



EDITORIAL

12 July 2006, the day the World Heritage Committee inscribed Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage Register will remain as one of the most significant moments in our short history. Not only is this the first World Heritage Site in the Mascarenes Islands, but it is the first time that the history of indentured labour, as it existed in the mid-nineteenth century, has received international recognition as a major phase in world history. The migration of indentured labour immigrants at this time is particularly significant given that it came when the British Government had abolished the slave trade and slavery and claimed glory for such humanitarian actions. Indentured labour migration to Mauritius and other British colonies showed however that the importation of servile, coercible labour did not end in the British colonies after 1833. As one well-wisher has put it, our great-grandparents are probably looking down upon us today, 2 November 2006 and sharing with us today the satisfaction that their history has finally been recognised by the international community.

The success of this inscription is the result of several years of hard work. It is also the result of the perseverance against all odds, some of which were entirely unpredictable. We, at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, were not prepared for the onslaught from certain forces who did not want this inscription. But the battle was well worth it for it has made the Trust Fund stronger than ever. Although we have always received the support of those in the highest positions of Government and also of those at the very bottom of the social and economic ladder, the same cannot be said of those 'in the middle!' Many people appreciate that we are conserving our heritage before it is all destroyed by commercial projects. People 'feel something' when they walk near the stone walls and up the steps of the Aapravasi Ghat: can this be quantified? Indeed, no price can be placed on this. It is clear however that we have a long way to go before those who put a price on everything, can be convinced to support heritage conservation. At AGTF, we will continue to focus all our energies in preparing a memorable visitor welcome for all those who wish to share the indentured experience with us.

Part of this work will include the preparation of an international seminar on the Indentured Labour Route for next November 2007. This theme has already been adopted by UNESCO and we hope to bring together, same time next year, representatives from the different countries where indentured labour migration took place. We will also be working on the Indentured Route within Mauritius and preparing a second site for nomination in this Indentured Labour Route: the Vagrant Depot. Future sites will include the quarantine stations located at Flat and Gabriel Islands which will be linked with the quarantine stations existing in Réunion at Grande Chaloupe, in Durban, South Africa, Nakalau Island in Fiji, and Nelson Island in Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Vijayalakshmi Teelock
Chairperson
2 November 2006

The Mauritian Delegation at the 30th Session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania on 12th July 2006



Historic visit of His Excellency A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of the Republic of India, to Aapravasi Ghat on 13th March 2006



Souvenir Photo of the Indian President with the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board Members and Staff (AGTF Collection)

"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."

-13th March 2006

His Excellency A.P.J. Abdul Kalam,
President of the Republic of India

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Office of The President
STATE HOUSE, MAURITIUS

Message from the President of the Republic



I am very pleased to send you a message on the 172nd anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

Aapravasi Ghat is a memorable symbol of the Mauritian identity and its recognition as a world heritage site by UNESCO had added universal historical value to it. Nearly half a million immigrants arrived in the 19th century to work as Indentured Labourers and today we take pride that we descendants still have their monument reminding us of our origins, the struggle of our ancestors and their sacrifices in the economic and social development of the country.

The renovation and restoration of the Aapravasi Ghat as a world heritage site will attract visitors from various countries. This will be an opportunity to show the visitors the hardship endured by the labourers and the lamentable conditions in which they were called upon to travel and stay before being distributed to a sugar estate. As President of the Republic, I feel that this landing place of immigrants should serve as a 'memoire' to strengthen our national unity, preserve our cultural values and be an inspiration to work harder to achieve stability and prosperity in the country.

I wish the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund full success in its mission to promote the site as a national, regional and international memorial site.

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

18 October 2006

PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE



*Prime Minister
Republic of Mauritius*



It gives me great pleasure to associate myself with the issue of a publication to mark the 172nd anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured labourers in Mauritius and the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on UNESCO's register of World Heritage Sites.

The Aapravasi Ghat is not merely a historical monument, it has an immediacy and relevance to our daily lives, to our families and to our country. My own grandfather Moheeth passed through its portals in 1871 and was registered as coolie number 353639.

The inscription on the World Heritage Site will ensure that this site will be preserved and consecrated. While it is fitting and proper that we preserve this site and edifice that stands thereon, it behoves us to honour the pioneering spirit, the courage and the grit of our forebears by perpetuating these virtues in our lives.

I would like to place on record my appreciation of the commendable work of the Chairperson, members and staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board. I would like to pay a special homage to the late Bickramsing Ramlallah for salvaging the Ghat from dereliction and oblivion. The Board assumed a weighty responsibility when they took the relay from him. I am happy they have been worthy of this previous legacy.

Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam,
Prime Minister

12 October 2006

MESSAGE OF THE MINISTER OF ARTS AND CULTURE

It is indeed a privilege for me to present this message on the occasion of the commemoration of the 172nd Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius and the celebration of the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List.

The Aapravasi Ghat Site is an important symbol of Mauritian identity since the ancestors of more than 70% of the present day population arrived on the island through this 'immigration depot'. In 1987, it was decreed a national monument and soon after, its name was changed from Coolie Ghat to Aapravasi Ghat.

