

NEWSLETTER

Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

2 November 2011 N° 9



Aapravasi Ghat
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006



Pictures of immigrants who were among the first to arrive as Indentured Labourers in Mauritius in the 1830s.



Archaeological research at future Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC)

From 22 November 2010 to 19 January 2011, Dr Diego Calaon and Ruud Stelten, Archaeologists, conducted archaeological research at the warehouse where BRIC will be set up. The research revealed the presence of a French dock dated from the 1770s and of a patent slip used for ship repairs dated from the 1840s-1850s. The archaeological features will be integrated in BRIC display.

The 5th Anniversary of the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List

On 16 July 2011, the AGTF celebrated the 5th Anniversary of the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List. Activities were performed at the World Heritage Site to involve the local community and celebrate the progress achieved in the past 5 years.

Visit of the President of the Republic of India

On 26 April 2011, H.E. Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of the Republic of India visited Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and paid homage to the memory of indentured labourers who arrived in Mauritius between 1830s and 1920s.



The Conservation Project of Vagrant Depot's Gateway

In 2010, the AGTF initiated a conservation project to restore the gateway of the Vagrant Depot G.R.N.W. The Vagrant Depot, former place of incarceration of vagrants, was damaged during 1999. The phase one of the conservation of this National Heritage was completed in May 2011.



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Special thanks to Mr Andiapen and Mr Nemchand.



Editorial

Dr Vijayalakshmi Teelock, GOSK,
Chairperson, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

We commemorate every year the arrival of indentured labourers and laud their contribution to the making of prosperous Mauritius. This acts as a 'feel good' factor for the descendants left in Mauritius. However we do tend to forget those who never made it here, or those who returned to India. Rarely in discussions on indenture, do we look at what happened before or after indenture? We need to move towards a more all-encompassing view of Mauritian history that looks at indentured labour as linked to other events and as part of a continuum rather than one isolated event lasting 100 years or so. We need to be more inclusive of other histories and experiences occurring at the same time, only in doing so, we will achieve a better understanding of Mauritian indentured history.

Indentured labourers did not live in a vacuum, isolated from the rest of Mauritius. To understand their journey fully, we need to go back to trace their steps from their homeland itself and understand who they were before they left for Mauritius, what were the conditions that made them leave? Was it the high price of rice in one district? Was it the end of the harvest and unavailability of work at a particular time of the year in another district? Or was it simply a more effective recruiter?

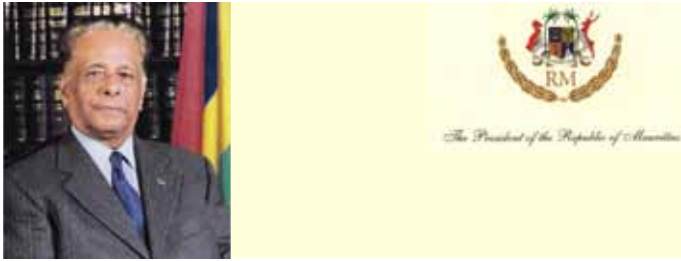
Sulekha was one such person: she had lived 12 years in Mauritius and had returned to India and opened a resting house near the railway station where trains took recruiters and labourers to Calcutta for emigration. Then there is the story of the little Indian boy found by a British official in a village speaking perfect French: his family had been to a French speaking colony and had returned to India. What of the returnees who had to pay a certain sum of money to be reinserted back in their caste or those who returned and faced ostracism? Did the immigrant come because he had told about *tapu* and not about *kala pani*?

And what about the recruiter for Mauritius in Arrah District, Jhumman Khán. He had also been a labourer in Mauritius and had returned to India to work as recruiter: what happened to him? All these untold stories are also part of our history and deserve to be researched and told.

