks located on the premises of the Trianon Sugar Estate, the AGTF is conducting historical research as well as archaeological survey at the Flat Island Quarantine Station and at the former Bras d'Eau Sugar Estate (1786-1867).



*Facade of the Bras d'Eau Sugar Mill (Source: AGTF Collection)*

After the closure of the Bras d'Eau Sugar Estate in 1867, the Government of Mauritius purchased the land in 1901 with the intention of reforesting it. According to the Forests and Gardens Department Annual Report, between 1906 and 1910, species like Mahogany, Filao, Grevillea, Toon plant, Kapok, Bois de Fer, Tatamaka among others were being raised at the nursery of Bras d'Eau. The Crown land of Bras d'Eau was converted into a national park in October 2011, becoming Mauritius' second national park after the Black River Gorges National Park. Both parks are managed by the National Park and Conservation Services (NPCS) who advise on all matters relating to the conservation and protection of biodiversity in Mauritius. Although none of the plants in the forest of Bras d'Eau is endemic today, the park is still a natural habitat for different types of plants, birds, animals and insects. The NPCS have set up a nursery and have begun to develop hiking trails such as the Coq des Bois nature trail, which ends at the Mare aux Mahogany.

Today, we can witness the remnants of the old structures along with scattered artifacts from the daily lives and activities of the estate's former inhabitants. As an archaeological site, Bras d'Eau has great potential to tell us about the material nature of slavery and indenture in Mauritius and how each changed over time. Two previous archaeological survey campaigns

conducted by the Mauritius Archaeology and Cultural Heritage project in close collaboration with AGTF and NPCS aimed at locating and documenting the remaining tangible heritage at Bras d'Eau. In addition to mapping and documenting archaeological features on the site, during the last season two test trenches were excavated in what seems to have been a living quarter for the estate's work force. These excavations uncovered rich cultural deposits including ceramic, glass, and metal cooking and food wares, marine shells, buttons, and the vestiges of a hard packed clay flooring.



*Remaining Structure of the Bras d'Eau Sugar Estate (Source: AGTF Collection)*

In July 2015, the archaeological exploration continued in a new section of the park east of the mill and Bras d'Eau visitors' center. This research revealed new structures that relate to the industrial function of the site, possibly enclosures for domestic animals, or what may have been used as living spaces for workers on the estate. Through a preliminary systematic collection of surface and subsurface artifacts, ceramic, glass, metals, and faunal remains were recovered. These artifacts will help identify how these spaces were used and when they were occupied historically. Significant finds from this area included ceramics dating towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, earlier than those found in our previous season of research, and possibly confirming that the estate was functional during the slave period.

Archaeological research will be pursued to shed light on the estate's various industrial activities, how labourers' housing and daily lives and activities were organized and how they changed over time, particularly over the transition from slavery to indenture.

These campaigns have shown promising results since 2014 and continued research will enable further interpretations of this heritage for the public at large.

## Archaeological Research at Bois Marchand Cemetery

*Dr. Saša Čaval and Hannah Moots*

When Bois Marchand Cemetery was established in 1867, Mauritius was in the midst of a malaria epidemic that would kill nearly one tenth of the population of the island. The cemetery was the largest in the Indian Ocean world at the time and it represents a key source of information about life and death in Mauritius a hundred and fifty years ago.

The successfully fifth season of archaeological exploration at Bois Marchand cemetery was undertaken between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2015. Saša Čaval and Hannah Moots supervised a dedicated team of fourteen undergraduate students from Stanford University, USA and the University of Mauritius. Out of eight graves we uncovered, six were double and two single skeletal burials; in total fourteen interments with twelve adults and two infants. All fourteen burials were initially interred in coffins, made either out of wood or metal. One coffin was particularly elaborately decorated; the wood was lined with thin lead and corrugated iron bosses, and four carried handles on the outer side of the coffin, although these were only partially preserved.

The grave goods included bone and metal buttons and beads, made from the local grass seeds (Job's Tears). An interesting feature of another grave was a chalky 'pillow' or head support. The burials contained also various personal objects such as bronze pins for fastening clothes, belt buckles, bone and metal buttons, glass beads, glass bottle and other

items. For further research purposes, ancient DNA, isotope and environmental samples were taken from each burial. With scientific analysis of these samples, we will acquire additional information about these individuals. Highlights of this year's excavation, in addition to a large number of double burials and interesting grave goods, include the fact that three adults and one infant individual were buried in atypical positions. The general layout of the graves is along the east-west axis; with the head toward the east and feet toward the west. Prior to this year, only three burials deviated from this trend, two of which were infant burials. The presence of four 'deviant' burials out of 14 is highly unusual and calls for further research.

The team looks forward to further investigating these findings and continuing the interdisciplinary research in the coming year.



## ICH Projects: Documentation of Phooliyar- Antoinette Sugar Estate

*Kiran Chuttoo Jankee, Research Assistant*

The Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) projects carried out by Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund are all community based projects. The UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage puts the communities at the forefront. Without communities' involvement and participation, identification, safeguard and transmission of ICH are practically impossible. The technical officers and researchers monitor and facilitate the progress of ICH.

The convention states that "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural

heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment. Their interaction with nature and history provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

In line with the Convention and the criterion IV under which the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site was inscribed, the institution has come up with projects for ICH revitalization among communities. The AGTF has initiated a project at Antoinette Sugar Estate to this purpose because the sugar estate stands among the first established estates: its camp where indentured labourers resided was still in use until recently. Oral history project at Barlow allows us to better appreciate and understand the nature of the ICH related to



indenture. Collecting memories at Barlow provides an insight into the lives of the descendants of indentured labourers. In this project, the AGTF collects elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage in their context of performance. This constitutes a comprehensive and global research approach on ICH and allows a better appreciation of its nature and of measures to be set up for its safeguarding. Interviews collected at Barlow have shown very vivid recollections of life in the sugar camp.



*Informants*

While most of the structures were demolished, the chimney still seems to be intact and the sugar mill is in ruins. The bell, the well, the fountain and the offices are still there. Two to three rooms of the camp with the attached kitchen still remain. These tangible structures are tied to a series of memories, practices, skills, traditions and knowhow. This is a site worth documenting as it was the Sugar Camp from where the first batch of indentured labourers went to work. The communities now residing in Barlow and Phooliyar are one of the rare witnesses of Indentured immigrants, who they quote as people who would

speak very less and would work very hard in the fields. Their language was Bhojpuri but different from that of today. Men would wear 'short langouti' that reached above their knees. They ate very little but consistent food like 'litti', which was a kind of faratha but very thick with organic spices. They had their own belief systems and would perform rituals like Kalimaye puja, Baharia puja and Dee Puja.

Oral History is the means to record the voices of the descendants of indentured labourers at Barlow. This includes their sweet and bitter memories, their experiences and knowledge. Through in-depth understanding of the values, drivers, strategies and environment, the ICH project ensures that actions taken will capture value for all stakeholders. It is also a way to promote their Intangible Cultural Heritage, share safeguarding activities and experiences and discuss challenges for the future. At the same time, this is an opportunity for us to update and manage the Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage related to Indenture.

Hundreds of life histories of descents of Indentured labourers were recorded by the AGTF since 2006 including an inventory on Intangible Cultural Heritage related to indenture. This has resulted in developing a database on life histories, capturing tales, riddles, stories, traditional folk songs, games, craftsmanship, belief system, rites and rituals. This work consisting in collecting memories and intangible cultural heritage will continue at Trianon Sugar Estate located in Saint Jean, Quatres Bornes, in order to gain a better understanding of the context of performance for the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

## *Recipe:* Preparation of "Poowa"

### *A traditional recipe of Mauritian Intangible Cultural Heritage*

Poowas are prepared during the traditional Hindu Holi festival, celebrated from ancient time by our ancestors and followed by the new generations. Holi festival brings unity, love and brotherhood among people. Nowadays, Holi is performed in different ways but the spirit of this celebration still remains. We should enjoy this festival with the true spirit of festivity.

#### **Ingredients:**

4 cups of flour

½ cup of sugar

2 tbs of milk powder

Oil for frying

#### **Preparations:**

Begin by adding all the ingredients into a large bowl. Then, add half a cup of water to the mixture and whisk until a batter is formed. The batter should look smooth. Heat a pan with oil and carefully put spoonfuls of the mixture in the oil. Fry on low flame until golden brown in colour. Place on absorbent paper and serve hot.



## Funding for the Conservation of the Old Labourers' Quarters at Trianon Sugar Estate from Mauritius Telecom Foundation

On 27 February 2015, the CEO of Mauritius Telecom, Cherry Singh, invited the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund at the 11<sup>th</sup> Cheque Presentation Ceremony for institutions and NGOs supported by Mauritius Telecom Foundation.

The Chairman of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, Mr Anil Dhuny, received a cheque of MUR 526,500 from Mauritius Telecom Foundation in order to complete the conservation of the Trianon Heritage Site, which comprises of the Old Labourers' Quarters (Trianon Barracks) located in Quatre Bornes.

This conservation project falls under the National CSR Approved Programme: Environment (code 500) Maintenance of National Heritage (code 501).

The restoration and conservation of the Trianon Heritage Site started in August 2011 with the preparation of a Conservation Plan for the Barracks and is expected to be completed by 2016. The main objectives of this conservation project are:

- To fulfill the objectives of the AGTF Act in preserving and promoting research on indenture sites in Mauritius;



- To conserve the existing structures and restore the roof of the barracks;
- To ensure the integrity and authenticity of the Trianon Barracks site;
- To control access to the site;
- To develop cultural tourism and an indentured labour trail in Mauritius;
- To promote and maintain our National Heritage.

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund heartily thanks the Mauritius Telecom Foundation for supporting this project.

## Consultative Committee

Every year on 16 July, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund organises a Consultative Committee in the context of the anniversary of the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The consultative committee is a forum for meetings and discussion with the local community.

The objective of organising such forum is to keep the community informed of the progress on projects implemented by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund; to invite the community to participate in projects and to consolidate the link between the World Heritage Site and the community. Feedback from the community is important to ensure appropriate management, conservation and promotion of the World Heritage Site.



This year, the Consultative Committee took place at the City Council of Port Louis on 16 July 2015, in the presence of the Honorable Santaram Baboo,

the Minister of Arts and Culture, and the Lord Mayor of Port Louis, Mr. Mohammad Oumar Kholeegan. The members of the AGTF presented a retrospective of projects achieved in the year 2014 and future projects for 2015-2016. The AGTF team presented the following:

1. Summary on the applications for development in the AGWHP Buffer Zone from June 2011 to December 2014 by Mrs. Natasha Kheddoo-Ramcharitar, Research Assistant, AGTF;
2. The Project of Local Economic Development Plan for the Buffer Zone by Mrs. Maurina Soodin Runghen, Researcher, AGTF;
3. The research projects and research plan for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site by Mr. Satyendra Peerthum, Historian, AGTF;
4. The archaeological research on Indenture in Mauritius by Dr Krish Seetah, University of Stanford, USA;
5. The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre after its opening: visits and activities by Mr. Vikram Mugon, Heritage Interpretation Manager, AGTF.



# ***Exhibition: “Hanging History: Dress of Indian Female Immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”***

The exhibition entitled “Hanging History: Dress of Indian female immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” is the result of a research project conducted by a team of historians, artists and students, funded by the University of Mauritius in 2013. The team has analysed the pictures of the immigrant women taken at the Aapravasi Ghat, from the MGI archives collection and from private collections. The purpose was to document a rich and disappearing heritage in order to foster pride in this legacy and encourage craftsmanship in traditions which form part of our identity.



