

The Aapravasi Ghat was the landing place for hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the nineteenth century. The flow of immigrants was replaced by departing immigrants or by their children requesting the services of the Protector of Immigrants. Their descendants also continued to visit the site when the Immigration Office became converted into other offices.

It is the wish of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust that in years to come, people will visit it not just as a national site but as a World Heritage site symbolising a moment of great historical significance: one of the greatest population movements of the nineteenth century within the Indian Ocean, a movement of peoples who defied tradition, travelled hundreds of miles to foreign lands, hoping for a better future. It is to them that we owe this moment.

The buildings have also been used for other purposes. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Immigration Department was merged with the Poor Law Department. Thus, the Immigration Department received poor people in need of assistance. Inspectors of the Immigration Office also made surprise visits to the 106 estates twice a year. (Poor Law Dept Report 1913). In 1922 the new Labour Ordinance abolished the indenture system. The Protector of Immigrants became the 'protector' of labourer's, the Director of Labour.

Also created in 1950, was the Public Assistance Department whose headquarters were located on the ground floor of the old building standing on Immigration Square, with the first floor being occupied by the Labour Department. One important section of the Public Assistance Dept was that dealing with immigrants Records. The department was responsible for the repatriation of indentured labour. The Department retrieved from the Archives the Immigrant Records because they were useful in collecting information for supplying passport, booking passages and certificates to establish their place of origin and other particulars. Those who worked in this Department were able to appreciate the richness of these records, which were later in 1976 retrieved from the site and housed at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute.

When these offices were closed down, the efforts of many individuals contributed to preserving the site. They were not able however, to resist the commercial development. Nevertheless in 1985, whatever remained of the site became a protected monument. It was at that time referred to as the 'Coolie Ghat'. Finally, in 1987, it became known as the 'Aapravasi Ghat', the term *Aapravasi* being coined to mean *immigrant*. Various attempts have been made to improve the look of the site such as the placement of commemorative panels, closing of original entrances etc. These attempted renovations, however sincere, have further reduced the potential of the site for consideration as an international heritage site. The Aapravasi Ghat Conservation Project is being launched to prepare the site for nomination to the World Heritage Site Status list. The AGTF has also enlisted the services of ICOMOS -India to supervise the conservation work. The Trust hopes that this work will be completed by December 2004.

Dr. V. Teelock
Chairperson,

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Motee RAMDASS
Minister Arts and Culture



Message

It is both with pleasure and pride that I am sending a message for the newsletter being released to mark the launching of the Restoration of the Aapravasi Ghat.

This is a historic occasion impregnated with emotion for this symbolic gesture is a fitting tribute to the enormous sacrifice made by about half a million indentured labourers in the making of Mauritius.

Government is providing all financial and institutional support to the restoration project. I must say that the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is leaving no stone unturned to realise its objectives.

The symbolic launching of the restoration project is highly significant in as much as it marks the beginning of the realisation of the wish of the Government to have the Aapravasi Ghat listed as a World Heritage Site.

May I extend my very best wishes to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and its staff and to all other stakeholders directly or indirectly associated with the project.

Motee Ramdass
Minister

Message

Tribute to Indian Indentured Labourers

No gold did they find
Underneath any stone
They touched and turned.

Yet.....





Every stone they touched,
Into solid gold they turned.

Vishvamisra Ganga "Aashutosh"

Projects and Activities of the Trust

The Aapravasi Ghat Conservation Project

The objectives of the project are to:

-  Preserve and restore the aesthetic and architectural aspects of the Aapravasi Ghat.
-  Establishing and promoting the site as a national, regional and international memorial site.
-  Set up a museum and create public awareness.
-  Apply for World Heritage Site Status.

This is being carried out under the supervision of the ICOMOS team, comprised of Dr. R. C. Agrawal Archaeologist and Secretary of ICOMOS - India, Mr. D. S. Sood Sr. Conservation Engineer and Mr. Munish Pandit Conservation Architect.

Indenture Route Project

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has been entrusted with the task of conceptualising the Indentured Labour Route Project. Mauritius is the largest recipient of indentured labour and the country containing the most historical sources and heritage sites relating to indentured labour. This project aims at creating a greater awareness of the Indentured Diaspora and to encourage better intercultural relations in and within the countries themselves.

Staff member and Archaeologist, Jayshree Mungur is currently conducting a survey of indentured sites in Guadeloupe, Barbados, Trinidad, Guyana and Jamaica.

Oral History Project: *from indenture to vrs*

The aim is to collect the histories of those who have been working on sugar estates and who are now retiring. The AGTF is thus collecting the histories of those who have lived on estate camps, such as that of Mrs. Cathien of Trianon estate.