To do so, however we must be provided with the resources, the tools and the training. Our education system needs to be more vigorous in training critical minds and thinking out of the box. The authorities need to fund young scholars who show interest in their country's history to go overseas, meet with other young scholars and exchange ideas. Currently very few can afford to do so. At the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, we are making a tiny contribution to this end. So, we have decided this year to bring these scholars to Mauritius.

The AGTF will not only be hosting the First International Scientific Conference on Indenture in December where young Mauritian scholars will have the opportunity to interact with fellow scholars but will also be publishing the works of young scholars in a first interdisciplinary 3-volume History of Indenture to be published next year. The very young have not been forgotten: Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund also launches today an e-book containing a colouring book based on the theme of indenture as well as stories in English, French, Creole, Bhojpuri and Hakka. We are also launching the first ever Young Historian Award to promote historical research among the youth. We sincerely hope this will encourage young people to take an interest in their history.

2 November 2011



Message from the President of the Republic

It gives me great pleasure to be associated once more with the publication of this annual newsletter by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, on the occasion of the 177th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

Indentured migration was a major historical milestone in the history of the Indian Ocean and the colonial world during the 19th century. The role of Mauritius is significant towards the indentured experience as it welcomed the largest chunk of emigrants.

The inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a world heritage gave us the opportunity to underline the specificity of our nation and its history. It serves as a monument to remind us of our origins, the struggle of our ancestors and their sacrifices in the economic and social development of the country. The challenge for our nation is to preserve this World Heritage Site and in this respect the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is doing a marvellous job.

The history of Indian immigrants in Mauritius bears testimony to the fact that they strived hard to keep alive the torch of their creed and culture. The early immigrants bequeathed to the successive generations this legacy which serves as an inspiration to realize far greater achievements. I commend the various initiatives of the Trust Fund to keep alive the unforgettable journey of the Indian immigrants.

I wish the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund lot of success in its mission.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC
President of the Republic
13 September 2011



Message from the Prime Minister

I welcome the publication of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund newsletter to mark the 177th anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured labourers in Mauritius. It is essential to honour the toil and sacrifice of our forebears and to show gratitude for the rich cultural legacy they have bequeathed to us.

The inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat and the Le Morne Cultural Landscape on the UNESCO World Heritage List, acknowledges the diverse origins and heritage of our people. My Government is determined to preserve our heritage sites and to ensure that the commitments taken vis-à-vis UNESCO are met.

In May this year, we amended the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Act to enable the control of the development in the buffer zones of the Aapravasi Ghat. I understand that the phase one of the Vagrant Depot restoration works has been completed and several on-going projects, such as the setting up of an Interpretation Centre as well as conservation works of the Old Labourer's Quarters at Trianon are expected to be completed by early next year.

The International Scientific Conference on Indentured Labour scheduled to take place in December 2011 will be an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the lives of indentured labourers and their contribution towards shaping the destiny of our country.

I congratulate the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for pursuing its research work and wish it success in its undertakings.

Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP
Prime Minister
17 October 2011



Message from the Minister of Arts and Culture

I am pleased to convey my warm greetings to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund on the special occasion of the issue of its annual newsletter, in the context of the 177th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

Government has always been pro-active in pushing ahead the heritage conservation and promotion agenda. We have successfully introduced Planning and Policy Guidelines to help with the effective management of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and its buffer zone.

As for the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre that is being set up for promoting the outstanding universal value of this World Heritage, research-work on indenture has already been completed while infrastructural works like roofing, landscaping and interior design are being finalized.

Indentured is not only a fact of our history through its impact on the peopling of Mauritius; more importantly, it is one of the pillars on which Mauritius has been built. To highlight this fact, the AGTF is organising an international conference on new perspectives on the diaspora.

Through all these actions, we are not only doing our *devoir de mémoire* towards the indentured labourers but we are also accomplishing our duty to Humanity, as guardian of this unique World Heritage Property.

I commend the Board and staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for their good work and I wish them well in their endeavours.