It is a matter of great pride for the Mauritian nation that the Aapravasi Ghat has been inscribed on the list of World Heritage Sites at the 30th meeting of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee held in July 2006 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The Aapravasi Ghat now belongs not only to Mauritians, but to the whole of humanity. Aapravasi Ghat is the first ever site in Mauritius to gain international recognition as a World Heritage Site due to its outstanding universal value. This is a tremendous accomplishment for Mauritius.

The inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site will definitely be a plus to the Mauritian economic sector as it will boost up tourist arrivals to our island, increase the flow of tourists to the Aapravasi Ghat site and promote cultural tourism.

The conservation project implemented at the Aapravasi Ghat has restored the site to its initial state. A real homage is thus paid to the memory of those labourers who made this unknown island their second motherland and laid the foundation of its economic development with their sweat and toil.

Now that the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat has been achieved, my Ministry will leave no stone unturned for the inscription of Le Morne on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

To conclude, I wish to thank and convey my best wishes to the Chairperson, members and staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund on the occasion of the issue of this Newsletter.

The Hon M. Gowressoo
Minister of Arts and Culture

AAPRAVASI GHAT DEEP DOWN TRIBUTE

How can one gaze at the Aapravasi Ghat without feeling the eyes of the unseen stars, over your body and penetrating your deepest down?

How?

I don't know....

I feel the pain

I feel the strain

not hundreds

not thousands

but millions...

Exaggeration! Not the least!

Swindled dreams...

Tainted nightmares...

Day light robbery...

Only Indian Ocean has the power to capture yester trauma

Yes! That's why despite her corrupt colour mother, Ocean talks to me...

Mother whispers to me

MA calls for action....

No time to rest...

slaved hard

hard talk

talk zero

zero gratitude

Can we forget?

There is nothing to remember...

MA! Tell me the name of the butcher who leaves traces behind him?

Tell me why it is empty!

Tell me why!

Why sweat?

Why blood?

Why still birth?

Why empty deaths?

Inscription we fought, on YEAH!

Prescription NAY!

No script for memories

No tales for conscience

only Today

for Yesterday

as Tomorrow is ebbing ... slowly away from minds and hearts!

Hon. Rama Valayden,
Attorney-General,
Minister of Justice & Human Rights

Message of the Chairperson of the National Heritage Fund

The National Heritage Fund (NHF) has great pleasure to associate itself with the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) for the national commemoration of the Arrival of the Indentured Immigrants in Mauritius, especially in the context of the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List since July 2006.

It is with much emotion that the NHF looks forward to the commemoration of the 2nd November this year, as it will mark the Inscription of the site as World Heritage, thus paying tribute to the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who left voluntarily or were made to leave their native lands in order to contract out their labour under what was termed as "A New System of Slavery".

The NHF hopes that the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat will pave the way for the acknowledgement and inscription of other Mauritian Heritage Sites on the World Heritage List and establish Mauritius on the cultural map of the world.

On this occasion, the Fund also wishes to send its blessings to the AGTF in the successful fulfilment of its aims and objectives and in providing Mauritian citizens as well as those of the world with a sense of pride pertaining to their heritage. Let this be also an opportunity for the NHF to congratulate all those who have contributed in preserving and making this site available to the public and to continue with the excellent work that has been undertaken.

Diana Bablee
Chairperson



Photos of Indentured Labourers (MGI Immigration Archives)

The Inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List of UNESCO

AGTF Research Unit



The AGTF Board Members and Staff with the Members of the Mauritian Delegation at SSR Airport Upon their Arrival from Vilnius, Lithuania - (AGTF Collection/Photo by R. Soobaroyen)

On 12 July 2006, through Decision 30COM 8B.33, the Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO at the 30th Session of the World Heritage Committee meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion (vi) which states:

"to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding

universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria).

The inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List was accepted because: *"it is the first site chosen by the British Government during the mid-nineteenth century for the 'Great Experiment' in the use of indenture after slave labour. This site hallowed by the steps and impregnated with memories, is the mute yet eloquent witness of the saga of almost half a million indentured labourers hailing from India, East Africa, Madagascar, China and South East Asia, recruited to work on the sugar cane plantations of Mauritius."*

The World Heritage Committee also recommended that the Republic of Mauritius as well as other interested parties should:

"Undertake research on indentured labour to consider the extent, scope and impact of indentured labour Diaspora around the world;"
"Consider the possibility of inscribing the Aapravasi Ghat archives for the UNESCO Memory of the World Register."

On 2nd November 2006, in the context of the 172nd anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers, the official unveiling of the plaque 'Aapravasi Ghat, World Heritage Site' will take place at the Aapravasi Ghat site in Port Louis.