**The exhibition will be presented  
at the Aapravasi Ghat World  
Heritage Site from**

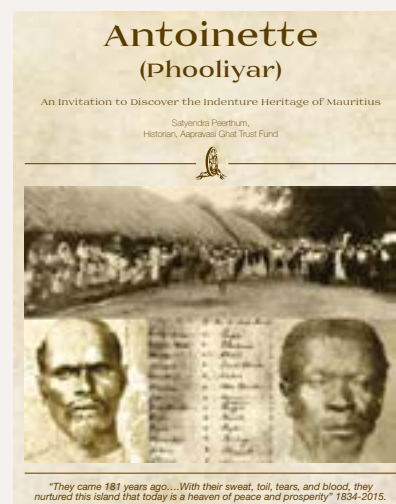
**3<sup>rd</sup> November until 6<sup>th</sup>  
December 2015.**

## ***Note on the Antoinette Booklet***

“Antoinette (Phooliyar): an invitation to discover the indenture heritage of Mauritius” consists of a 20-page booklet that provides detailed accounts of the establishment of Antoinette Sugar Estate and the story of its indentured workers and their Mauritian descendants. It spans the period between 1770 and 2014 looking at the genesis and emergence of Antoinette, formerly known as Belle Alliance, into one of the most important sugar estates in Rivière du Rempart district during the Sugar Revolution. The Franco-Mauritian planters also played a key role in making this possible. The booklet provides new insight into the arrival of the 36 indentured workers in November 1834 who went to work and live on Antoinette Sugar Estate. It also includes the lives of the Indian, Chinese, Liberated African, and Comorian contract workers who lived and worked there between the 1830s and early 1900s.

They also briefly look at one Indo-Mauritian family, the Purbhoo family, who for three generations worked and lived on Antoinette Sugar Estate between the 1870s and 1980s. It also provides an overview of some of the

important surviving stone structures such as the old sugar mill, the estate camp, and the temple. The booklet highlights the historic and heritage value of Antoinette and the importance in disseminating information about this rare indenture site to the Mauritian population in the context of the 181<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the arrival of indentured workers on Mauritian shores. This booklet was written by Satyendra Peerthum, Historian at AGTF, the oral interviews were conducted by Mrs. Kiran Jankee, Research Assistant at AGTF and the design and layout are by A. Khemraj. This project was made possible with the firm support of Mr. Anil Dhuny, Chairman of AGTF and the Board of AGTF.



## Visit of eminent personalities at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site 2 November 2014 - October 2015



**02 Nov 2014 – Smt Sushma Swaraj, Honorable Minister of External Affairs, Government of India**

*"It has been an immense honour and privilege for me to pay homage at this beautiful shrine to the memory of the pioneer Aapravasis who landed on these shores 180 years ago. It is the struggle and sacrifice of these brave souls that converted extremely harsh circumstances into the prosperity and freedom enjoyed in this rainbow island today."*

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**12 Mar 2015 – H.E. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India**

*"I am honoured to have the opportunity to pay homage to the brave Aapravasis who left India's shores nearly two centuries ago. Aapravasi Ghat is an eloquent tribute to the indomitable human spirit, and also to the enduring links between our people. It is our sacred duty to treasure and preserve this site."*

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**21 Aug 2015 – Hon Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Union Minister of State, Indian Minister of Culture & Tourism**

*"Visiting indentured museum is a life time experience to visualize the real happening of the workers who came to Mauritius."*



**25 Aug 2015 – H.E. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana**

*"Very educative and impressive. Many thanks for this tour on the occasion of my state visit to Mauritius. Great respects to the memory of the many indentured slaves who came through this site."*

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**16 October 2015 - Rula Ma'ayah, Minister of Tourism, Palestine**

*"A place that deserves to be a World Heritage Site."*





# Exploring our Mauritian indenture sites: A brief history of Antoinette Sugar Estate and the experience of its indentured labourers

Satyendra Peerthum, Historian

## The Genesis of Antoinette Sugar Estate

Over the past three decades, Antoinette Sugar Estate has been mentioned on numerous occasions as an important indenture site where the “first” Indian indentured workers worked and lived. However, few people know about its origins and the experience of its immigrant workers. The genesis of Antoinette or Belle Alliance Sugar Estate, located in Rivière du Rempart district, can be traced to 1770 when Chevalier de Chermont, a French military officer and aristocrat, was given a land concession of 112 arpents by Governor Desroches with the support of Intendant Pierre Poivre. During the 1770s and the early 1780s, it consisted mainly of land covered by forest and remained undeveloped by Chevalier de Chermont.

In 1783, Louis Naud was given Chermont’s land concession by the colonial land tribunal. Between the 1780s and early 1800s, Naud used his slaves to clear the forest, develop the land, and transform it into a small estate where he grew some sugar, spices, and vegetables while the rest of the land was used for grazing by livestock. During the early 1800s, he turned it into a sugar estate with a small sugar factory and where alcohol was manufactured. He employed scores of slaves and made enough profits to purchase land adjacent to the estate and he also obtained some additional land concessions. The size of his estate grew from 112 arpents to more than 500 arpents.

During the late 1820s, Naud passed away and his wife and children sold his estate to Emilien Dupuy and Madame Joseph Diore in 1828. By 1832, Dupuy and Diore were unable to manage the sugar estate and sold it to Mr. Arbuthnot who represented Hunter and Arbuthnot Company, a newly formed British company based in Mauritius. Arbuthnot gave the name of *Belle Alliance* to his new acquisition. His company invested thousands of pounds sterling into the sugar estate and transformed it into one of the most important plantations in Rivière du Rempart, with one of the most important distilleries.

## The Experience of the Antoinette Indentured Workers

Lachari	X	Lingam	X
Lachari	X	Callachand	X
Bhadrachari	X	Bhadrachari	X
Champak	X	Lachari Bhadrachari	X
Bhadrachari	X	Lachari	X
Lachari	X	Chata Bhadrachari	X
Julles	X	Lachari	X
Chata Bhadrachari	X	Bhadrachari	X
Bhadrachari	X	Mugger	X
Arjun	X	Harach	X
Arjun	X	Chaytan	X
Arjun	X	Chaytan	X
Arjun	X	Bhadrachari	X
Arjun	X	Gungaram	X
Arjun	X	Chata Mugger	X
Chata Chomulall	X	Chata Bhadrachari	X
Mugger	X	Lachari	X
Arjun	X	Bhadrachari	X

The 36 Bihari Hill Coolies who worked on Antoinette Sugar Estate during the 1830s. (Source: Mauritius National Archives)

In 1832, there was a total of 190 slaves on the plantation and by 1834, 36 indentured Indian workers were also laboring in its sugar cane fields. Recent research at the Mauritius Archives has provided new information on the indentured labourers who came to Mauritius on the *Atlas* on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1834. The story of these pioneer Indian labourers began almost two months earlier in Calcutta, India with the arrival of George Charles Arbuthnot, part owner of Antoinette Sugar Estate.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September 1834, 36 Hill Coolies of the Dhangar caste (originally from the hills of Bihar in eastern India and who were then living in Calcutta) signed a five-year labour contract with Arbuthnot of Gillanders-Ogilvie (an important British commercial firm based in British India) and acting on behalf 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.

One of the conditions in the contract clearly stated:

*"The natives agree to proceed to Mauritius to work as labourers there upon a sugar estate, the property of Hunter Arbuthnot & Co. and to remain there as required for the term of 5 years".*

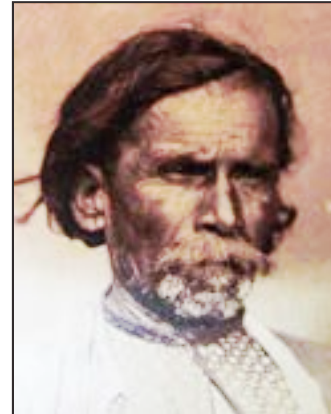
Once the labourers agreed to the terms and conditions, they placed their thumb mark on the contract and on a separate list, which contained the names of the 36 Coolies, they placed an 'X' next to their names. The sirdar of these labourers was called Soorooop who was assisted by Subaram. In all, there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

Within a day after their arrival, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1834, Arbuthnot's coolies were taken to Belle Alliance Sugar Estate in Rivière du Rempart. The Indian labourers worked from sunrise to sunset, six days a week and they were also required to perform light duties on Sundays.

They worked side by side with the slaves of Belle Alliance in the sugarcane fields.

Therefore, the indentured workers supplemented the labour of the slaves and were a blessing for that particular estate because between the mid-1830s and early 1840s, sugar production reached 300 to 400 tons each year and almost 200 arpents of land were added to Belle Alliance. During this early period of indentured labour, there were other Indian indentured workers who also worked and lived for several years at Antoinette Sugar Estate such as Immigrant Luchmun.



*Immigrant Luchmun arrived in Mauritius in 1830. He worked on Belle Alliance Sugar Estate as a cane cutter during the late 1830s and early 1840s. (Source: MGIHA)*

In 1848, Arbuthnot sold Belle Alliance to Chailmers, Guille and Company which by then extended over an area of 793 arpents and produced 500 tons of sugar. A few years later, in 1856, the sugar estate was purchased by Ste. Langlois brothers who produced more than 551 tons of sugar each year. By 1863, it was Raoul de Maroussem and his associates who bought the sugar estate. He renamed the sugar estate Antoinette after his wife.

During the 1860s and 1870s, de Maroussem added more land to the sugar estate and sugar production increased to more than 1,000 tons per year. A smaller estate La Lucia was annexed and became part of Antoinette. In 1873, he brought 31 male Bihari Indian workers to cut cane on his estate. The ship the *Iskender Shah* arrived in Mauritius on 28<sup>th</sup> June of the same year and the workers were sent to Maroussem's estate two days later. Some of the indentured workers were Rojiah and Lallmahomed.

In 1883, he sold the estate to Gustave Martin. Antoinette was centralized on Mon Songe Sugar Estate by 1900. In 1901, Mr. Martin brought around 25 Bihari Indian indentured workers to work on his sugar estate on 5-year contracts. Their ship the *Wardha* arrived at the Immigration Depot on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1901 and they were sent to Antoinette Sugar Estate two days





*Indo-Mauritian and Indian Indentured Workers residing in Antoinette Estate Camp. (Source: MacAllister MacMillan, Mauritius Macmillan Illustrated, 1916)*

later. Some of the immigrants were Bisnath, Mohan, and Persad. They worked and lived for several years on the the same sugar estate.

### **The Expansion of Antoinette Sugar Estate**

Between the early 1880s and 1910s, Martin rapidly developed the sugar estate by doubling its size to more than 2,000 arpents and sugar production reached more than 2,800 tons per year by 1912. In 1920, La Compagnie Sucrière d'Antoinette was created and took possession of the estate. During the same year, Mr. Antoine Harel, the new owner, made a rare and important exchange where 211 arpents of Antoinette were exchanged for 157 arpents of land from Beau Sejour Sugar Estate.

Between the 1920s and 1930s, the size of the sugar estate grew to more than 2,500 arpents. Furthermore, with modern machinery, techniques of sugar cane cultivation and varieties of sugar cane, there was a record sugar harvest in 1938 with 7,429 tons of sugar when the annual average was between 6,500 and 7,000 tons for Antoinette.

Antoinette Sugar Estate was still one of the most important sugar estates in Rivière du Rempart by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Important personalities such as Louis Naud, Mr. Arbuthnot, Raoul de Maroussem, and Gustave Martin played a key role in the development of this important Mauritian sugar estate and indenture site.

# Indian Immigrants and Smallpox

Raj Boodhoo, Researcher in Medical History

Mauritius had been affected by several smallpox epidemics prior to the beginning of mass immigration of Indian labourers in the 1830s. It was a common disease in many countries. In England, smallpox, known as 'the speckled monster', was described by contemporary writers as 'the most terrible of all ministers of death.' Highly contagious, it was more prevalent in the overcrowded areas of English industrial towns. The victim was affected by fever and a rash which covered the whole body soon transformed into pus-filled pustules. When they healed, the pustules left deep scars.

recruits from different regions, consuming poor quality water, the future migrants were exposed to all sorts of infectious diseases, some of them unknown to them and to which they were not immune.

In the previous issues of this magazine, we have briefly presented to the general readers the colonial government's policy towards imported infectious diseases and the strict enforcement of the quarantine system. In spite of rigorous measures, smallpox and cholera appeared now and then at Port Louis, capital and port, and spread to the rural settlements.