M Choonee
Minister
20 October 2011



Message from the Lord Mayor of Port Louis

Remembrance, emotion, nostalgia merge into our hearts and mind to give way to overwhelming sentiment of pride and the need to salute, very humbly, the memory of those first Indian immigrants who touched Mauritian soil, specially that of Port Louis, historical city, 177 years back.

We are fast nearing the 200th anniversary and, hopefully, the celebrations will be grandiose and even more emotional. This shows the turning pages of the history of our country, Mauritius where development has, in its foundation, the sweat and tears of slaves and Indian immigrants. The wheels of justice and recognition have also turned and Mauritius has successfully managed to have the world community accept the vestiges of the forefathers of our nation. Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne are now World Heritage and we, Mauritians, in the first instance have a duty to protect and preserve these sites. Failing in our duty would be tantamount to a lack of respect towards the forefathers of the majority of Mauritians.

The Aapravasi Ghat is the first site in Mauritius which has been inscribed on the list of World Heritage. It is therefore the pride of our country and of its capital city. It is very forceful symbol of events which can change drastically the course of a country's history.

The Municipal Council of Port Louis is committed in its duty to support initiatives for preserving the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage without impairing development in the region where it is situated. The first immigrants, when stepping at the Aapravasi Ghat, had a vision, a dream of "gold under the rocks". I am sure that they would wish the country and Port Louis to progress further while keeping alive their memory.

Dr Mahmad Aniff Kodabaccus
Lord Mayor of Port Louis
22 October 2011



Memorial to the Truth and Justice Commission

Officer in Charge, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

Some members of the AGTF Board and staff recently submitted a written submission to the TRUTH AND JUSTICE COMMISSION concerning reparations for injustices endured by indentured Immigrants. The main ideas behind this memorial are published here.

1. Concerning the injustices suffered by the Indentured Labourers, the memorial highlights the fact that indentured labourers filed more than 110,000 complaints against their employers for non-payment of wages. This was even mentioned in official Commissions of Inquiries. The amount of unpaid wages need to be calculated for the period 1830 to 1940 and reparations given to the descendants. It is possible this may amount to millions of rupees, which converted into today's currencies may amount to billions.

The memorial also highlights the harsh laws passed between the 1840s and the 1870s on vagrancy enacted by the local colonial administration which controlled the mobility and labour of the New and Old Immigrants, plight of indentured labourers imprisoned as 'vagrants'. This has been extensively documented and condemned by British authorities themselves.

Between 1860 and 1871 alone, more than 130,000 immigrants and ex-immigrants were arrested as vagrants. They were denied of their basic fundamental rights for freedom of movement. Imprisoned, they continued to be compelled to furnish for free their labour to build and carry out the maintenance of buildings, roads, bridges and other public infrastructure. Moreover, they could not move from one district to the next one or even from one sugar estate to the next one without it. This was not 'free' labour at all as claimed by the British Government.

2. On the question of land, the memorial states that during the 'great morcellement' movement between 1870 and 1920, when tens of thousands of hectares of undervalued marginal land were sold at an expensive

price to indentured, ex-indentured workers and their descendants. One could add that this was done to keep them near the sugar estates so as to continue to furnish sugar canes to the sugar mill. This is another example of exploitation of cheap labour today probably worth billions. Furthermore, many metayers (sharecroppers) as well as the small planters were cheated of their earnings when taking their cane to the mill to be crushed.

3. The memorial also highlights the heavy mortality endured by several thousand indentured labourers from diseases, malnutrition, dehydration and exposure on ships and in quarantine stations on Flat Island, Gabriel Island, Ile aux Benitiers, Pointe aux Cannoniers and Ile aux Tonneliers. Thousands more died during the epidemics due to unsanitary conditions on sugar estates. Working conditions made them ill but employers were too short sighted to see that the labour output was less when labourers were ill. There were high numbers of suicides among the immigrants on the sugar estates.