(Source: Basic Texts of the 1972 World Heritage Convention: 2005 Edition (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, France, 2005))

The Significance of the World Heritage Emblem

UNESCO's 'Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention' highlights in detail the significance of the World Heritage Emblem which is bestowed on each site which is inscribed on the World Heritage List:

"At its second session, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, adopted the World Heritage Emblem, which had been designed by Mr. Michel Olyoff. This Emblem symbolizes the interdependence of cultural and natural properties: the central square is a form created by man and the circle represents nature, the two being intimately linked. The Emblem is round, like the world, but at the same time it is a symbol of protection. It symbolizes the Convention, signifies the adherence of States Parties to the Convention, and serves to identify properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. It is associated with public knowledge about the Convention and is the imprimatur of the Convention's credibility and prestige. Above all, it is a representation of the universal values for which the Convention stands."

The Activities in the Context of 2nd November 2006

Indira Gyaram

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is organising regional activities in former sugar estates camps where sugarcane workers once lived such as at Forbach, Union Vale, Constance la Gaiete and Trianon.

Each of the rural regional activities consists of the following :

1. A photo exhibition which profiles the history of the sugar estates and estate camps
2. Oral Testimonies of individuals who once lived in the sugar estate camps
3. A cultural programme to depict the preservation

of cultural values on the descendants of indentured labourers in Mauritius

4. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute will also be launching a brochure entitled 'Tracing Your Roots'. The objective of this publication is to help Mauritians, especially those descendants of indentured labourers, to retrace their ancestors.

On 27th October 2006, an exhibition entitled 'From Captivity to Freedom: A History of the Liberated Africans Associated with the Aapravasi Ghat during the Nineteenth Century' was held at the Port Louis Municipal Theatre. In addition, a booklet on the life and experience of the Liberated Africans was also launched. This highly successful activity was undertaken by AGTF in order to pay homage to all the Liberated Africans who passed through the Aapravasi Ghat between 1856 and 1869.

Beekrumsing Ramlallah: A Man of Principles

Simla Ramlagan

To commemorate the 172nd anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius and the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage Site List, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is launching a book on the life of Beekrumsing Ramlallah entitled *Beekrumsing Ramlallah: A Man of Principles*. This book is a compilation of the life history of Beekrumsing Ramlallah, a social worker, a politician, a militant journalist and above all a man of vision whose determination and efforts to preserve the Coolie Ghat between the 1970s and 1990s bore its fruits on 12 July 2006 when the Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed in the World Heritage List.

Synopsis

B. Ramlallah, born on 2 September 1915 at Montagne Longue, started his career as a primary school teacher in 1937. Being a fervent believer and disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, he was always at the service of the poor and the downtrodden. His motto was "LIVE AND HELP LIVE".

In 1946, Beekrumsing Ramlallah founded the Nalanda bookshop and he set up the first English-language newspaper of the island, *The Mauritius Times*, on 14 August 1954. He also set up the Nalanda Press Service in the same year. Beekrumsing Ramlallah kept on working at the *Mauritius Times* till the age of 80.

Beekrumsing Ramlallah was involved in the political life of the island since 1948. He became a member of the legislative assembly and served as Parliamentary Secretary from 1959 to 1976.

Beekrumsing Ramlallah was probably the first person to attach considerable historical and sentimental value to Aapravasi Ghat, which was known as Coolie Ghat. As from the 1960s, Beekrumsing Ramlallah and his family honored the memory of the indentured labourers by celebrating a religious ceremony, a yaj, at the site.



Portrait of the Late
Beekrumsing Ramlallah by D. Reetoo
(AGTF Collection)

Through his relentless efforts and unwavering determination, Beekrumsing Ramlallah succeeded to bring Shrimati Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India to visit the Coolie Ghat in June 1970. This was an opportunity for him to underline the existence of the site and its historical value.

In the year 1970s, Beekrumsing Ramlallah led intensive campaigns for the recognition of the site and for the preservation of the documents, registers, portraits etc found in the former Office of the Protector of Immigrants. He convinced the government to transfer the documents to the National Archives. These campaigns created a heritage consciousness and paved the way for heritage conservation. The history of Aapravasi Ghat as well as that of Mauritius would be incomplete without the recognition of the achievements of Beekrumsing Ramlallah.

Beekrumsing Ramlallah passed away on 12 September 2000 at the age of 85. This book focuses on the multifaceted personality of *Beekrumsing Ramlallah: A Man of Principles* and a source of inspiration for the generations to come.

A Regional Activity by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

Buruth Dinand, AGTF Board Member

An exhibition was held on 12th September 2006 at Universal College, Riviere du Rempart. A ceremony was organized by the school on that day to mark the 45th anniversary of its existence. Exhibits from Aapravasi Ghat focusing on the arrival of indentured labourers in 1834 to Mauritius were visited by 1700 students and 120 teaching and non-teaching staff of the school on that day. Most of the students come from Plaine des Roches, Roches-Noires, Belle Vue Maurel, Piton, Mapou, Poudre d'Or Hamlet and Cottage. A random sample of these students who were surveyed said that they had not visited the Aapravasi Ghat.