OTHER INDENTURED SITES

Vagrant Depot

The Vagrant depot is another important site related to indentured labourers. During the indenture period immigrants found guilty of 'petty crimes' or offences were sent to the Depot for imprisonment. The entrance gate of the Vagrant Depot will be restored in the coming months.



Flat Island

Flat Island is situated in the North of Mauritius. During the indenture period the islet was used as a quarantine station for the immigrants suspected of being contaminated with infectious diseases. A few ruins still exist on the island and need to be preserved.

Forbach

Forbach is the site of a former estate. The land was first bought by Joseph Staub in 1812. The sugar mill was established around 1818. Part of the camp for labourers still exists today and needs to be preserved.

Union Vale

Union Vale contains the remains of an estate camp. The barracks are believed to be older than the Trianon Barracks.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

One guiding principle of the Trust is to encourage capacity building of its staff and encourage professionalism. The Research team has been given training in AUTOCAD. An Introductory course in Museology has also started and opened to the public. The Indian Government has given a scholarship for an MA Museology course at the National Museum of India to Vickram Mugon, Research Assistant at AGTF. The labourers working on the site will be trained in restoration techniques by the Conservation Engineer Mr Sood.

Activities

Heritage and Cultural Tourism “... the current buzz phrase in Tourism...”

Tourism is the world's leading industry and what we call heritage and cultural tourism is its fastest-growing segment.

Cultural Heritage Tourism is a multi-faceted and quickly evolving form of tourism. It is being developed both as a primary objective and as a by-product of other activities by a wide variety of players, including economic development projects, travel agencies, educators, international agencies and entrepreneur local development agencies.

Unlike conventional tourism, Cultural Heritage Tourism features historical sites and other cultural attractions that help people learn about our past. It focuses on historical and cultural attractions as well as to have fun while learning about the past. Furthermore, it focuses on historically authentic places that make history come alive, and events that give individuals the opportunity to experience life as is used to be.

The Aapravasi Ghat leads the visitor to historical insight of considerable depth and breadth. It constitutes a work of testimony to our beginning and has achieved significance of exceptional dimension over the years.

Working at AGTF

As young graduates who have first encountered the world of work without any experience we find the work at Aapravasi Ghat most enriching.

We consider ourselves as being lucky in the sense that we are engaged in a project of a pioneering nature. It is indeed the first time ever in the history of our country that such a major conservation work has been undertaken.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the work at the Aapravasi Ghat makes it incomparable. Working here is never boring. Field work deals with excavations on the site, cleaning and cataloguing of artefacts. The historical work is mainly research at the National Archives, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute Archives, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and the National Library. All the information gathered are then inputted into our computerised database.

The work is also intellectually stimulating. We often get

Our past has in fact a brighter future than ever.

Mauritius is very rich in underdeveloped heritage assets which could be marketed to domestic and foreign visitors. It is just a question of competence and priority.

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Cultural heritage tourism product can include any of the following:

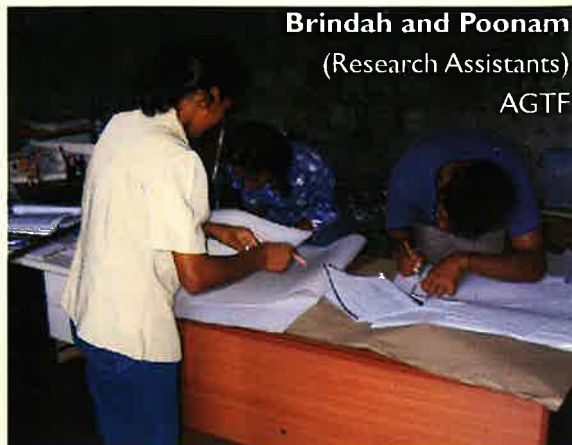
- ✍ Built structures and their surrounds,
- ✍ Cultural landscape
- ✍ Ruins and archaeological sites,
- ✍ Sites of important events
- ✍ Commemoration sites,
- ✍ Significant relics, objects, artefacts,
- ✍ Heritage tours, trails, festivals, etc

The cultural heritage components helps development of new niche areas of tourism and new destinations hitherto unexploited and unknown.

Premilal Mahadeo

the chance of attending lectures not only restricted to History but also extending from architecture to such scientific topics as archaeozoology and GIS. Such opportunities open up new avenues in the sense that we have contacts with different fields of knowledge. We really feel privileged of being part of the Conservation Project.

Brindah and Poonam
(Research Assistants)
AGTF



Articles

Conservation of Aapravasi Ghat Site

Since this is the first newsletter by AGTF and the Trust has taken-up Architectural Conservation Project of the Aapravasi Ghat, which is first of its kind in the country. Being the conservation Architect for the project I would like to take the opportunity to introduce and share the concept and process of conservation which we (a multidisciplinary team of professionals) will be applying in the conservation of this project.