As a result of these injustices, the memorialists urged the Commission to consider:

a) Reparations for the introduction of the Indentured Labour System in Mauritius which was instituted only to secure cheap labour supply to produce sugar in the higher interests of the colonial market. However they also stated that reparations should be global and include descendants of slaves as well.

b) Sugar was the backbone of the Mauritian Economy and the capital was produced by the hard labour of Indentured Labourers despite being poorly paid. Reparations is a highly legitimate expectation, by virtue of the principles of Natural Justice.

c) However the Memorialists also recognize that social stability is important, that we have a sensitive social fabric and multi-cultural/religious society and believe the approach to paying reparations should be the most pragmatic approach. Therefore, they propose that:

i. Capitalists should contribute at least 15% of their Yearly Net Profit into a Consolidated Fund for the coming fifteen to twenty years.

ii. The Consolidated Fund should have Statutory label, with well defined objectives and parameters of operations having its focus on social justice and integration.

iii. It should be managed by an entity mandated by the Government of Mauritius and aim at alleviating the plight of the descendants of slaves and Indentured Labourers equally on the basis of merit.

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- iv. It should provide free services of professionals for project write ups, feasibility reports, permit clearance, marketing reports, consultancy services etc. to those descendants of slaves and indentured labourers.
4. Thus the Memorialists espouse the idea of collective compensation through structural improvements particularly in the education system that would most benefit people who had suffered harm because of the social and economic legacy of slavery and Indenture.
5. Finally, the Memorialists recommend the institution of a Special Tribunal to be put in place by the Government to look after land dispossession. It should have a panel of respected judges and people of moral integrity. This panel should provide free legal and technical aid to Appellants and the cost of the Tribunal should be funded by the proposed Consolidated Fund.

Raju Mohit
Officer in Charge, AGTF
2 November 2011



1867

The Temple of Gokoola

Bhuruth Dinand, Board Member

Gokoola is a small village situated in the district of Rivière du Rempart sandwiched between the villages of Piton and Amitié. This agglomeration has made a name in itself in the Hindu religion. Gokoola is the place where the indentured labourers from North-India constructed their first place of worship in the year 1867. They did so in reverence to Lord Shiva, protector of the Universe who, they believed, would give them some solace from their daily life of drudgery. The Indians called it the shivalaya or mandir. This shows the role of religion in the lives of Indian immigrants in those days. These people had brought hand-written religious texts which are still found in Mauritius. Today, the Sewocksingh family of Gokoola who resides just opposite to the temple has taken the responsibility for the day-to-day running of the temple

Gokoola (Immigrant No 63067) was a contractual labourer who came from Garakhpur, India. He married a Bi-hari girl named Soolakhney and their marriage was registered officially on October 1881 at Piton. From their marriage, Soolakhney gave birth to six daughters. Gokoola allowed a temple to be erected on a portion of his plot of land to preserve his name.

Many Indian immigrants like Gokoola abandoned the idea of returning to India. Their children grew up and got married to settle here. Thus families were founded in the colony of Mauritius and eventually became their adopted homeland. The Gokoola family was determined to achieve great by earning enough money to acquire some property, like a house, cow, cart and plots of land. It was difficult for estate labourers to save some money as absences and sicknesses were deducted from their meagre monthly salary of five rupees.

Later, Gokoola obtained the post of sirdar on the Beau Sejour sugar estate at Piton. He, thus, earned two to three times more than an indentured labourer and prospered in this position as he acquired a first portion of land of approximately seven and a half arpents at Rivière du Rempart.

After a few years, Gokoola became a job contractor and in 1882 acquired another plot of land to the extent

of six acres and eight perches. He built his one-storeyed house where the ground floor was in masonry and the storey was bordered with planks covered with shingles.

This short history of immigrant Gokoola who corresponded to the government regulated scheme of indenture contracts of individuals gives a picture of the progress made by the Indian immigrants who came barefoot and with only a few clothes. The 1850's and the 1860's notarial deeds reveal that Indian immigrants had already saved enough money to purchase large plots of land.