The age range of these youngsters is between 11 and 18 years. They were sensitized on the hardships endured by their forefathers before and after their arrival in Mauritius. This inspired a few students to participate in the poem, drawing and painting competitions which were organized by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for students of Forms Four, Five and Six. Many students and teachers bought the books on sale namely 'Aapravasi Ghat-Past & Present' and 'Vagrant Depot'. Furthermore, past AGTF newsletters were freely distributed.

The Aapravasi Ghat site, which has been recently inscribed as a World Heritage List, should not only remain as a site to be visited, but also should be made more lively and inspire Mauritians participate in activities like the ones mentioned above. The on-the-spot drawing and painting competition held recently was a success and in the future, a similar competition open to the general public on the site itself, will be organized.

AAPRAVASI GHAT - ASSOCIATED INTANGIBLE VALUES

Simla Ramlagan

Although a site has physical dimension, it is often the values associated with the site that hold great significance. Intangible values are harder to recognize or measured compared to tangible heritage values, but intangibles occupy a considerable part of the total set of values of a heritage. Taking the Aapravasi Ghat site for example, the tangible heritage value of the whole immigration depot comprises only one fifth of what existed in 1865, but still the intangible heritage values associated with it makes it worth preserving.

Thus, in view to look at the cultural significance and to



The Aapravasi Ghat during the 1970s (AGTF Collection)

obtain the intangible aspects of the values associated with the Aapravasi Ghat; the Oral History/Oral tradition Unit of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund had carried out interviews with the Mauritian population during the months of April and May 2006. These 1-3 minutes interviews based on opinion about Aapravasi Ghat had been carried out with different categories of people all around the island, namely:

- Staff and workers of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.
- The intellectual class from the MIE, UoM and MGI
- Trade Union members
- White collar & Blue collar jobs people in Port Louis
- Businessmen
- Students from the UoM and the MIE
- General public in Port Louis

The main objective of the interview was to obtain multiple views from different perspectives, namely from the aesthetic, historic, scientific, scientific and social point of views.

I AESTHETIC VALUES

Aapravasi Ghat is one among the very many buildings in Port Louis which convey particular aesthetic values with its colonial style and craftsmanship. Associated with many buildings in Port Louis (Military hospital, General Post-office, Customs House, Windmill, Granary, Central Market, Jumma Mosque, Trou Fanfaron Police station,...),

Aapravasi Ghat still reveals the beauty and the enrichments of the 18th and the 19th Century architecture. It holds an important place in the history of modern heritage conservation in Mauritius.

II. HISTORIC VALUES

The Historic value associated with Aapravasi Ghat is that on an international scale, it is an important part of the British colonization indenture-labour system. It relates to the nation's indentured labour history. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the only immigration depot in all the whole colonial world which is surviving and is best preserved. It is also connected with socio-economic development as the place has always been important for economic activity and work. It has also to a second gateway: China town: an evidence of a welfare institution and it has also paved the way for a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society.

III SCIENTIFIC VALUES

Aapravasi Ghat is currently working with and training young researchers for the development of a research culture. Research is multidisciplinary: history, ethnography, anthropology, oral tradition/oral history, architecture, archeology... Each research work or report is giving scope for new discoveries, new research projects and thus channeling the young generations towards the preservation of their heritage.

IV. SOCIAL VALUES

Aapravasi Ghat is a symbol of the agricultural past of Mauritius. It is a symbol of the role of indentured labourers in Mauritius. It is an important local landmark tracing the family history of its descendance. It holds an important place in the history of modern heritage conservation in Mauritius. Usually no value is attached to a port but people attach an emotional value to the Aapravasi Ghat as a port of disembarkation. It represents the separation from the homeland, solitude, fear, loneliness in a new country. It represents the transmission of values of ancestors: harmony, peace and respect for others. It represents the preservation of one's identity in any condition; the preservation of one's culture and spiritual values in difficult conditions.

Thus Aapravasi Ghat is a place of great cultural significance. It must be conserved for present and future generations.

According to the Burra Charter - The Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance 1999, it is stated that:

"do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained."

(Burra Charter 1999)

Visit of Mr.Armoogum Parsuramen On 17th July 2006 at the Aapravasi Ghat site



Mr. Parsuramen Viewing A Commemorative Plaque at the Aapravasi Ghat (AGTF Collection)



Mr. Parsuramen Signing the AGTF Visitors' Book (AGTF Collection)

"I am very happy to visit the Aapravasi Ghat after the historic inscription of the site on the World Heritage List. This inscription is a just tribute to our forefathers who landed on this site and made Mauritius what it is today.

I wish all success to make the site a living memory for all generations."

Mr.Armoogum Parsuramen
Secretary, UNESCO Executive Board, Paris

Two years at the National Museum Institute, National Museum, New Delhi, India

Vickram Mugon

In July 2004, as I left for the Airport I was both thrilled and anxious. Thrilled at the idea of discovering a new place, new people and a new country, the country of my ancestors, India....Worried, I was of the unknown.