*Remaining structure of the Flat Island Quarantine Station  
(Source: AGTF Collection)*

With the development of travel and transportation since the sixteenth century, smallpox spread to the New World, killing thousands of natives who were exposed to it for the first time. At the end of the eighteenth century, in 1793, a most violent epidemic hit Isle de France causing many deaths. After the peace treaty of Versailles in 1814 that ended European wars, sea traffic increased in the Indian Ocean. Vessels transporting liberated slaves, immigrants and troops introduced infectious diseases into the island. The arrival of a larger number of immigrant ships from Indian ports after the 1840s further increased the risk of epidemics. Smallpox was endemic in India where violent epidemics broke out while emigration to Mauritius was at its peak. Travelling all the way from their native villages, stopping at the magistracies for registration, going through the bazaars looking for food, staying at the port depots together with other

The colonial state had to take drastic measures to save lives and the economy; the need for labour in the growing sugar industry was predominant. The high mortality rate on board immigrant ships and on the sugar estates in the island was alarming, causing the Indian government to suspend emigration in 1838 in order to establish recruitment procedures and to engage 'healthy and laborious' workers. The Mauritian government stressed the need for immigrants to be vaccinated against smallpox before embarkation. Moreover, Mauritian planters complained that recruits were generally frail and unable to work, hence causing a loss of funds invested in importation. New laws were passed in India in 1842 and emigration resumed, but again significant changes did not occur overnight.



The cowpox vaccine had been advocated by an English physician, Edward Jenner, since 1796. It was introduced in India in 1802, and since, thousands of inhabitants of British India had been vaccinated freely. Prior to vaccination, an age-old practice known as inoculation (or variolation) as a method of immunization was carried out in India, China and Africa. The pus from the smallpox lesions of an infected person was inoculated into a healthy person, causing only a mild infection. This method was apparently introduced in America by African slaves. Old cultures also had their gods and goddesses to protect them from smallpox. The Indians prayed to Mata Sitala when they suffered from smallpox and measles.

The vaccine was brought from India to the French Mascarenes in about 1802. In 1811, the first British Governor Farquhar set up vaccination centres and appointed vaccinators for the port and the districts. Mauritians dreaded the outbreaks of epidemics each time vessels with smallpox victims arrived at the port. They always pressed on the government to send ships away from the port to the quarantine stations. Infected ships were, therefore, directed to quarantine stations at Ile aux Bénitiers or Flat island. They were against the project of the government to build a quarantine station at Ile aux Tonneliers, arguing that this islet was too close to the town and that the miasma could infect the inhabitants. Finally, by mid 1850s, Flat and Gabriel Islands became the main stations for infectious diseases. Ships from India were not the only carriers of disease; those carrying liberated Africans and British troops were also dangerous. In 1840, the

*HM Lily* carrying Africans anchored at Port Louis and smallpox spread to the town.

Laws were passed in the colony to regulate vaccination. The whole population, Whites, Indians and ex-apprentices, adults and children, had to be vaccinated. As it was voluntary and no fines were enforced, many, especially those who lived in remote areas, escaped vaccination and did not care to bring their children to the centres. Rumours also circulated that vaccines caused other diseases such as syphilis. However, in general, vaccination was successful, and smallpox cases became rare. Smallpox epidemics hit Mauritius only twice in the second half of the nineteenth century, and did not cause high mortality. On the other hand, cholera in the 1850s and 1860s caused more deaths. But it was malaria, which became endemic for the next hundred years after 1867, that caused the highest level of morbidity, and Mauritius as a whole became 'a sick island.' The old image of its being a paradise-island free from diseases waned.

Outside Mauritius, smallpox existed in many places around the Indian Ocean until recent times. But vast vaccination campaigns throughout the world by WHO in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century completely eradicated smallpox by 1980 and rid humanity of this scourge. A disease that had existed from time immemorial is now extinct.

Adapted from *Health Disease and Indian Immigrants*, 2010, AGTF and from unpublished text on epidemics.



*Flat Island (Source: Mauritius Wildlife Foundation)*

# Bhojpuri Presence in Mauritius

**Dr Sarita Boodhoo,**  
**Chairperson of the Bhojpuri Speaking Union**

Bhojpuri is ingrained in the Mauritian soil and has taken local colours. It has a long history of over 180 years in Mauritius (2<sup>nd</sup> November 1834-2015). This period is long enough for language transformation and the development of its own identity as a language proper to Mauritius.

Until the 1980s, no serious step was taken to give Bhojpuri prominence or respectability. Among the Indian fold itself, it was considered as a “motia” (coarse or rough) language or dialect as opposed to the refined bhasha of Hindi, language of prestige utilized in the cultured milieu. It was considered as “langaz” of “bitasion” or “la campagne”, “ban gense la” vis-à-vis the Creole population or urbanised Indians and other dominant languages such as French. This stigma persists till date hence the diminishing proportion of its users among some of the urbanised younger generation. They feel uncomfortable to use it and want to tuck it at the back of their consciousness. In the early days as late as the 1970s, people of Bhojpuri origin were referred to as *Calcuttias* and the language they spoke as *Calcuttia* itself, because they came to Mauritius and to the other plantation *Girmitia* colonies through the port of Calcutta, which was then the capital of British India.

There are some 26 Bhojpuri-speaking districts in India, both in the States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh as well as in States of Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. Bhojpuri is also one of the 14 recognised languages of Nepal having predominance in the Nepal – Bihar border. Besides Mauritius, Bhojpuri has a living presence in South Africa especially in Natal, in Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago as well as a secondary presence in UK, France, Holland, U.S.A, Canada with secondary migrations of descendants of Bhojpuri *Girmitias* (indentured labourers) in these new areas of settlement.

Out of the 26 districts from which recruitment was made, Bhojpuri is widely used in eight districts of UP and Bihar. These districts have been further split for administrative purposes. *Awadhi* a sister dialect

of Bhojpuri is used in seven districts, Maithili another closely connected dialect is utilised in 4 districts, Braj further westwards around the area of Agra in two districts, Magahi in two and Kanawji and Bundelkhandi as well as Khari Boli in one each (Surendra Gambhir, well known linguist based in USA). It is quite clear that the number of Bhojpuri and Awadhi speakers migrating into the plantation colonies was quite significant. These various languages existed and still exist side by side. There is a popular saying in the Bhojpuri belt which goes as follows:

*“Kos kos par pani badlela*

*Char kos par bani”*

*“Water changes its taste and quality at every mile,*

*And language at every 4 miles!”*

As recruitment for Indentured labour was carried out from various pockets, and they fell an easy prey to *arkatias* or the middlemen, the influence of all these dialects existing side by side, can be felt in the plantation settlements.

As Mauritius was the first post of the ‘Great Experiment’ which proved tremendously successful, and recruitment for Mauritius was primarily from Bihar and Eastern UP, and Chotta Nagpur in the earlier periods, there is a stronger presence of Bhojpuri here than elsewhere. Bhojpuri became the predominant language of communication favoured by the back to back barracks and closeness of people favouring interaction. Even the corner Chinese shopkeeper in the village and the white “colon” conversed in Bhojpuri with the workers. All the other linguistic residues were slowly absorbed to Bhojpuri as it became a vigorous *Lingua Franca* in rural Mauritius. Of all the diasporic countries, Mauritius is one case in point where the Bhojpuria has emerged as a strong social, linguistic and political force. Although during much of the earlier and middle part of the last century, it suffered as an inferiorized language, the trend is still present if we analyse media statements. It keeps on being neglected and relegated to a secondary position at times by the authorities as well as the media who give it but a timid consideration. However, one should



salute the tradition bearers for having “contre vents et marées”, preserved and promoted the age old traditional Bhojpuri songs and kept them alive till date. These oral songs associated with ‘rites of passages’ known as *solahsanskars* especially those sung on different aspects of the marriage rites, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day (chatti) or 12<sup>th</sup> day (barhi) of bath of the new born baby and his mother known as *lalna* or *sohar*. Name-giving ceremony (*namkaransanskars*) and others sung during drought known as *harparawris* or harvest songs, *chowtal*, *dhamar*, *phagwa* songs sung on the occasion of Holi festival, or *jatsar* songs sung during the early days of stone-milling, or *godna* songs sung during the application of what is commonly known today as tattoo are also well preserved in Mauritius. Moreover, various food delicacies such as the *dalpuri*, *tipuri* and *faratas* (parathas) have become fast foods in Mauritius.

Artists and singers/composers such as late Sona Noyan, known as King of Gamat, new ones like Kishore Khemia, Kishore Taucoory, Ravin Sowamber, Rambha Ramtohol are determined to create new wave songs in Bhojpuri.

Bhojpuri has to battle constantly from within the fold and from outside for its survival and weather out prejudices. However, due to its resilience and combative force and its capacity to absorb, borrow, loan and share its vocabulary and expressions, it has survived and continue to do so as a new wind is blowing giving recognition to various linguistic identities such as the Mother Tongue Day proclaimed by UNESCO in 2008.

Even so, the Government of Mauritius set up, by an Act of Parliament, the Bhojpuri Speaking Union in August 2012 whose aims and functions to promote and disseminate Bhojpuri as a recognised language of Mauritius and its intangible cultural heritage are well defined and stipulated. The Government of Mauritius has further sent the Nomination Dossier on Bhojpuri Folk Songs and Dance known as *Geet Gawai* for Inscription in the UNESCO’s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Bhojpuri has climbed the sixteen steps of the Aapravasi Ghat as from 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1834 till 31 May 1924 to go to the canefields and villages and reached the World Heritage Site of UNESCO in 2006 with the recognition of Aapravasi Ghat as a world heritage site based precisely on Criterion 6 of UNESCO guidelines i.e. the intangible heritage of the immigrants preserved especially Bhojpuri.

In 2014, for the commemoration of the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary, celebrations of the arrival of Indentured Labour Immigrants the Bhojpuri Speaking Union under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture in collaboration with the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, Mahatma Gandhi Institute and Rabindranath Tagore Institute organised a grand International Bhojpuri Mahotsaw with an International Literary Conference on Bhojpuri language and various other activities to enhance the presence of Bhojpuri in Mauritius. The Cabinet took the decision on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2014 for an annual celebration of the International Bhojpuri Festival, just as is being done in the case of the International Creole Festival.

Bhojpuri is offered as a module at academic level at the University of Mauritius in collaboration with the Department of Bhojpuri, Folklore and Oral Traditions of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute which in days to come, will be considered as a core subject for academic and post-graduate studies. The introduction of Bhojpuri Studies as a subject at University level is being seriously considered as more and more students are taking Bhojpuri as a subject at post graduated level studies. Currently more than 4 students have entered for their PhD Studies in Bhojpuri. Bhojpuri has been introduced as a subject combined with Hindi at the Primary Sector of Education. Its curriculum materials are designed by the MGI under the guidance of the MIE. The Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal College in Flacq offers Bhojpuri as a subject at Secondary Level from Form I to Form V. The MBC has given a great visibility and exposure to Bhojpuri through the 24 hour Bhojpuri Channel and various other programmes such as “Anjoria”, “Ka Bole La”, “Bol Bandhu”, “Kheti Bari”, “Khel Khabar”, “Chala Gaon Ghume”, “Chala Shahar”, “Bhojpuri ke Yuva Manch” and others. The Bhojpuri cinema in Bollywood also has helped to give Bhojpuri visibility and prominence.

Bhojpuri has a very rich vocabulary, etymology, syntax and grammar. Bhojpuri in fact is derived from Sanskrit and is older than Hindi. In Mauritius there is the common belief that Bhojpuri is a ‘patois’ of Hindi just as Creole is derived from French (Mauritius). This is far from the truth. It is the other way round. In fact, Eastern Hindi as spoken in Mauritius is fed to the tune of 70-80% by Bhojpuri and associated dialects of the Magadhi branch of Indo-European languages. Therefore a study of Bhojpuri and its intangible cultural heritage, its introduction in the school cursus and academia would benefit and enrich the linguistic landscape of Mauritius. Bhojpuri has influenced Creole language as much as it has borrowed from it. Bhojpuri has contributed immensely

to the semantics of Mauritius. Bhojpuri terminologies, proverbs, sayings, riddles (pahelis) (sirandanes), charades, swear words, *kissas/kahanis* (folktales), phraseologies, idioms, children's games and above all, folk songs both traditional and modern make of Bhojpuri a vibrant, pulsating and intrinsic aspect of

the Mauritian linguistic landscape which cannot be denied or buried alive.