*Source: Gokoola, Family,
Temple & Village
V. Govinden and M. Carter*



From Servants to Indentured Immigrants: the Case of Mauritius

Alessandro Stanziani
EHESS, CNRS, Paris

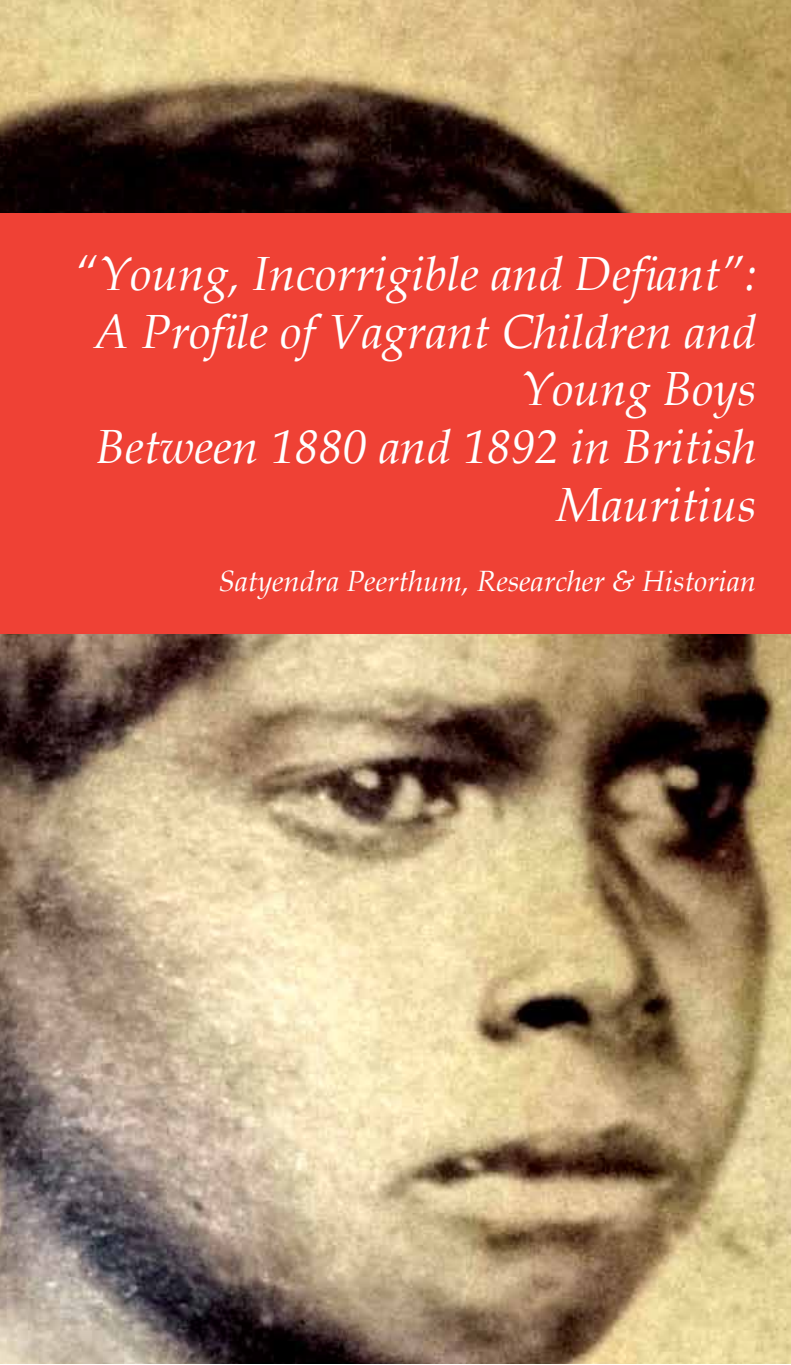
The indenture contract, usually considered by historians to be a form of forced labour, did not come under this category until the middle of the nineteenth century. Until that point, ever since the seventeenth century, indenture had been viewed on the contrary as the expression of free contract; the individual bound by the contract was just a servant whose travel expenses were paid in advance and who committed himself for a longer period of time than a labourer but a shorter one than a domestic servant in the strict sense. Like the others, however, he owed all this time to his master, who could sell the indentured servant along with any debts he still owed to somebody else. As a master in Great Britain had the right to recover fugitives, so too in the colonies, indentured servants who fled were subject to criminal penalties. Without the Masters and Servants Acts, indenture would not have been possible.