"Be prepared for hustling and bustling crowds" was I told. New Delhi was deserted on that Sunday morning. As I passed by the National Museum on that day, I could not help but be impressed. The red and yellow sandstone building was almost shining in the hot sun. The National Museum, Institute, New Delhi It was the place where I was going to take classes in Museology for the next two years.

The next day would be the first History of Art class. "Sattvahanas, Kushanas, Kanishka..."

Everything was esoteric. I believe I had an excuse. It must have been the flight However; this class would soon take me into a world of fascination; where Indian art, traditions, culture and society blend into a wonder. Museology being a multi disciplinary subject was an opportunity not only to discover fields of study but also to meet people of different backgrounds, thinking and views. A workshop to make street

children discover the museum was probably one of these most memorable occasions. The smile and joy with which these children left the museum was not only very self-satisfying but also convincing about the social role that museums were called upon to play in society.



Students at the National Museum Institute with Vickram Mugon

Museology in India was also the opportunity to meet very remarkable people. Mr. D.C Bhattacharya was definitely one of these unforgettable persons who marks one all life long. Though this senior museologist has now lost his eye sight, his vision remains ever young and probing. Moreover memories of India and particularly studies in National museum Institute are too many to recount in these few lines. Each and every one was a pleasant learning experience.

THE VAGRANTS DATABASE PROJECT

Satyendra Peerthum

The Vagrants Database Project

In 2006 and in the context of the Vagrant Depot Conservation Project-Phase I, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund embarked on a project entitled the Vagrants Database Project at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute Immigration Archives. The objective of this project is to study the experience of thousands of vagrants who were incarcerated at the Vagrant Depot of Grand River North West as well as at the other rural depots between 1870 and 1910. The database concerns the vagrants exclusively and will improve our understanding of these indentured and ex-indentured labourers. At the same time, a lot of emphasis will be placed on vagrant case-studies.

The Vagrants Database Project tries to shift attention away from



Picture of Choonee, a Vagrant (MGI Immigration Archives)

the structural history and establishment of the Vagrant Depot as well as the vagrancy laws to focusing mainly on the lives of the vagrants. This has been a largely neglected theme of modern Mauritian historiography. Furthermore the project aims at thoroughly analyzing all the relevant information from the PH series which consists of ten volumes. This project also seeks to study vagrancy patterns in rural Mauritius between 1870 and 1910. The bio-data of each vagrant is being entered into a vagrant datasheet. This information will gradually be placed in a vagrants database which will store

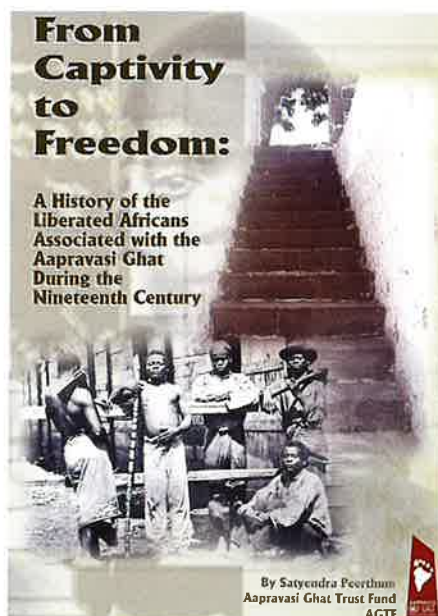
detailed information on all the vagrants located in the PH series as well as a picture of the vagrant. It will be the first time that an in-depth study of the experience as well as a detailed quantitative analysis of this important segment of the indentured labourers will be undertaken by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

From Captivity to Freedom:

A History of the Liberated Africans Associated with the Aapravasi Ghat During the 19th Century

Satyendra Peerthum

Almost a generation before the abolition of British colonial slavery and the beginning of large scale introduction of indentured labourers into Mauritius, the imperial government of Great Britain passed The Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807, which outlawed the importation of slaves into its overseas colonies. In March 1808, an Order-in-Council was passed by King George III, with the approval of the British Parliament, which stipulated that Africans or negroes who were seized on slave ships by the British Navy would be forfeited to the British Crown. The Africans, who were captured on these slave vessels by the naval forces of Great Britain were called 'Liberated Africans' and were also known by other names such as 'Prize Negroes', 'Prize Slaves', 'Government Apprentices', 'Government Blacks', and 'African Recaptives'. During the 19th century, the majority of the Liberated Africans came from Madagascar, Mozambique, other parts of East Africa and the Comoro Islands.



Booklet on the Liberated Africans Associated with the Aapravasi Ghat (AGTF Collection)

THE LIBERATED AFRICANS LANDED AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT

Between 1856 and 1869, hundreds of Liberated Africans were landed in Port Louis harbour and the majority of them were kept for 48 hours at the Aapravasi Ghat. Between January 1856 and October 1869, or over a period of almost 14 years, 2365 Liberated Africans were brought to the Aapravasi Ghat where they were processed and allocated to various private employers by the Protector of Immigrants. During their brief stay at the Aapravasi Ghat, most of these Liberated Africans walked up the site's famous steps and passed through its main entrance gateway, as they began their new life in Mauritius as "indentured African and Malagasy labourers".