Take the case of '*difé dans Lanka*' a Creole expression that has come straight from Bhojpuri taken from the Ramayana.

Some Examples of Bhojpuri Words in Kreol			
<i>Maja karo</i>	<i>Gamat</i>	<i>Bayo</i>	<i>Beta</i>
<i>Kalchul</i>	<i>Bazaar</i>	<i>Batchara</i>	<i>Beti</i>
<i>Jharna</i>	<i>Alim</i>	<i>Gajak</i>	<i>Poukni</i>
<i>Godi</i>	<i>Paissa</i>	<i>Duniya</i>	<i>Lota</i>
<i>Dukh</i>	<i>Nissa</i>	<i>Kismet</i>	<i>Phenousse</i>
<i>Poolia</i>	<i>Jalsa</i>	<i>Dalpuri</i>	<i>Dahi</i>
<i>Gandjia</i>	<i>Agwa</i>	<i>Puja</i>	<i>Kawal</i>
<i>Chake</i>	<i>Belna</i>	<i>Dalpitha</i>	<i>Sawal</i>
<i>Chulha</i> ( <i>Metteurchulha</i> )	<i>Tawa</i>	<i>Dudhpithi</i>	<i>Alouda (Faluda)</i>
<i>Roti (roti chaud)</i>	<i>Dal</i>	<i>Kalimai</i>	<i>(ti) puri</i>
<i>Chowtari</i>	<i>Odhni</i>	<i>Phuli</i>	<i>Saffron (haldi)</i>
<i>Dulha</i>	<i>Sari</i>	<i>Catora</i>	<i>Dulhin</i>
<i>Dulhin</i>	<i>Bajias</i>	<i>Dekchi</i>	<i>Piao</i>
<i>Karai</i>	<i>Dayine</i>	<i>Massala</i>	<i>Mamou</i>

Even though the younger generation may feel shy of using Bhojpuri, yet the language is part of their home environment. It crops up as strong symbolical terms in Kreol such as '*amen mo tharia, lota, kapur, mo pou alle faire puja dans mandir*', and much more, in family relationships, the kitchen and culinary terms which cannot be replaced.

## Nardégon et opparli sur les convois et dans les dépôts :

### Performances du ballet indien et lamentations avec les engagés au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle

Dr. Sully Santa Govindin,

Chercheur associé au LCF/ILLET –

Chargé de cours à l'Université de La Réunion



Convoi d'engagés indiens vers La Réunion XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. (Source: Archives Départementales de la Réunion)

Outre les regrets de la perte du défunt, et les lamentations occasionnées au cours des veillées funèbres, plusieurs moments dans l'espace des croyances indiennes sont propices à la remémoration des mythes. Les rapports des chirurgiens navigants

confirment l'importance des prestations artistiques dont plusieurs termes les désignent : « *bal indien* », « *bal tamoul* », « *bal malbar* », ou « *nardégon* », qui se produisaient dans les dépôts et qui se prolongeaient dans les entreponts des navires. Deux témoignages sur les bâtiments de navigation et un compte rendu relatif à un dépôt d'engagés au lazaret illustrent nos propos.

Durant leur périple sur les navires d'émigration, les migrants indiens subissaient des épreuves terribles liées aux conditions de navigation et aux traitements abjects que leur réservaient trop souvent les équipages. Les chirurgiens responsables des conditions sanitaires et morales durant l'acheminement des engagés jusqu'à la terre d'accueil insistent dans leur rapport adressé à l'amirauté sur ces instants de bonheur qu'ils encourageaient vivement.

Ainsi le convoi *Le Siam* quitte Pondichéry le 2 août avec à son bord 429 émigrants et mouille le 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 1859, en rade de Port-Louis (île Maurice). Il passa deux jours sans que l'intendance sanitaire voulût se rendre à bord, et fit route alors pour La Réunion, puis resta onze jours pour faire de l'eau. Il quitta Saint-Denis le 13 septembre au soir, et mouilla le 11 octobre devant Sainte-Hélène, en direction de la Martinique. Le médecin Leclerc (1860, p.9-10) décrit dans son rapport médical les activités des engagés indiens :



« Les émigrants passaient toute la journée sur le pont, lorsque le temps le permettait; ils ne descendaient que lorsque la nuit était venue, et lorsqu'il y avait lieu, on prolongeait encore ce séjour. Cependant, quand il pleuvait, et au passage du Cap, il fallut autoriser les Indiens à rester en bas, le froid quoique peu intense, les éprouvait trop fortement, et il y aurait eu danger à les retenir à l'air libre. On avait embarqué deux tamtams et des cymbales pour leur amusement; tous les soirs, les hommes se livraient à des danses et à des représentations tragi-comiques de leur invention. Le jeu des instruments accompagnait un chœur de chanteurs. J'ai favorisé, autant qu'il m'a été possible, ces divertissements qui leur font trouver le temps de la traversée moins long, et entretiennent la gaieté parmi eux. »

Doressamy Gnanadicéam (Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Réunion, Carton 381, dossier 3296), stagiaire embarqué en qualité de médecin à bord du *Suger*, où il n'eut à déplorer aucun décès parmi les engagés, décrit aussi dans son rapport sur le voyage de Pondichéry à La Réunion en 1865, l'emploi de la journée des émigrants en insistant sur la pratique artistique :

« Pendant la majeure partie du jour nous les autorisons à chanter et à danser. Nous excitions leur émulation par des distributions raisonnables d'eau de vie pour les engager à jouer les soirs des comédies, excellent moyen de distraction. »

Enfin, Auguste Vinson médecin au lazaret de La Réunion eut lui aussi l'occasion d'assister à un spectacle et en fit une description dans le bulletin de la société des Sciences et Arts en 1883. Le médecin caractérise la prestation théâtrale telle une comédie-ballet (1882, p. 60) :

« une bonne comédie en cinq actes, en grande partie mimés avec chœurs, danses, chants et dialogues. Tous les genres s'y trouvaient. »

En dépit des scènes burlesques, l'auteur précise cependant, qu'au dernier acte (1882, p.67): « nous sommes transportés dans une pagode de l'Inde, où la divinité sur un trône est assise et voilée. Des chants religieux se font entendre. On lui adresse

des hymnes, des motets, des concerts et des cantiques. La scène est vraiment majestueuse. Les prêtres indiens exercent deux métiers dans leur sacerdoce : ils récitent des prières et vendent des amulettes... »

Aucun de ces auteurs ne signale le répertoire des ballets indiens. Le chirurgien Gnanadicéam souligne le registre tragi-comique, et Auguste Vinson évoque leur fécondité et les qualifie de « *littérature du théâtre indien* » qui servirait à des études comparatives. En prospectant la tradition orale nous avons inventorié deux répertoires utilisés par les descendants d'engagés à l'occasion des veillées et des cortèges funèbres.

Les chants aux morts intègrent en particulier à La Réunion trois répertoires en langue tamoule: le **Tirouvassagam**, l'œuvre du poète Manikka Vassagar sur « *l'Amour au Dieu Siva* » ; le **Vaïkoundon Ammanai**, ou les ballades contant le départ des princes vers « *Le paradis de Vishnou* » lues par les officiants à l'occasion des veillées, et écrit par le poète Mahavintamenum; et « *le Supplique à Harichandran, l'histoire du roi déchu* ».

Ce dernier personnage mythique assure le rôle de gardien de cimetière sollicité avant l'inhumation des cadavres. Une forme théâtralisée est encore utilisée de nos jours : *Harichandran Nardégon*. Les corpus de ces deux derniers récits se fondent sur les références épiques liées au *Mahabharata*, et la connaissance des différents épisodes faisait partie d'une culture ancestrale partagée au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle par la communauté des engagés indiens.



Danseur de nardégon. (Source: Archives Départementales de La Réunion)

<sup>1</sup>Archives de Médecine navale à Vincennes (Paris) (A.M.N.) : Rapport sur le voyage du « Siam » de Pondichéry à la Martinique, du 2 au 13 septembre 1859 en rade à La Réunion, signé le chirurgien de première classe, délégué du gouvernement, LECLERC, dans la Revue Algérienne et coloniale, mars 1860 : Immigration indienne, « Emploi des journées par les Indiens » , p.9-10.

<sup>2</sup>A.N.O.M., Réunion, C.381 d. 3296 : Rapport sur le voyage du *Suger* de Pondichéry à La Réunion, du 27 juin au 29 juillet 1865, 12 p., signé Doressamy GNANADICEAM.

<sup>3</sup>Auguste, VINSON, « Un Spectacle au lazaret. » Théâtre indien, Nardégon comédie-ballet en cinq actes, jouée par les engagés indiens à la Grande Chaloupe. Article publié dans le Bulletin de la Société des Sciences et Arts de l'île de La Réunion, année 1882, Saint-Denis, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> (Ibidem., p. 67).

# Oeuvre missionnaire et engagisme indien à l'île de la Réunion

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## Introduction

Durant la période esclavagiste à l'île de la Réunion, l'Eglise Catholique bien que religion d'Etat fait face à des difficultés pour instruire les esclaves, notamment en raison de l'ampleur de la tâche qui leur incombe et de la suspicion de certains propriétaires à leur égard. L'arrivée d'un grand nombre d'immigrés indiens rend leur tâche plus compliquée. En effet, l'effectif des religieux est réduit, et les indiens sont dispersés dans les habitations. La barrière de la langue est une réelle difficulté pour eux, aussi l'Eglise décide de faire venir un premier missionnaire jésuite de l'Inde en 1853, le père Garry, mais celui-ci meurt peu après.

## L'œuvre du père Laroche

Au cours de la même année, un autre missionnaire jésuite, le père Laroche arrive après avoir passé dix ans à Madurai. Il parle parfaitement le tamoul et s'est profondément imprégné des coutumes et mœurs des indiens. Il vient de la mission de Maduré. Entre 1855-1868, le père Laroche prend en charge la mission indienne, appelée « mission St Thomas des Indiens ». Dans un rapport en 1858, il se plaint du manque de temps à consacrer à ces derniers. Il informe qu'il doit d'abord s'occuper en priorité des engagés déjà chrétiens, et consacre très peu de temps aux non-tamouls. Il déplore que ceux-ci ne connaissent que les mots liés au travail et à la vie quotidienne, et savent à peine réciter le « notre père » en français.

*« Ces pauvres gens ne savent pas le français, il faut absolument des missionnaires qui savent l'indien.. »*

Dans ce même rapport adressé à l'évêque, il explique qu'il est réduit à rencontrer les indiens à la nuit tombée car les engagistes refusent de leur laisser du temps libre. Lui-même hésite à prendre sur le temps de repos des engagés car ceux-ci ont aussi besoin de se reposer...

*« Que peut faire un missionnaire pour 70 000 idolâtres ? Encore si les indiens chrétiens étaient réunis (...) mais ils sont disséminés sur toute la surface du*

*pays, dans les sucreries, et le missionnaire indien est obligé de rester à la nuit tombée tantôt dans un lieu, tantôt dans un autre pour les instruire »<sup>1</sup>*

Les termes « idolâtres » et « payen » semblent courant dans le lexique des missionnaires pour désigner les hindous où pratiquants du culte mahométan. Usités durant la période esclavagiste et les premières décennies succédant à l'abolition, ils tendent à disparaître vers 1880. Le père Laroche demande à l'évêque Monseigneur Montpoint la possibilité de construire une chapelle dédiée aux indiens déjà catholiques. Le 16 avril 1860, le prélat suit ses préconisations et achète pour 6000 francs un terrain à Arthur Vergoz, riche propriétaire veuf, qui souhaite récupérer le bien de son épouse pour ses enfants. Les plans seront dressés par l'ingénieur colonial Scheiner.