Real conditions of workers depended not only on their period of coming and ethnical origin, but also on the estates on which they worked. Small plantation owners were more concerned about fugitive, insubordinate and vagrant indentured servants. Large plantation owners, on the other hand, who complained of the excessive cost of slave surveillance, often imposed a liberal ideology in the colonial systems; they found support for the indenture system in humanitarian and anti-slavery associations by underscoring the benefits of free immigration (indenture) as opposed to slavery, as well as “famine” in India and Africa. Despite the efforts of the British abolitionists, who were on the lookout for any form of disguised slavery, the conditions of these immigrants remained quite harsh and the law difficult to enforce. Indenture contracts were governed by the provisions of the Masters and Servants Acts in the colonies, strongly inspired by practices in Great Britain. It was undoubtedly extremely challenging for workers to make use of the law; the local magistrates were corrupt and had close ties to the plantation owners. For example, wage payment and the return trip expenses were the most common complaints raised by Indian immigrants. The terms for reimbursing travel expenses were often complex and only vaguely explained at the time of commitment, thus leaving the immigrant indebted for life.

The estate inspectors, who were introduced specifically to oversee these relationships, confirmed the abuses; however, the courts seldom ruled in favour of the immigrants, in spite of the creation of a body of magistrates appointed by London in the early 1840s. The planters succeeded in convincing the magistrates that the indentured servants had invented “malicious” complaints against them and should be punished for it.

However, the number of cases in which indentured servants brought proceedings against their masters – which rarely happened in the 1850s – rose sharply thereafter. Between the 1860s and 1870s, about 10% of the indentured servants sued their masters, in virtually every case for non-payment or insufficient payment of wages and they won in more than 70% of the cases. This result, partly due to pressure from England, did not indicate that the “march to equality” was under way. In subsequent years, the percentage of contracts denounced by coolies declined first by 5% overall (at end of the 1870s) and later dropped to a mere 0.3% between 1895 and 1899, with the success rate falling to less than 40%. This can be explained by the fact that, after the results of the 1860s, and thanks to a new law on labour contracts adopted in 1867, contracts became increasingly oral and it was therefore more difficult for the coolies to produce proof. Above all, the coolies’ contracts were no longer drawn up with the plantation owners but instead with Indian middlemen, which no doubt helped to stifle many of the conflicts. The retention of coolies increased, as both the result and source of this process, with the percentage of contract renewals rising from 40% in 1861 to more than 70% twenty years later.

To sum up, in Mauritius, 14,000 indentured and domestic servants were prosecuted each year in the 1860s mostly for absenteeism, vagrancy or theft. In contrast, masters were seldom indicted and even more rarely convicted for breach of contract, ill treatment or non-payment of wages. At the same time, even though the real conditions of indentured servants were not necessarily better than those of the slaves who preceded them, the rights they enjoyed and above all the fact that their status was not hereditary constituted essential differences that were to play an increasingly important role in the twentieth century.