THE ALLOCATION OF THE LIBERATED AFRICANS

Ordinance No.18 of 1865 officially legalized the role of the Protector of Immigrants as well as the Immigration Depot in the allocation process of the Liberated Africans in Mauritius. Article 5 provided for the maintenance of the Liberated Africans at the Immigration Depot, or Aapravasi Ghat, under the superintendence of the Protector of Immigrants from the time of their arrival in Mauritius until their allocation to their employers.

During the 1850s and 1860s, the immigration registers indicate that 40% of the Liberated Africans males were employed as servants, with 30% as semi-skilled and skilled artisans, and 30% as labourers on rural sugar estates and in Port Louis. Around 90% of Liberated African females were employed as servants and 10% employed as dress makers. It is interesting to note that between 1856 and 1869, the majority of the Liberated Africans were not employed as field labourers on sugar estates, but as servants and they worked for private companies and wealthy individuals.



His Lordship Hon. R. Issack, the Mayor of Port Louis, and His Excellency Mr. Bruno Ranarivelo, the Ambassador of Madagascar to Mauritius, Viewing the Liberated Africans Exhibition at Port Louis Municipal Theatre in October 2006 (AGTF Collection)

The Vagrant Depot Event of 2nd March 2006

Satyendra Peerthum

On 2nd March 2006, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) organized an 'On-The-Spot-Painting Competition' and a Power Point Presentation at the Vagrant Depot of Grand River North West. These activities were undertaken in the context of the 162nd anniversary of the opening of the Vagrant Depot on 23rd February 1864 as well as to mark the one year anniversary of the launching of the Vagrant Depot Conservation Project-Phase I.



Power-Point Presentation of the Vagrant Depot to School Children in March 2006 (AGTF Collection)

Twenty-eight students from the New La Tour Koenig Government School, the Old La Tour Koenig Government School and the Pointe aux Sables Government School were invited to the Vagrant Depot activity. One of the major objectives of AGTF was to foster a greater sense of awareness of the historical and heritage value of the Vagrant Depot and its surroundings specially among school children from neighboring schools. Therefore, just before the 'On-The-Spot-Painting-Competition' got underway, the school children were invited to a guided tour of the Vagrant Depot site by members of the AGTF research team. Shortly after, a power point presentation was made on the history of the Vagrant Depot and of the national monuments located in its surroundings such as La Tour Koenig, the Old Civil Hospital of Grand River North West, the Old Flour and Corn Mill, Donjon Saint Louis, and the Old Grand River North West Bridge.

It should be noted that the commemoration of the opening of the Vagrant Depot as a colonial prison in 1864 has become one of the important annual activities of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.



The Entrance Gateway and Guard Room of the Vagrant Depot of Grand River North West (AGTF Collection)

THE AAPRAVAVIS : A MEMORY

*The waves have washed the footprints of the
Aapravasis who travelled
From the sacred land of Ayodya Cholas ans
Pandyas*

*But the eternal moans of grief and pain
Mixed with the rythms of the ripples
Spread for beyond the Virgin Island*

*In the silent night
I listened to the lamentations of my ancestors
The Tori ragas that fill my mind with the night
mare*

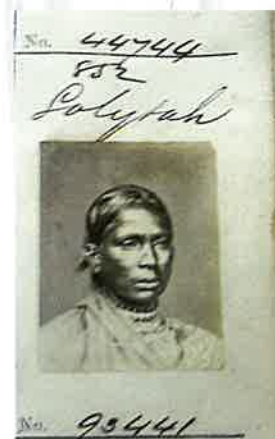
A painful memory of the past

*I longed to reverse the wheel of time
And scoop the drooping head
Of my humiliated great grand father
And also hold the swollen hands
Of my great grand mother*

*My heart swelled with emotions
I cried to be by the side
Of the weak of the poor*

*To fight the wicked oppressors
With unflinching determination
And win the crusade of freedom and peace
It's a dream, a memory born
In as moment of tranquillity*

N. Tiroumalechetty



Picture of Lolytah (Immigrant No. 93441) a Female Indentured Labourer from Northern India who Landed at the Aapravasi Ghat in 1851 (MGI Immigration Archives)

Expedition on Flat Island

Jayshree Mungur Medhi

One of the objectives of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is to "undertake research on indenture system and on sites related to indenture". To accomplish this aim, the AGTF is not only undertaking multi-disciplinary research on the Aapravasi Ghat, but also on other sites which are intimately linked with indenture. One of those sites is Flat Island.

Flat Island is located to the north of Mauritius and during the colonial period, it was used by the British as a quarantine station for indentured immigrants.

In April 2005, the Research Unit of AGTF undertook a non-intrusive archaeological reconnaissance survey with the close collaboration of the National Parks and Conservation Services. During the three days that the team spent on the islet several stone structures were surveyed and mapped. In August 2006, a second expedition took place. This time the team was joined by the National Heritage Fund and volunteers.