Le 31 juillet 1860, le père Laroche écrit au vicaire suite à un courrier du ministre de la marine, lui faisant part de la possibilité de commander des dictionnaires et des livres en tamoul, appréciés et demandés par les indiens aussi bien catholiques qu'hindous ainsi que par « les créoles ». Ce terme désignait les indiens nés dans la colonie. Nous découvrons ainsi que les immigrants étaient prêts à engager leur pécule pour posséder ces précieux livres qui leur rappelaient leur pays d'origine



Église St. Thomas, Saint Denis.

(Source: Céline Ramsamy-Giancone)

<sup>1</sup> Rapport de la mission indienne, ADRV série cultes



## Estimation du nombre d'indiens.

Dans le rapport de 1958, le père Laroche parle de « 69 000 travailleurs indiens et chinois », dont « 6000 chrétiens à peu près », soit un rapport environ de 10% d'engagés catholiques.

Dans son ouvrage « La France et ses colonies au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle », Ernest Lalande cite un nombre de 48000 travailleurs indiens en 1858.

Prosper Eve estime qu'entre 1848 et 1860, l'île accueille 47285 indiens. Le pic d'immigration se situerait vers 1854, date à laquelle le nombre d'entrées est évalué à 9000.<sup>2</sup>

En 1860, au moment de l'acquisition du terrain en vue de la construction de l'église St Thomas, Auguste Vinson rédige une note suite à l'arrivée prévue de 6000 travailleurs. Il tente de rassurer la colonie au sujet d'un événement qui semble inquiéter les engagistes : la proposition d'envoi par l'Angleterre d'un émissaire anglais. Son rôle serait d'accompagner les immigrants dans l'île et de vérifier le respect des clauses des contrats. Auguste Vinson, médecin dans la colonie, rassure les planteurs en faisant appel à plusieurs arguments :

-L'immigration devrait selon lui « amener les peuples encore dans l'enfance au sein des nations civilisées », d'une manière « libre et consentie ».

-La nécessité absolue de recruter dans l'Inde suite à la dispersion des anciens esclaves.

-La présence d'un consul de France au Cap, alors que les compatriotes ne sont pas nombreux.

-L'occasion de montrer à l'Angleterre que les immigrants étaient bien traités. Il rappelle le fait suivant : le navire « L'île Bourbon » ayant débarqué en 1856 des coolies provisoirement, on eut toutes les peines à les réembarquer pour la Guadeloupe, leur destination finale. En effet, le convoi d'indiens avait pris contact avec les engagés de Bourbon, et refusait de remonter sur le bateau, ce qui fut fait par la force.

Des arguments avancés par Vinson transparaissent une vision controversée de l'immigration indienne qui donnera lieu à plusieurs rapports et analyses contradictoires, notamment dans

<sup>2</sup> Prosper Eve « *La laïcité en terre réunionnaise* »

les différents bilans de la Chambre d'Agriculture. Ces données permettent cependant de traduire le contraste entre le nombre important d'immigrants arrivant dans la colonie et les difficultés auxquels sont confrontés les prêtres durant les décennies liées à l'immigration indienne.

Le constat d'échec de la mission indienne aux Antilles et à la Réunion vers les années 1880, sera conforté par l'importance des études anthropologiques consacrées au XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle à l'hindouisme indien dans ces îles.

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*Indienne de la Réunion.*  
(Source: Extrait de *la France et ses colonies*)

# Indentured connections:

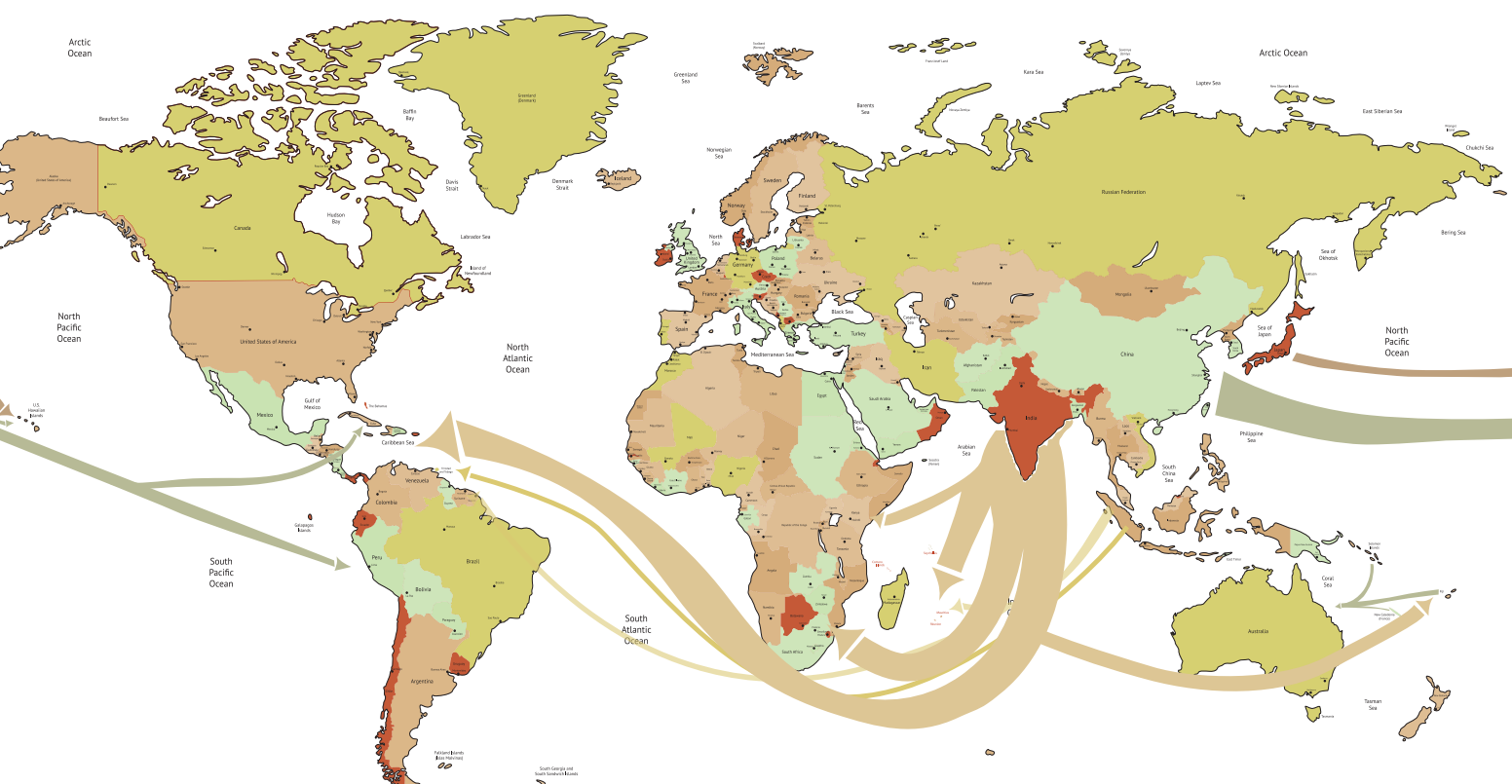
## Mauritius, Fiji and the unifying cord of indenture

Reshaad Durgahee, PhD student

Today, it is common practice to demarcate geographic boundaries firmly separating oceans, which, if viewed on a map are of course wholly interconnected. The Pacific ocean and the Indian ocean were though once connected through a practice that defined the nineteenth and early twentieth experience of Mauritius – Indian indentured immigration.

*Map showing the location of Mauritius and Fiji within the Indian and Pacific Oceans*

*(Source: AGTF Collection)*



In an increasingly borderless world, we are often still concerned with analysing the history of indenture in particular places, and how this institution affected the socio-political, economic and cultural landscapes of the colony under study. Indenture however was a system that stretched across oceans, connecting not just India with the sugar colonies of the empire – but also connecting those colonies with each other. Through indenture, links were created between colonies at various levels – from the elite to the subaltern level. Mauritius developed relationships with other sugar colonies in the Caribbean during the mid-nineteenth century, but it was in 1874 when Britain annexed the Fiji Islands in the South Pacific that a stream of indenture related movements began

eastwards from Mauritius, connecting these two colonies. An Indo-Pacific colonial arena was created with Indian indenture as the unifying cord – an arena that would last for fifty years, before being consigned to the annals of history at the end of indentured immigration.

The formation of this colonial arena began when Arthur Gordon, Governor of Mauritius from 1871 to 1874 moved to the Pacific to become the first Governor of Fiji. Gordon left Mauritius, not sorry to leave describing it as a “prison-like island” with “great tracts of hideous cane fields”.<sup>1</sup> Strange then, that he would set the ball rolling for the development



of the sugar industry in Fiji; within four years, he had implemented Indian indentured immigration to the Pacific colony and the first ship, the *Leonidas* arrived in 1879 with 463 souls – the first of over 60,000 who would make the long journey from India to Fiji.

Gordon did not move to Fiji alone. He was accompanied by members of his Administration in Mauritius including Aide-de-Camps Lieutenant Knollys and Captain Arthur Havelock and John Gorrie, Second Puisne Judge in Mauritius who became Chief Justice of Fiji. These colonial officials took with them to Fiji their ideals and experiences of administration in Mauritius. After Gordon's move to the Pacific, Adolphe de Plevitz, known in Mauritius for organising the petition of Old Immigrants in 1871 followed the Governor to Fiji in the hope of starting a new life. He arrived in Fiji in 1876 and wrote to the colonial administration to ask whether it would allow emigration from Mauritius. De Plevitz wrote that before he left Mauritius over 1200 labourers had expressed interest in moving to Fiji and he wished to start a scheme of recruiting time-expired Indian labourers in Mauritius to Fiji. The Administration stated that "it would be impossible for [the Governor] to assist or encourage emigration from Mauritius".<sup>2</sup> In short, it would not assist in any direct recruitment from Mauritius. De Plevitz's plan of recruitment in Mauritius for Fiji never came to fruition. He was not the only one however to propose such a scheme.

Five years later in 1881, the Mauritian company Blythe & Co submitted a request to

commence emigration of Indian labourers from Mauritius to Queensland and Fiji<sup>3</sup>, but this too was rejected. Whilst suggestions for direct recruitment schemes from Mauritius to other colonies were not implemented for fear of lack of regulation, there was nevertheless a movement of labourers between Mauritius and other colonies including Fiji. The labourers however, returned to India, before re-embarking on a ship in Calcutta or Madras to another colony. So between 1890 and 1906, a small number of time-expired indentured labourers in Fiji made the long journey back to India, and re-indentured for Mauritius. The flow in the other direction was larger, and between 1885 and 1916, 128 former indentured labourers in Mauritius, returned to India and set sail for Fiji.<sup>4</sup> Indenture linked Britain's sugar outposts in the Indian and Pacific Oceans not only through elite and administrative movements, but also through the subaltern experiences of mobile indentured labourers.

Mauritius and Fiji may be over 12,000 kilometres apart, but during the period of indenture they were unequivocally linked through their use of indentured labour. By thinking archipelagically, and bringing to light cross-colony links such as those mentioned between Mauritius and Fiji, we can avoid compartmentalising the indenture experiences of one particular colony which can create artificial borders and impede our understanding of one of the most important mass movements of labour in the modern era.

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1 *Letter from Gordon to his wife Rachael, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1874: Gordon, A.H. (1894) Mauritius: Records of public and private life, 1871-1874. R. & R. Clark, Edinburgh*

2 CSO 76.1221, *National Archives of Fiji*

3 RA 2610, *National Archives of Mauritius*

4 PE Series, MGI; *Arrivals Registers, National Archives of Fiji*

# Beacons of Hope in Belize

Sylvia Gilharrey Perez,

*President of Corozal Organization of East Indian Cultural Heritage*

Belize is a tropical paradise of 8, 866 square miles located in the heart of the Caribbean Basin. It is blessed with the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest barrier reef in the world and is home to over 300, 000 multi-ethnic people and a haven to 7000 People of Indian Origin.