*“Young, Incurable and Defiant”:
A Profile of Vagrant Children and
Young Boys
Between 1880 and 1892 in British
Mauritius*

Satyendra Peerthum, Researcher & Historian

*The picture of Ramsamy
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Institute Immigration Archives*

An Overview of the Vagrant Children and Young Boys

In 19th century British Mauritius, a “vagrant”, in the eyes of local British colonial officials, the Mauritian planters and according to local colonial laws, was someone who did not possess ‘a valid pass’ or ticket and not working under a labour contract. At the same time, a vagrant was also someone who was considered to be a vagabond with no fixed place of residence and a deserter who escaped from his master’s employment usually on a sugar estate. Vagrants and vagrancy are important themes of research when looking at the history of the indentured labourers, in British Mauritius. The experience of vagrant children and young boys like stories of Ramsamy Ramen and Munisami is highly revealing.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, hundreds of indentured, ex-indentured and Indo-Mauritian children and young boys, who were often orphans, were arrested by the local colonial police as vagrants. They were imprisoned at the Vagrant Depot, the rural depots and the other prisons of the colony. Many of those aged between 10 and 17 were also

placed in the Orphans’ Asylum at Pamplemousses.

Nine volumes in the PH series of Mahatma Gandhi Institute’s Immigration Archives contain the only complete surviving vagrant registers with the pictures, bio-data and conviction records of several vagrant children and boys. They contain important data as regards to those who were arrested and imprisoned by the colonial police between 1879 and 1900. Many among them were sentenced to serve one to three month sentences at the Port Louis Prisons, Beau Bassin Central Prisons, the Vagrant Depot of Grand River and in the other rural depots or were restored to their employer or someone else who was ready to give them work. The case-studies of Ramsamy Ramen and Munisami provide important insights into the experience and lives of these vagrant children and young boys during the 1880s and 1890s.

The Experience of Ramsamy Ramen, an Indo-Mauritian

Ramsamy Ramen was 12 years old when he was caught sleeping in one of the streets of Port Louis and arrested as a vagrant by a police constable on 19th May 1881. On the same day, he was sent by the Stipendiary Magistrate of Port Louis to the Immigration Department for identification. Mr. H. Beyts, the Protector of Immigrants, took a personal interest in this case.

When questioned, Ramsamy stated that he resided with his mother in the village of Rose-Hill. The Protector of Immigrants directed Boodhoo, one of his office messengers, to go to the police station and civil status office in Rose-Hill to inquire about this particular case. He came back with Ramsamy’s birth certificate which indicated that he was born on 4th May 1868. He also found out that his mother was Narsam, a female Indo-Mauritian, who was a long term patient at Barkly’s Asylum.

Ramsamy had stated earlier that he had an elder sister, Lutchmee, who was summoned by Protector Beyts. She informed that their father Ramen, Immigrant Number 166444, was an indentured labourer who came to Mauritius during the 1850s, he had been murdered on Labourdonnais Sugar Estate several years earlier. Furthermore, she mentioned that their mother, Narsam had been a patient at the Barkly’s Asylum. Their mother could no longer take care of her brother and abandoned him.

It is interesting to note that the Protector observed that according to the records of the Immigration Department, Ramen (Immigrant No. 166444), died in the district of Flacq on 28th October 1863 several years after his arrival in Mauritius. Therefore, the question of whether or not Ramen was indeed the father of Ramsamy Ramen and Lutchmee remained unresolved!

When Beyts requested Lutchmee to take care of her younger brother, she refused and stated that she did not want “to have anything to do with him on account of his bad character.” The Protector of Immigrants decided to send Ramsamy to the Orphans’ Asylum in Pamplemousses where

he might learn to read and write as well as a specialized trade. The records of the Orphans' Asylum indicate that Ramsamy Ramen was admitted into that colonial institution in September 1880 at the age of 12.

The case-study of Ramsamy Ramen is an important and interesting story of an Indo-Mauritian child who became an orphan, left to live by himself in colonial society at a very young age.