As defined "The objective of conservation is to prolong the life of cultural heritage and, if possible, to clarify the artistic and historical messages therein without the loss of authenticity and meaning. Conservation is a cultural, artistic, technical and craft activity based on humanistic and scientific studies and systematic research. Conservation must respect the cultural context."

It is internationally accepted that the conservation of a monument does not only imply to the monument/site but also aims to ensure to retain the setting and ambiance of the surroundings also as close as possible to the period it belongs.

Since many years historical research on the site or the theme of indentured labourers was undertaken by several individuals and department in the country. The scientific process of exploring, investigating, recording and documentation of the site along with research and compilation of its history with intentions of conservation of the site initiated about a year back jointly by AGTF and ICOMOS India.

As far as Aapravasi Ghat site is concerned our intentions are to conserve, retain and reveal the aesthetic and historic values of the site and interventions are based with respect to original materials used and authentic documents available. Reconstruction of site based on conjecture is not our intention. Any extra work which is indispensable (if required to ensure safety of the structure or visitor or to prolong the life of site) will be undertaken and will be distinct from the original architectural composition and will be done in a contemporary manner. The conservation process precedes and follows an archaeological and historical study of the site.

The site has evolved over a long period of time, but based on the authentic information available and considering the most important period in the history of the site the consensus of the multidisciplinary team involved in the project is to reveal the elements and character of the site during 1860 to 1865. This was the time when then called immigration depot took new outlook and remodelled to accommodate record increase in the immigrants at the depot. The archaeological excavation also has revealed many elements constructed during that time and will be consolidated and preserved for the posterity. A

special emphasis has been given to understand and document the history of the site prior and after the 1860s period. During the process of the conservation attempt will be made not to destroy or modify any known feature of the site which is prior or later to the period and hold any significant value to the site.

It is intended that for the better interpretation and understanding of the visitor, an interpretation centre will be developed in the neighbouring old warehouses which will be restored and reused for the purpose as these two warehouses are also historic and are contemporary to site.

All efforts are being made to ensure that during the process of conservation guidelines for the conservation work laid down in the various charters of ICOMOS are respected. The proposed conservation proposal has been made public for any comments and contributions by locals and the intellectual community of Mauritius and abroad so that necessary modifications (if necessary) can be made before executing the proposal.



Munish Pandit
(Conservation Architect)
ICOMOS India

Original stone drain found
under the newly laid concrete
floor

The wreck of the Randolph

When the Randolph left Madras on 28 May 1851 for London via Mauritius none could foresee this to be its last voyage. Belonging to Messrs. Dunbar and Sons, it had a full cargo consisting of 600 tons of Sugar, 80 tons of Rice, 30 tons of Rum, 20 tons of Sapin Wood.(1). The passengers on board include Lieutenants Scott of the Madras Army and Holland and many Indian Immigrants, the exact number being uncertain : 270, according to The Commercial Gazette of 27 June, Le Mauricien and La Sentinelle of 30 June and 254 according to Le Cernéen of 28 June 1851. The Commercial Gazette will complicate the matter by stating in its issue of 11 July that the Randolph was carrying 278 Indian Immigrants on board. The same information will appear in the first issue of The Overland Commercial Gazette of 23 July 1851.

The complete crew of the Randolph was unfortunately nowhere mentioned in the press, the only available source of information ... Only the names of the following members of the crew appeared in the various detached press reports : Captain Dale, Captain of the ship, Mr. Scott, the First Officer, Mr. Samuel Bishop Sheard, Second Officer, Mr. Stribley, the Third Officer, Dr. Parke, Mr. Thomas Childs and Mr. Peter Atkins (seamen).

Only The Commercial Gazette, in its issue of Friday 11 July 1851, gave a full description of the wreck of the Randolph which took place in the night of 25 June 1851, on the reef to the North of Ile d'Ambre. The paper wrote that Mr. Thomas Childs and Mr. Peter Atkins (seamen), Lieutenant Scott, one of the passengers

were drowned as well as 19 Indian Immigrants (5 men, 10 women and 4 children), without however mentioning their names. But, at a special Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce held on 5 July 1851, during the course of the debate for the erection of a Lighthouse, it was reported that 27 Indian Immigrants on board of the Randolph perished during the wreck. This happened to be the first reported case of Indian Immigrants having drowned on our coast.(2).

Only very little was saved from the wreck. After several postponements, the sale by Auction of the wreck of the Randolph definitely took place on Friday 4 July 1851. According to The Commercial Gazette of 11 July 1851, 2374 dollars were obtained from the sale.