Belize like many other countries share a unique experience of being the recipient of India's human reservoir. Over 80 years, the Indian labour force filled the gap created by the abolition of slavery in 1838. Indians first touched Belizean soil in 1858 when 1000 Sepoy Indians along with their families were deported to Belize because they revolted against the British in India's first war of Independence. They were later joined by former indentured Indians from Jamaica in 1872. Most of these time expired Indians worked on the sugarcane plantation of American confederates in Punta Gorda, the southern part of Belize, while others worked in the sugar cane, banana, and timber industry in other parts of the country. A group of Indian coffee workers from Guatemala also relocated to Belize. Unlike the early Indians who came to Belize, the Sindhis who began arriving in Belize since 1970 as business enterprisers, they have managed to maintain their ties with India and retained the Indian culture.

Indians were torn away from their homeland and arrived with minimal material goods to their new abodes in Belize. Because our Indian ancestors had a strong determination to cling to their way of life, they were forced to make the best of what was available in their new setting. The physical hardship of working on the sugarcane plantations during long hours, the unbearable heat and abusive working conditions coupled along with the emotional disturbances and psychological stress surely threatened our ancestors' survival. Instead of accepting defeat, these unfavourable experiences only pushed them some more to find refuge in making good use of the minimal materials they brought along with them. Although the East Indians cook and eat foods which are common to Belizean Creoles, they still favour those foods which their ancestors used and handed down to them. Indian cuisine plays a very important role in Indian kitchens and the blend of yellow ginger, (turmeric) with organic spices and herbs enhances the food's flavor. Other ethnic groups do enjoy Indian food with its distinctive taste which makes it a popular favourite in Belize and all over the world.



In seeking favorable living conditions, small groups relocated to different areas in Belize. However, without support from each other, minimal linkages to their homeland and relatives, and societal expectation of newcomers adopting the mode of life in their new settings, Indians gradually strayed away from their cultural practices. They adopted the food of their new country, abandoned their Indian clothing and names as they assimilated into the country's dominant culture. East Indians in Belize adopted Christianity and credit their Christian conversions to the absence of their own religious leaders, temples, and schools. The values deeply embedded in their cultural background and the country's freedom of religion paved the way for the zealous christian missionaries to convert Indians to various Christian denominations.



In spite of the estate owners oppressive demands, the descendants of indentured Indians from the very beginning demonstrated dedication, persistence, opti-mism, and thrift which was inculcated by their elders. The early East Indians in Mauritius and





Belize broke away from a history that confined them to work as labourers in the sugar, lumber and coffee industries that were owned by non-Indians and Europeans. Since most East Indians have a love for the land, they are engaged in cultivation of food crops, and plant their own vegetables in their backyard in spite of the limited land space available. Even though the struggles of christianisation, acculturation and intermarriages resulted in culture erasure, Indians in Belize have managed to retain some indianness.

Our ancestors did a great job in using what was available, and bush medicine and natural remedies still play an important role in preventing and curing diseases. Indians in Belize continue to excel and contribute to the local economy, politics and the socio-cultural formation of the nation. Many now fill the posts of renowned professionals, dignitaries and entrepreneurs. Because our ancestors' spirits did not waver, they were beacons of hope to keep India alive in a distant and foreign land as they have passed on to us a legacy of a taste of India. The five years of their intended stay flitted by and they did not return rich to India but excelled in their adopted home, Belize. As Belizean East Indians, they have contributed much to the building of the nation they call home. Certainly Belize reaped the rich flavor that the East Indians added to the building of the Belizean nation. Rekindling these values, customs and traditions that have been willed to us through the ages is a very small price to pay in comparison to our ancestors' will to survive.



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# Coringa: Pioneering Role in the Emigration of *Coranghis*

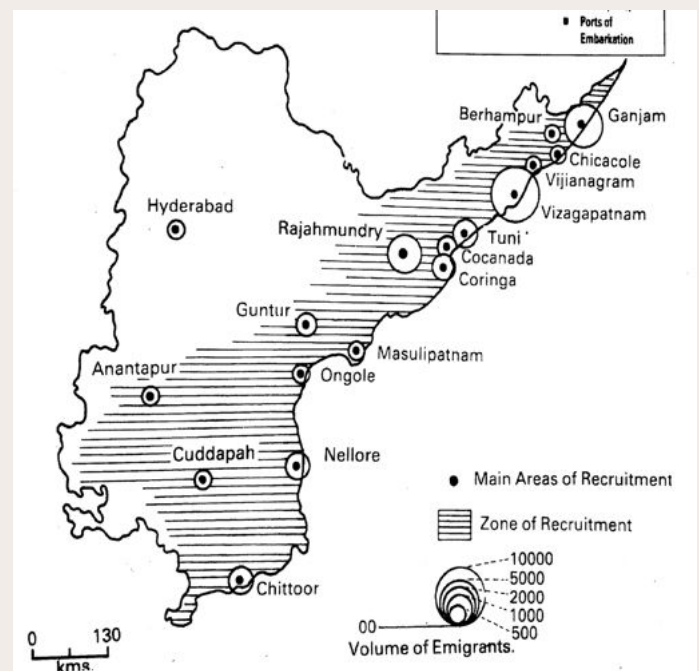
Dr. Indrani Gopauloo

The presence of *Coranghis* or *Coranghees* also known as *Talingas* during the French period in Mauritius, can be traced back to the eighteenth century. Quite a few migrants were introduced in the eighteenth century and in the early years of the nineteenth century. Sadasivam Reddy and Muslim Jumeer counted nine *Talingas* among the 118 emancipated slaves between 1796 and 1800. However, a regular inflow of people, as indentured labourers, from Andhra region started after the abolition of slavery in 1835, when Mauritius became the hub of the Indian labour immigration. There followed an increase in the intensity of maritime traffic plying the Indian Ocean from India to Mauritius, linking not only the ports of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, but also that of Coringa in the early years of immigration, to that of Port Louis.

Between 1834 and 1920, out of the staggering number of nearly half a million of people displaced from their homelands, some 35,000 originated from the Telugu country, then part of the Madras Presidency. In terms of volume of migrants recruited as indentured labourers to Mauritius, the Andhra region ranked third next to Madras and Bihar.

It is to be noted that emigration had been a characteristic feature of the coastal regions of Andhra since time immemorial.<sup>1</sup> The Telugu-speaking inhabitants of coastal Andhra migrated to Burma, Malaya and other Southeast Asian countries for trade and work or to settle down permanently. However, the indentured labour system in the nineteenth century, changed the course of Telugu emigration that had been essentially directed towards the East. Migrants shifted their itineraries to the South West Indian Ocean and towards the West beyond the Atlantic Ocean. A relatively large number of people from the Andhra region emigrated to Mauritius, South Africa and the Caribbean, although a sizeable number continued to move East as far as the Fiji island. It led to a wider dispersal which gave the movement a global dimension.

Massive movements of population from the populous rice-growing and weaving districts of Andhra are generally attributed mainly to failure of crops due to cyclones, floods and droughts causing poverty, famine and starvation, economic exploitation by landlords, social ostracism due to caste. These economic and social realities, pushed many *Gentoo* (middle class) families among others to migrate of their free will. For instance, the rice-growing districts in the Krishna and Godavari deltas and the weaving districts such as Nellore, were a rich source of cheap labour for Mauritius.



*The main regions and districts of recruitment for Telugu indentured labourers in southern India during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Source: Author)*

The ports of Coringa Bay, more especially the port of Coringa and later Kakinada, played a pivotal role in emigration of Telugus to Burma, Malaya and Mauritius among other places in the early phase of emigration of indentured labourers in the nineteenth century. The majority of immigrants from coastal Andhra arrived between 1852 and 1886. The main places recorded in registers of arrivals at the MGI Immigration Archives are Coringa, Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, Godavery, Krishna, Cocanada, Musulipatnam, Srikalulam, Issapatam, Rajahmundry, Nellore, Ellore or Eluru, Cuddapah. Inland districts

<sup>1</sup> *The Imperial Gazetteers of India*, located at the Indian Immigration Archives, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius.



such as Chittoor, Kurnool, Guntur and Hyderabad among others sent fewer people. Many of the places of origin were thriving ports with populous hinterlands, and had for centuries been active in distant maritime trading activities. European and native crafts plied the coastal waters of Andhra. They engaged in lucrative business and export activities, for instance woven textile goods were exported to Sumatra and other islands of Southeast Asia, and other varieties of cloth from the hinterlands of other ports of Coringa Bay to Europe, the Persian Gulf and America. In addition, a flourishing ship-building industry grew around the ports.

### From the Ports of Coringa Bay to Port Louis

The earliest phase (1836 – 1839) of immigration is characterised by a high inflow of indentured labourers from the district of Coringa via the port of Coringa (now known as Korangi). It played a pioneering role in the exportation of indentured labour to Mauritius. Figures of arrival of immigrants obtained from the Indian Immigration Archives (MGI), provide a vivid picture of the immigration pattern from coastal Andhra. They show that between 1836 to 1842, immigrants arrived from three main districts, namely Coringa, Nellore and Hyderabad. 151 came from Coringa; 4 from Nellore and 2 from Hyderabad. In 1836, 27 out of 36 immigrants said they arrived from Coringa “presidency”; in 1837, 50 out of 105; in 1838, 116 out of 150; 1839, 6; 1840, 2, 1841, 4; 1842, 2; 1843, very few out of a 800 and odds. The decline can be explained in terms of the violent hurricane that struck Coringa in 1839, killing thousands of people and immobilising the port forever.

The main villages in the Bay of Coringa and its vicinity which supplied Mauritius with labour during this period were Coringhy, Amelapuram, Poodoocotah, Yanam, Peddapuram, Pillagry, Samalcotah, Ponapoor, Bobili, Nelloor, Cooloor, Peddapory, Coringa, Balaree, Sangala, Allancoory, Tallapory, Loodeepur among others. They stated as belonging to the following castes: Telinga were in majority; Reddy, Pariah, Chamar, Raja, Gentoo, Vellala, Coringhy, Mavalla, Vitula, Malabar, Cavery, Nowree, Hindoo, Christian. Most immigrants fell in the age bracket of 25 to 45 years. Two only were aged 50. The oldest was aged 60 and the youngest 24 years old.

The Coringa Bay in the East of the Godaveri district, is situated south of Visakhapatnam and

comprised of a cluster of important ports, namely Coringa, Kakinada or Coconada, Ingeram, Bendamurlanka, Yanam and Jagannathapuram. The Bay played an important role in contemporary trading activities and emigration. Coringa Bay was the only smooth water (except Blackwood’s harbour) on the western side of the Bay of Bengal during the South West monsoon (Johnson & C.)

Coringa or Caranga was a considerable seaport town in the Northern Circars, district of Rajamundry. It was an international emporium of trade in timber supplied from the interior of the forested country. Among the exports from the Bay were cloth, tobacco, groundnuts, rice and sugar. As to the importance of the port of Coringa in maritime trade, Henry Morris wrote: *“It was the only place between Calcutta and Trincomalee where large vessels used to be docked.... [However,] because of its location on a low site near the coast, Coringa suffered very seriously in the hurricanes of 1784 and 1839”*. 300,000 people lost their lives in the 1839 surge. This calamity marked the fall of Coringa in terms of volume of trade in the world and emigration to Mauritius. This led to the rise of the Kakinada port located in the Coringa Bay. Referring to the fall of Coringa and the phenomenal rise of Kakinada, Adapa Satyanarayana writes, *“Of the all ports in the Bay, Kakinada or Coconada soon rose to prominence both as a trading centre as well as an urban town”*. After the closure of the Coringa port, migrants had to make their way to the port of Madras to embark for Mauritius and other colonial destinations.

Archival records also show that a large number of emigrants to Mauritius came from villages located in the vicinity of the port of Kakinada also called Cocanada or Coconada, which became one the pivotal ports of the Coringa Bay. According to K. N. Raju (2008), it was *“one of the most interesting Eastern ports, the busiest minor port on the Coromandel Coast, and the safest harbour and among the best shipping ports in India.”*

Today, Coringa is famous for its wildlife sanctuary which is the second largest surviving mangrove forest in India. It is home to twenty-four mangrove tree species and to over one hundred and twenty species of birds. The sanctuary that is part of the Godaveri estuary and flows into the Bay of Bengal, has become an *haut-lieu* of eco-tourism.