The expeditions of 2005 and 2006 proved to be very fruitful. Different interesting features and structures were identified and carefully recorded. Many of the features such as the remains of the hospitals, cemetery and lime kiln were located on historical maps which were obtained from the Mauritius Archives.



Aerial View of the Surviving Stone Structures Located on Flat Island (AGTF Collection)

The islet is a site of great potential and all the surviving structures need to be documented, analyzed and preserved because none of the other quarantine stations of Mauritius have survived. Furthermore, Flat Island forms part of the Indenture Labour Route in Mauritius and which will be linked to other surviving quarantine stations located in other countries such as in Reunion Island, South Africa, Trinidad and Fiji.

AGTF Seminar on Notarial Records with Dr. Richard Allen (7-21 August 2006)

Satyendra Peerthum

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund organized a research seminar which was attended by AGTF researchers, scholars, students from the University of Mauritius and private citizens. The objective was to introduce and familiarize the participants with the richness of the notarial acts in the Mauritius Archives. Different types of notarial acts were examined as well as their function, use, problems and limitations as primary source documents.

The participants were also trained in quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, analytical strategies and approaches, situating notarial acts in appropriate social, economic and political contexts. The seminar also involved a research component where the participants were asked to examine and analyze specific volumes of the notarial acts. Twenty of the participants visited the Mauritius Archives and presented the results of their research work. In his report on the research seminar, Dr. Allen wrote:

"I believe that the seminar achieved its goal of encouraging participants to acquire a much better understanding of the notarial record and how it can be used to reconstruct the social and economic of eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth-century Mauritius."



Dr. Richard Allen with his Seminar Group at the Aapravasi Ghat Office (AGTF Collection)



Photos of Liberated Africans Associated with the Aapravasi Ghat (MGI Immigration Archives)

Heritage Day and Heritage Week at Aapravasi Ghat

Corinne Forest & Vickram Mugon

On Sunday 30 April 2006, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund organised guided visits of the site and of its surroundings in the context of the ICOMOS International Day for Monuments and Sites celebrated every year on 18 April. During the opening ceremony, the Mayor of Port Louis launched the book Aapravasi Ghat and its Surroundings written by Brindah Annasawmy, AGTF historian. The book offers a historical scope of heritage buildings in the buffer zone.

During the World Heritage Day, the AGTF staff conducted

guided visits of the immediate surroundings of the site (Labourdonnais Hospital, Postal Museum, Post Office, Granary) and took visitors for heritage walks in Port Louis to visit the central market, the Jumma Mosque, the Merchant Navy Club thanks to the collaboration of these institutions. This successful experience was renewed during la Semaine du Patrimoine initiated by the Ministry of Tourism and External Communications from 2 to 10 September 2006. Around 3 600 visitors came to Aapravasi Ghat during the heritage week and gave the AGTF a chance to have a feedback from visitors thanks to a visitor survey.

The contribution of the community helps us devise a permanent public programme responding to the expectations of visitors as part of the activities proposed by the future Aapravasi Ghat interpretation centre.

Comments of Visitors to the Aapravasi Ghat during Heritage Week in September 2006

(Comments Collected by the AGTF Research Unit)

"It was very nice and interesting knowing such a place which was still unknown to me."

-Shameerah Oozeer of Vacoas (5th Sept. 2006)

"It is with emotion that I visited this building, it reminds me of my ancestors who set foot here more than a century ago."

-Jagdish Jayram of Moka (6th Sept. 2006)

"Really interesting. You're doing a really good job. This is a place unique in the world and a place where our ancestors stepped down."

-N. Dhoomun of Quatre Bornes (7th Sept. 2006)

"Very interesting visit. Remembrance of my great grand parents while coming here."

-V. Lutchmiah of Port Louis (8th Sept. 2006)

"Need to have frequent visits and inform our generation about our culture and traditions especially in our educational system."

-S. Dussoruth of Rose-Hill (9th Sept. 2006)

"Its a very very beautiful and historical place."

-O. Gooroochurn of Vacoas (9th Sept. 2006)

"It is very interesting and informative. I have learnt a lot about the immigrants in Mauritius."

-M. Khoyrutty of Amoury-Belle Vue Maurel (9th Sept. 2006)

"Very interesting. Emphasis should be laid on the renovation process so that it does not alter the original history of the building."

-K. Ram of Triolet (10th Sept. 2006)

"Very interesting, educative and memorable place. Should really be preserved and renovated."

-V.A. Calleemootoo of Vacoas (10th Sept. 2006)

"A very valuable and historic place. Very interesting."

-Serge Mamoun of Pailles (10th September 2006)

My Working Experience at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

Mrs. Lutchmee. Pydatalli - Heritage Field Guide



Mrs. Pydatalli at AGTF (AGTF Collection)

I joined the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund as field guide (AGTF) in 2005. Before joining I had really very little idea about the Aapravasi Ghat site or of its significance and therefore the need to preserve it.