The steamer Lord Fitzroy Somerset, under the command of Captain Harper, which left the harbour in the morning of 26 June 1851, at the request of the Port Office, immediately after having been informed of the wreck, returned at 9.30 p.m. with 47 Indian Immigrants and Mr. Sheard.(3).

179 men, 20 women and 7 children had landed at Mapou according to The Commercial Gazette of 30 June 1851.

If only access could be given to the Civil Status Documents, at least some among those having perished during the wreck could be known.

Ally H. Orjoon
(Historian)

- (1) The Commercial Gazette No 354 - 11 July 1851
(2) The Commercial Gazette No 360 - 18 July 1851
(3) La Sentinelle de Maurice No 1218 - 30 June 1851

Authenticity of Materials in Conservation

The materials which we intend to use for the restoration process are similar to the one used in the original construction. As revealed by historical research and evidence available at site, the basic materials used in the construction were local stone, lime mortar and renders, and teak wood for roofing and doors and windows. As per the records two of the surviving rooms (surgery and ward) were provided with wooden flooring and wooden false ceiling. During the restoration process lime mortar and renders will be used (with compositions as close as possible to the original) using traditional methods and techniques for the masonry pointing and plastering purpose. Teak wood will be used for

the purpose of roofing and doors, windows etc. Design of door/windows and roof truss will be reproduced as it was originally made at site. During the investigations original levels of floors and roof were discovered and will be maintained in the process. All efforts are being made to ensure that the interventions done during the process of conservation will be reversible and will not adversely affect the original built fabric or materials. The key source for the design of doors, window and roof truss are available detailed drawings of the complex made for the execution for this site during 1864-65.

D.S. Sood
(Senior Conservation Engineer)
ICOMOS India

Distinguished Visitors to the Site



The Aapravasi Ghat regularly receives visitors from all corners of the globe. Mrs Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, visited the Aapravasi Ghat in 1970.

Events

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has the responsibility of organising the National Commemoration of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers on November 2nd.

The 168th anniversary of the arrival of Indentured Labourers was commemorated on November 2, 2002. The theme of the commemoration was 'Reconstructing our History'. Indentured History was represented through a multimedia presentation entitled 'Restoration of the Aapravasi Ghat'. conceived by Archaeologist Amitava Chowdhury. In addition, an exhibition on indentured heritage by five artists and sculptors namely Mala Chummun-Ramyead, Nalini Treebhoobun, Devanan Bungshee, Chayetan Seebaluck and Nirmal Hurny. was organised.

The 169th national commemoration in 2003 started with a commemorative song entitled 'Ode to the Indentured Labourer' written and translated by Suchita Ramdin. The song was followed by a drama by the Ministry of Arts and Culture, Drama section, entitled 'Glimpses on the Arrival of Indentured Labourers'.

A professional Mauritian photographer and film-maker, Atman Ramchalaon, who lives in the Netherlands held exhibiton entitled 'Anjorpur ki Laxmi' ('light from Anjorpur') and 'Masooms' (The innocents). The Museum Council also lent their Immigration Exhibition for the regional activities.



The Director General of UNESCO, His Excellency Mr K. Matsuura visited the site on the 17 February 2002.

Lectures and Collaborations

Mr. Munish Pandit Restoration Architect gave two lectures at the University of Mauritius titled 'Architectural Restoration' and 'Heritage Management of Historical sites'.

Visiting faunal expert from India, Dr Pramod Prabhakar Joglekar, analysed the bone remains that have been collected during the excavations. He gave two lectures, organized jointly with the Mauritius Institute, entitled 'Faunal remains from the site of Sanjan, District Valshad Gujarat in the medieval period' and the second organized in collaboration with the University of Mauritius, was entitled 'Geographical Information System in Archaeology'.

Mr. Amit Mishra, Researcher at Jawaharlal Nehru University undertook research work in India on behalf of the AGTF and will publish a Guide to Sources on Indenture in the Indian Archives.

Dr Claire Anderson from the University of Leicester is collaborating with AGTF on a publication on Vagrants and Convicts in Grande Riviere Nord Ouest.

Events

“All factors considered and for the following 4 reasons, I would recommend that 2 November be proclaimed a public holiday to commemorate and celebrate the arrival of coolies and their contribution in the making of our country's history and the role played by those who opposed and helped to bring an end the indenture labour system”.

-Paul Berenger

Then Chairperson of the Committee to Commemorate the Making of our History by the Slaves and Coolies / Indentured Labourers

About the Trust

The decisions to establish the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund was taken following the recommendations of the subcommittee chaired by Deoram Santokhee, Advisor to then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Mr. Paul Berenger in June 2001.

The proposed legislation was voted by legislative assembly on December 18, 2001. The Act came in to an operation in July 2002.

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Miss. C. Francois	Research Assistant
Miss. P. Bhaugerothee	Research Assistant
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