# Indentured Labour from India: A Reflection From Twenty First Century

*Prof. Ajay Dubey, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi  
& President, Organisation for Diaspora Initiatives (ODI International)*

At the time of abolition of slavery, indentured labour was introduced to replace slave labour by a new labour force to work on plantations. Many of the contract provisions in the indentured contracts were similar to those for emancipated slaves who were forced to work for the interim period till the indentured labour was put in place. It was rightly called "a new form of slavery". Indentured workers were brought in from different regions of the world like India which were under colonial rule by the European countries.

Legally the indenturedship contract provisions and terms gave a theoretical possibility of refusal under contract condition, but their shipment to far off distant land, given that both home and host territories were under colonial occupation, gave them similar subjugation and helplessness that slaves had suffered. Their new home territories grew by exploitation of their labour and personal sufferings. African slaves who came under slavery have been acknowledged as inhuman and compensated but little has been done to recognise and compensate the indentured labour exploitation and their sufferings. It is time for India and Indian diaspora led countries to work to get the world recognise this issue and compensate for it. The only exception was Hindraff movement in Malaysia.

Looking back from a perspective of twenty first century, when skilled labour migration under deception, allurement or under discriminatory system still exists, there is a need to recognise the skill and indispensability of sugar cane cutters or plantation workers in creation of national wealth of host countries. Many times Western scholars dismiss their valuable contributions merely as a process where poverty driven people move to new territory which rescue them from hunger and poverty. Colonial masters had tried to recruit indentured workers from China, Indonesia and many other parts of non-African territories but these labourers were unskilled for and unwilling to work on sugar or rubber plantations. They were a colossal failure. It was only the Indian indentured farmworkers who proved excellent in farming skills and showed willingness and respect to farm work despite their ill treatment. Their successful identification with

farming (since farming was among the highest valued profession in India during that time) made them a most sought after work force. There was race and competition to recruit them so much so that not just the Britishers but the Dutch and the French colonial governments entered into bilateral agreements with Britain, as it occupied India during that time, to supply fixed quotas of Indian indentured workers to them as they did not recruit unskilled and unwilling workers from their own colonial possessions in different parts of the world.

The skilled labour migration, facilitation by government and body shopping of low paid Indian workers today all over the world, reminds one of exploited indentured labour system which had similarly sought after skilled workers. During indenture period and even now the low paid, discriminated skilled workers are sought after resources to develop the economy of the host territories. They were ill treated earlier and discriminated even now. But in all cases then and now, they proved to be the backbone of economy and formed the core of the skilled resource pool of economy through a process of brain drain from India.



*The arrival of Javanese indentured workers in Paramaribo, Suriname in the 1920s. (Source: National Archives of Suriname)*



The indentured workers who did not return to India became part of the Indian diaspora. They remained cut off from their motherland, cut off from their civilization and culture. They neither had societal support nor government protection or care in the new territories. But they still maintained their Indian culture and civilizational values reflecting the diversity of their language, ethnicity and religions. Most of Indian traditions and values were retained at their home. For setting up a family they had very few Indian women recruited during indentured system. Despite their troubled history, they succeeded in holding on to Indian family values, societal ideals, and civilizational virtues. Contributions of women among Indian Diaspora during the troublesome indentured period is little recognised and appreciated. Indian Diaspora today may not have remained 'Indian' if Indian women had not played their silent role in preserving Indian practices during the indentured period.



*The arrival of indentured labourers in Natal in late 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
(Source: Kwazulu Natal Archives, South Africa)*

Lastly, indenturedship had scattered, segregated Indian children from India. The two World Wars followed by the cold war led to water-tight state systems, which kept Indian Diaspora spread in several far off countries separated from mother India. For many other Diasporas their mother country itself disappeared during this period. For some like the African diaspora, it got split into fifty four countries leading to absence of any recognisable home country. Luckily for Indian diaspora, India remains the same mother country, celebrating the same diversity of language, ethnicity and religion.

Additionally, India is now raising its head, as an emerging global player, recognising and proactively following policy to engage with its Diaspora, culturally, economically, and diplomatically. It is willing to play its role as responsible and respected member of the world community to get justice and due place for its children abroad who were taken away during the time of its subjugation.

The indentured Indian diaspora constitutes more than fifty per cent of over 30 millions Indians abroad. Many of them live as a small minority suffering discrimination and threat. Many of them despite being substantial in number as in Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago are under constant threat to their rights to political and economic space in their new home. It is time that India along with its children who were separated and delinked from India through the process of indentureship, come together to claim their due share of voice that they deserve in their new country. They need to work together for themselves, for local inhabitants and other Diasporas around them and for a better and equitable world which is still dominated by ex-colonial countries and their people spread around the world.

The atrocities and discrimination of indentured period reminds us to safeguard our low paid migrant workers who are badly treated and underpaid in these developed countries. It convinces us that history can separate children of India from mother country under trying times through hard processes like indentureship, but it cannot take Indianness out of them.

# *A Reflection on the Heritage and Historical Value of AGWHS: Insider / Outsider View*

Dr. George Okello Abungu  
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The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site (AGWHS) is one of its kind in the world. Like Robben Island in South Africa, it is listed under criteria 6 of the ten criteria under which world heritage sites can be listed by UNESCO. Criteria 6 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention or the Convention concerning the Safeguard of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage is, much more a consideration of intangible qualities rather than the tangible. It captures the memory and memorialization of great events, happenings, occurrences in human history and memory. For AGWHS, it was the human experience of one of the largest migrations for labour purposes with its attendant sacrifices, suffering, endurance and final triumph over all the adversities.

The British's Great Experiment of moving large numbers of people from their ancestral lands to new locations to replace the void created by the abolition of slavery was a major historic event. It transformed not only population dynamics in places but extended the period of cheap or labour at no cost for sometime after institutionalized exploitation of human by human had ended. This practice, known as Indenture, is better represented at Aapravasi Ghat than anywhere else.

The Immigration Depot, as it was popularly known, and a world heritage site, represents the history of immigration in its bare grey walls: the sixteen steps that remain till today are a testimony of ascending to a new and unknown life of promises that were never to be met on arrival. The bathroom, courtyard and kitchen, the remembered spaces of significance now carry with them deep and at times, scary memories. At the same time, they have become the measure of how far and how successful the descendants of this nearly holy place, have moved forward creating a home and a very successful one for that matter, in the land previously unknown to them. Where the promises of riches turned into ashes and hard labour at minimum pay but endurance, sacrifice and resilience subsequently led to a new nation, a proud people with its own identity and dignity.

Aapravasi Ghat at 30% of its original size did not lose its power and spirit of place. Brought back from near abandonment, the reconstruction of the memories of indenture has seen this place of great significance rise from ruins to reign as one of the most important heritage places. Listed under the most acceded and "prestigious" convention, the Convention concerning the Safeguard of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value, AGWHS today shares an elite position with such heritage of humanity; one that presupposes that while all heritage are important, there are some that are so important that their value transcends their national borders and therefore, their conservation for now and posterity should be the responsibility of all humanity. It is a principle that does not only bestow prestige and privilege to AGWHS but also responsibility.

Recognized by UNESCO since 2006, AGWHS shares the noble principles of which the international



organization was founded that are grounded on the spirit of recognizing, appreciating and celebrating the diversity and richness of human cultures and heritage in order to create a common understanding between peoples. Today through its various resources, notably



staff and their work, AGWHS has become a source of knowledge, sharing the same and creating an understanding of the past and assisting in charting a future that remembers the past; the roots of a people and a nation, building relations among Mauritians as well as between Mauritians and the world. In the latter aspect, nothing could be better than its recent role in the creation of the International Indentured Labour Route Project. Those who know their past can control their future.

I remember walking the ruins of this site with Vijaya Teelock being introduced to staff putting together puzzles of a place in the name of archaeological excavation and conservation, working on the walls and the grounds and giving my opinion. I remember the heat of the sun hitting the walls as we walked this desolate yet powerful space. I also remember sitting in the front row of air-conditioned and most decorated hall in Vilnius, Lithuania, in a privileged position as Kenya's representative to the World Heritage Committee.

I remember the palpable tension among the Mauritian Delegation that despite being members of the Committee, the rules did not allow them to talk in support of their heritage site. I remember the responsibility at hand to make sure the site goes through, not because we shared a mother continent or we came from the South but because we sincerely believed in the outstanding values of the site. This was

in the face of those who preferred to see the physical rather than the non-physical, who touted the highway and the bus station as compromising authenticity and integrity of the site and who dwelt on the lack of clearly demarcated and protected buffer zone as reasons to defer. At the end, India proposed the listing and Kenya seconded. The intense discussions that followed did not stop but led to recognition and listing this important heritage of humanity.

Since then, AGWHS has come a long way putting in place effective research, administrative and public programme structures that have ensured that it plays its effective role as a world heritage property. The investment in human resources has been commendable and the foresight to allow many to build their capacities, including in MA Heritage Management, that I have had the pleasure of running, is admirable. An institution that invests in people invests in its future. BRIC is another investment that has demonstrated the innovative approach at capturing, and sharing with everybody the story of indenture.

A world heritage site is full of challenges, especially one in a living, thriving city. The complex challenges of the management of the buffer zone attest to this. The answer however lies in stakeholder/ community engagement, and innovative reuse supported with implementable regulations. "Not for us without us" applies to AGWHS too.



## *Dr Idrice Goomany:* Sacrificing his life for the welfare of the Indentured Labourers

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In the 1880s when the island was in dearth of professionals, it was a great achievement for someone to be qualified as a medical practitioner. But it was indeed a big exploit for someone from a modest background, particularly for a descendant of Indian immigrant, to have undertaken the long and perilous travel by ship to Europe and get enrolled in a prestigious university despite all types of restrictions imposed by the colonial authorities on the people of Indian and Creole origins.



Dr Idrice Ameer Goomany (1859-1889) leapfrogged the ladder of social mobility by becoming among the first batch of doctors among the non-white people of Mauritius. He completed his graduation in 1883 from Scotland. He is remembered for his heroic action in saving the lives of his country-fellows, in particular the Indian indentured labourers. He positively responded to the official call of the colonial government, when others categorically refused, to take charge of the Quarantine Station of Pointe aux Canoniers, which was then overwhelmed with patients afflicted by epidemic diseases, predominant

among the indentured labourers arriving by ships to Mauritius.

Idrice Goomany was born on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1859 at Pagoda Street in the Eastern Suburb of Port Louis, then known as Camp des Lascars. His grand-father, originating from Cochin on the western coast of South India, settled in Mauritius during the French rule to work as lascar (sailor) and married to Marie Bactor on 4th February 1802. From this lineage, he had three children Douglad, Ameer and Çayeroune.

Ameer Goomany married to Roselie Margueritte César in 1839. This union gave birth to Idrice Goomany (b.1859), Assen Goomany (b.1860) and Mirmani Goomany (b.1863). The Goomanys were very committed to the upbringing of their children through education. The three kids were admitted to a private school called "Pensionat de St Louis de Gonzague" (founded in 1852). After successfully completing their primary education in December 1868, Idrice and Assen joined the Royal College, while Mirmani, who completed her studies in December 1869, opted for apprenticeship in handicraft. It was not a common practice at that time for Muslim girls to go for further education. At the Royal College, the Goomany brothers had Hassen Sakir and Anasamy Sinatambou as class-mates.

After completing his matriculation at Royal College in 1878, Idrice Goomany engaged himself for a little while in the business of his father. He then travelled to Europe for higher studies. He studied medicine in Glasgow and subsequently, he followed a surgery course in Edinburgh. Before returning to Mauritius by the end of 1887, he had stopped in France where he had fallen in love with a French woman. But this relation did not materialize.

It was indeed very costly for a Mauritian to afford to pay for higher studies in Europe. The father of Idrice Goomany, who was in business, struggled hard to sustain the long educational pursuit of his son abroad.



On his return to Mauritius, Dr Idrice Goomany worked for more than one year as private medical practitioner at Camp des Lascars (today known as Plaine Verte). In the beginning of 1889, an outbreak of smallpox took thousands of lives in the country. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the ships carrying indentured labourers disembarked increasing number of patients suffering from epidemic diseases.