My understanding of the site grew as I underwent sessions of training in different disciplines. Thus, I was trained in the collection of oral history by Ms Vina Balgobin and Ms S. Ramlagan. I became familiar with the manipulation of recording devices as well as techniques of interview. These interviews were opportunities to interact with different people and descendants of indentured immigrants and to know about their life experiences.

The heritage walks organized by the AGTF on World Heritage Day helped to show the remarkable team spirit. The Semaine du Patrimoine, organized from 2nd to 10th September by the MTPA and to which the AGTF participated, was a further opportunity to meet and share this World Heritage Site with people from different parts of the island.

Today I am happy and proud to be part of the AGTF team: a team which is working hard to preserve the memories of our ancestors alive. For this I am grateful to the whole team of AGTF and especially to the very supportive chairperson, Mrs. Teelock.

हमनी के भाई बहिन से इ प्रार्थना बा कि भोजपुरी के जिआके रखऽ । एकर में तोहर भलाई औरू कल्याण बा । आवे होला जेनेरेशन के साथ भी भोजपुरी बोलऽ । ओके ललक दऽ ।

दिन के भूलल रात के लौट आय तऽ ओके भूला ना बोलल जाला । एक जना से बजार ना लगेला । भोजपुरी सरल, शान्ति आनेहोली, एकता लानेहोली, मधु औरू मिश्री के समान मीठा हऽ । इ हमनी के हृदय से, हमनी के तन से औरू मन से जुड़ल हऽ । ई भाषा ही नै, संस्कृति ही नै बल्कि हमनी के जीवन के एगो अंग हइ, एगो ढंग हऽ । भोजपुरी से निकलल रोशनी दुनिया भर में फैली, भगवान से हये प्रार्थना बा । याद रखऽ ।

“पुस्तक पढ़ि-पढ़ि जग मुआ, पण्डित भया न कोई
इंटरनेट, कम्प्यूटर भोजपुरी पढ़ि से पंडित होई ।
भोजपुरी नै रहत तऽ हिन्दी नै आवत,
औरू हिन्दी नै अवत क्षऽ हिन्दू नै रहत ।”

भोजपुरी के खखाइल लईका
दिमलाला मोहित

**Souvenir Photo of General Workers and Mrs. J. Mungur-Medhi,
Archaeologist, who worked on the Aapravasi Ghat Conservation
Project (2004-2006)**



Standing From Left To Right: **Chandraduth Greedharee, Sanand Gowressoo, Mindranath Ramchurn, Rashid Bhugel, Subhir Ramsurrun, Hansraj Dhanoodharee, Suchit Ramparsad, Mahesh Sharma Ramdhony, Vishal Beetnah, Vivekanand Seechurn;**
Sitting From Right to Left: **Kishan Doorgathian, Mohunparsad Bahadoor, Deenesh Kumar Gungaram, Ravin Bassoodelsing, Varun Sharma Badoo, Louis Healdey Ramyad;**
Front: **Mrs. Jayshree Mungur-Medhi (AGTF Collection)**

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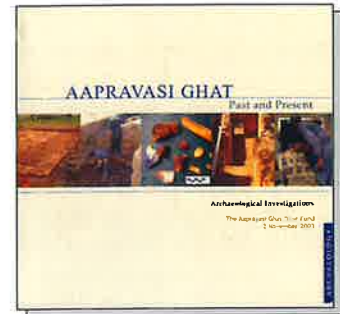
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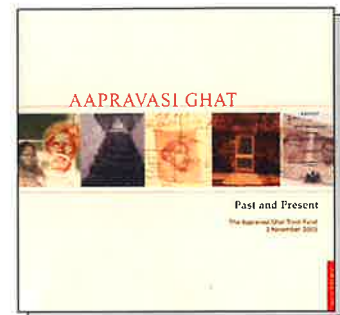
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Website: <http://www.aapravasighat.com>

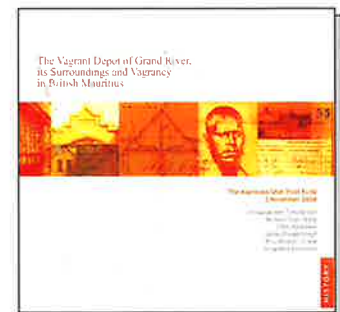
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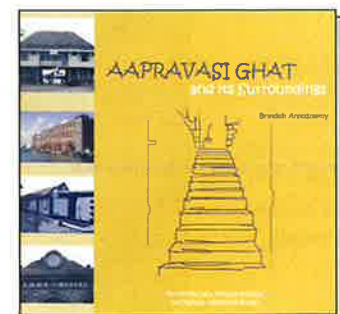
The Aapravasi Ghat: Past and Present:
Archaeological Investigations (2003)
Price: Rs.100



The Aapravasi Ghat: Past and Present:
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Price: Rs.100



The Vagrant Depot of Grand River, its Surroundings
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Aapravasi Ghat and its Surroundings
by Brindah Annasawmy (2006)
Price: Rs.150