*Medical tools of Dr Goomany  
(Source: Author)*

This was further compounded by the fact that the quarantine station was without any doctor following the demise of Dr Horace Lazare Beaugeard. Despite the repeated calls by the colonial government, no doctor wanted to risk his life by coming in direct contact with the patients. This was evidenced by a case reported to the Health Commission regarding Dr Vinson who categorically refused to treat his patients.

In the mid May of 1889, Dr Idrice Goomany volunteered to take charge of the Quarantine station at Pointe aux Cannoniers. He gave his heart and soul in performing his duty. In a matter of few weeks, he was successful in curing many patients. By mid-July 1889, while the epidemic had almost disappeared, the Health Commission was alerted that Dr Idrice Goomany had contracted the virus. The Health Commission made a daily follow-up on the state of health of Dr Goomany. As the quarantine station of Pointe aux Cannoniers was a prohibited area to the

public, the members of the Goomany family had to go to the Health Commission in Port Louis to inquire about the health of their kindred. On 29 July 1889, while the Chief Medical Officer was apprising the members of the Health Commission, in the presence of Assen Goomany, to the fact that the health of Dr Idrice Goomany was improving, a male nurse rushed into the office to announce the demise of the doctor. The members of the Health Commission were shocked and the brother of Idrice Goomany fell instantly unconscious on the table by this sudden announcement. The Health Commission, which met in special session on 30 July 1889, decided that Dr. Idrice Goomany be given the same recognition that the one given to this predecessor, Dr. Horace Lazare Beaugeard, and that his body be buried with all honours at Pointe aux Cannoniers.

The death of Dr Idrice Goomany generated widespread sympathy among the public. -On 31 July 1889, the newspaper "Le Bien Public" published a lengthy tribute to him on the front page. Some extracts from this article give a real sense of the situation:

*«Un médecin qui tombe dans ces conditions laisse une mémoire aussi honorée que le soldat qui perit au premier rang de la bataille. Dans l'un comme dans l'autre cas c'est un patriote qui meurt en service de son pays ... Nous n'avons pas besoin de dire combien le public sympathise avec la famille du défunt et déplore une mort si prématurée. La Commission de la Santé d'abord puis son excellence le gouverneur et Le Conseil Législatif l'on dit d'une manière plus complète que personne ne saurait le faire. Le Dr Goomany avait fait le sacrifice de sa vie en se chargeant d'un service de salut public au lazaret de Pointe aux Canonnières. D'autres médecins avaient refusé ou ne s'étaient pas empressés de prendre un poste si dangereux».*

The demise of Dr. Idrice Goomany was a national tragedy for the country, but it was an irreparable loss for the Goomany family. It took the family almost one generation of sacrifice and toil to trace the way of Idrice to a higher position and it gave just a momentary satisfaction to find him bloom like a rose and wither forever. Many of the assurances and promises given to the Goomany family by the colonial Government remained unfulfilled until this day. The example of Dr. Idrice Goomany must be projected as a model for posterity and can serve as a national symbol in the consolidation of the Mauritian society. The gesture of the Apravasi Ghat Trust Fund must be commended in its effort to recognize the sacrifice and contribution of Dr Idrice Goomany and his spontaneous acceptance in coming to the rescue of the freshly disembarked Indian indentured labourers quarantined at Pointe aux Cannoniers.

***Basdeo Bissoondoyal (1906-1991)*****Sermons of Liberation**

*Dr Jimmy Harmon,  
Director Nelson Mandela Centre for  
African Culture Trust Fund*



Basdeo Bissoondoyal was born on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1906 in the village of Tyack, Rivière des Anguilles. He returned to Mauritius in 1939 after higher studies in Lahore and Calcutta. He worked for the cultural unity of Hindus, symbolised by the Maha Yaj performed on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1943 jointly by Arya Sabha and Sanatanist priests under the headship of Swami Hari Har Aiyar of the Sockalingum Meenatchee Ammen Temple. Bissoondoyal & Banymandhub (1998: 65) state that 'it was no surprise that the cultural mobilisation led also to political mobilisation'. The public life of Basdeo Bissoondoyal personified 'Gandhian missionary' (Peerthum & Peerthum, 2005) and he had 'a fire within' (Bissoondoyal, 2006). Reflecting on his sermons in his *Selected Works*, Basdeo Bissoondoyal (1991: 13) wrote: 'I did not know that I was asking for trouble. I soon got into scrapes. It was really foolish to refuse high posts and serve one's countrymen to the best of one's ability'. Unnuth (1986) states: 'When his first sermon was delivered at Cassis, Port Louis, hardly 25 people attended. But gradually, Pandit Bissoondoyal's extraordinary rhetoric as well as his amazingly clear interpretation of the Hindu scriptures began to draw crowds. Eventually, he was addressing packed audiences all over Mauritius' (p.22). His sermons were in defiance of the social and political order.

**Discourse of Defiance**

Bissoondoyal's sermons can be considered as a form of discourse in the sense of social practice. For Fairclough (1992), when we describe discourses as social practice it means they can have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position

people. I therefore mean that since Bissoondoyal's sermons were so socially consequential, they gave rise to important issues of power. Four aspects of his sermons challenged the colonial authorities namely the language medium in which they were delivered, the dress code, the flag hoisting ceremony and the songs. Clothed in dhoti, a university graduate that he was, Bissoondoyal addressed thousands of Hindus in Hindi. He made the beginning as follows: 'Hindu Dharma Ki Jai' (Long Live Hinduism). After a short introduction, he requested some local influential persons to join in the unfurling of the Hindu flag to the tune of a song, the beginning of which reads as follows:

*Yahan Aum ka jhanda ata hai*

*Soney walo jag chalo*

*Here comes up our flag, leave off your slumber.*

*Arise, awake, unite and forge ahead my co-religionists.*

His sermons were clearly sowing the seeds of nationalism and ultimately independence. He was arrested in 1944 after the proclamation of a Notice making unlawful all public gatherings held without prior authorisation by the police. In fact, his arrest came after several exchanges of correspondences with the authorities. In a letter dated 22 June 1940 to the British authorities, he wrote:

I beg to bring to your knowledge that I am a Hindu missionary. I have been delivering lectures on Hindu Religion for the last six months or so. I made it a point to seek the permission of the police even when it was not necessary because I wanted to make it clear that I am a man of religion and as such would be last to disturb public peace and tranquility [...]



But the success of mobilisation of this 'man of religion' attracted suspicion and created jealousy and political rivalry amongst contemporary Indo-Mauritian leaders urging for leadership of the community (Sutton, 2007). In 'Le Procès Bissoondoyal', the contemporary writer Jean Erenne (pen name of Jean René Noyau, 1911-1986) to Basdeo Bissoondoyal quotes the judgement:

[...] *le chant du Bande Mataram (Chant national du Congrès national de l'Inde) et du 'Elevez le Drapeau' par les membres de la Sewa Samiti à la demande de l'accusé à la réunion de Petite Rivière et à celle de Lallmatie en présence d'un certain nombre de Mahometans à cette réunion, ne laisse dans notre esprit aucun doute que ces réunions n'étaient pas exclusivement religieuses ... Nous condamnons l'accusé.* (Erenne, 1964 : 66).

Indeed, such a religion challenged the status quo.

### Challenging the status quo

Arya Samaj is a Hindu religious and social reform movement in India, founded by Swami Dayananda in 1875. It promotes Vedic teachings. Its presence in Mauritius as from 1910 brought a Hindu renaissance and helped Hindus understand their worth as individuals (Mulloo, 2001). Studying the struggle of the workers' movement in Mauritius, Quenette (1985) highlights the Belle Vue Harel unrest in 1943 and makes the following observation about the role of Bissoondoyals' Jan Andolan movement:

*"Ensuite vint 1943. Belle Vue Harel et ses morts. Le Jan Andolan du missionnaire Bissoondoyal qui, au-delà d'un parti travailliste épuisé, portait auprès des masses hindoues, un message religieux pas toujours exempt de radicales revendications sociales. En notre temps, la croisade 'bissoondoyaliste' aurait porté l'étiquette de quelque théologie de la libération. (p.99)."*

The theology of liberation is a concept developed in the 1960s in the catholic church of Latin America which interprets the teachings of Christ in relation to liberation from unjust social, economic and political conditions. The historical roots of liberation theology are to be found in the prophetic tradition of Christian evangelists and missionaries from the earliest colonial days in Latin America -- churchmen who questioned the type of presence adopted by the church and the way indigenous peoples, blacks, mestizos, and the poor rural and urban masses were treated (Boff & Boff, 1987). The theology of liberation gave birth to the preferential option for the poor in

the modern era. We can draw a parallel here with the works of the Arya Samaj in Hinduism. For Hollup (1994), Arya Samaj in Mauritius stressed education, adult literacy, teaching Hindi, renouncing blind faith, and rejecting the caste system based on birth rather than on human worth; i.e., personal achievement and a righteous living. Such was the missionary work of liberation by Basdeo Bissoondoyal.

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## *In memoriam Dr. Abdul Kalam*



*Wreath Laying at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site by Dr. Abdul Kalam during the 2<sup>nd</sup> November Commemoration of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius in 2006 (Source: AGTF Collection)*

The AGTF would like to express its deep sorrow over the passing of Dr. Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, the 11<sup>th</sup> President of India. The former President, who passed away this July 2015, was the chief guest for the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence of Mauritius. He visited the Aapravasi Ghat on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006 where he wrote an inspiring message in the visitors' book:

*"Aapravasi Ghat is in itself an inspiring event in the history of Mauritian people.*

*My respect for the people who sweat to create this nation."*

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## *In memoriam Prof Karel Bakker*

Written By: Nicholas Clarke on behalf of SAIA , edited by Laura Robinson



*The passing away of Prof Karel Anthonie Bakker (PhD) on 19 November 2014 has left a great void in the architectural and heritage fraternities both in South Africa and internationally.*

Born in 1956, Karel completed his high school and graduate education in Pretoria. A conscious objector to Apartheid, Karel, opted to complete his degree in Architecture at the University of Pretoria first before continuing to serve the then mandatory two years in the South African Defence Force architectural division. Here he refused to participate in architectural projects that he deemed to be unjust and in service of an oppressive regime.

Karel joined as the staff of the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria, where he completed his M. Arch (cum laude) in 1993 and successfully defended his PhD Thesis. It was through his work under the banner of his professional consultancy, Cultmatrix, that Karel was able to raise the bar in heritage management in South Africa as the firm was the first to produce a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) under the then new National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999). This HIA has recently been included in the Architectural Conservation in South Africa since 1994: 100+ Projects publication (2014. A Herholdt, ed.)

In 2004, Cultmatrix was commissioned to compose the Vredefort Dome Cultural Heritage Survey And Conservation Management Plan, Karel's first venture into the World Heritage Arena. He was soon invited by ICOMOS to undertake various advisory and monitoring missions and advise in general with regards to World Heritage. As early as 2004, he was invited to review the ICOMOS Enane Charter on Interpretation of Heritage Sites.

In 2007 and 2008, he largely contributed to the preparation of the Planning Policy Guidance for the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. He also worked on the Le Morne Cultural Landscape and the UNESCO Slave Route Monument in Mauritius.

In South Africa, he contributed to Robben Island, Vredefort Dome and the Richtersveld WH Sites. Stone Town of Zanzibar and Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara in Tanzania occupied him for more than five years, starting in 2008. In 2010, he was requested to advise the international community with regards to the reconstruction of the Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga Tombs of the Buganda Kings at Kasubi, Kampala, Uganda, and in the same year, started his engagement with the heritage management and impact assessment of the new port development adjacent to the World Heritage Site at Lamu, Kenya. He was directly commissioned directly by UNESCO to conduct the Heritage Impact Assessment for the Lamu Deep Water Port project, a task during which he again stressed the value of engagement with community. In late 2013, he was tasked with an advisory mission to the World Heritage nominated Barotse Land Cultural Landscape, Zambia.

Karel was committed to the idea of 'living heritage' – a continually self-modulating heritage as part of a continuum of people's engagement with their environment and played a crucial role in creating support for the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscapes approach.

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