The Experience of Munisami (Immigrant No.401237)

During the late 1880s and early 1890s, one of the well-known vagrants in Mauritius was Munisami (Immigrant No.401237). He was 17-year old youth when arrested for the first time for vagrancy on 24th June 1887 in Port Louis. He served one month in prison in the Vagrants' Ward of the Port Louis Prisons. It was around this time that his picture was taken at the Apravasi Ghat. He arrived in Mauritius from Madras in January 1887 as a young indentured child. He mentioned that his father was Muthalagan and his mother was Latchmi. He measured 1m 54 cms and had pock marks on his face.

Between 1887 and 1892, he was arrested ten times as a vagrant in the districts of Port Louis and Plaines Wilhems. Munisami was imprisoned in the Port Louis Prisons and the Beau Bassin Central Prisons. He served a total of 2 years in prison for vagrancy. He was convicted for the last time in 1892 as a vagrant when he was 22 years old.

When looking at the numerous convictions of Munisami, it is not surprising that during this period, the Stipendiary Magistrate of Port Louis and the Protector of Immigrants described him as being a "repeat offender", an "incorrigible vagrant" and as "a constant nuisance to the colony". After all for several years, this former indentured labourer regularly broke the colony's ordinances specifically Ordinance No. 12 of 1878.

Through his actions, Munisami and other "recalcitrant" vagrants like him proved to be a constant source of concern and frustration for local colonial authorities such as the police, the stipendiary magistrates and the Protector of Immigrants. It is evident that vagrants like Munisami repeatedly resisted and rejected the colony's oppressive laws and labour system, mobility from one district to the next and their lives. After all, the

Stipendiary Magistrate noted in 1891, in a letter to the Protector of Immigrants, young vagrants like Munisami, which also include Ramsamy Ramen were indeed "young, incorrigible and defiant".



The picture of Munisami (Immigrant No.401237)
Source: Mahatma Gandhi Institute Immigration Archives

Crime on Sugar Estate: The Murder of "Peyrie" Blamed to be an Unfaithful Wife

Babita Bahadoor, Research Assistant

The mid-19th century local newspapers published several articles providing information on the lifestyle, working conditions and also complaints of indentured labourers. During the period of indenture, it must be noted that crimes such as vagrancy and robbery and murders were prevalent in British colonies. In Mauritius, many crimes were also recorded.

It was reported that in the morning of the 9th April 1838, an Indian woman aged between 18 and 20 years, called Peyrie was found with the head almost severed, covered with wounds in the house of a certain Laboram on the estate of M. Cequeval and M. Lanégrie at Rivière du Rempart. According to the testimonies of other labourers, it was an Indian labourer namely Rupsing who killed his wife out of jealousy as the latter was having an extramarital affair with another Indian labourer called Laboram. After committing this crime, Rupsing fled from the sugar estate and was arrested several months later. When Rupsing was brought before the judge, he declared that he committed this crime because a Noir— living on the same sugar estate - informed him about the infidelity of his wife.

The medical reports attributed the death of Peyrie to a profound injury caused by the dissection of her upper jaw, all the arteries of the right lateral neck and the first vertebral artery linking the head. According to the Court, despite his frail appearance, the killer displayed energy and intelligence and planned the murder of his wife. The crime was qualified as a murder with intention.

To defend Rupsing, his lawyer argued that the murder was motivated by jealousy. He also added that Rupsing "était Hindou; il n'y pas de législation qui ait plus maltraité les femmes; (...). Le plus vil et plus corrompu des maris a une autorité souveraine sur son épouse ; on lui recommande de la surveiller et de la contenir le jour et la nuit, parce qu'abandonnée à elle-même, elle ne peut que faire des mauvaises actions."

Despite several supportive arguments in favour of Rupsing, he was finally sentenced to death. Before his execution, he was imprisoned at the old prison of Port Louis (located next to the Municipality of Port Louis). According to the *Cernéen*, Rupsing showed an extraordinary calmness and resignation after his condemnation. He requested to see his child and he cried a lot during his trial, but he soon resumed to his usual impassive state.

Three days before his execution, he told the Translator that: "Je voudrais avoir un petit manguier pour le planter dans la cour du tribunal; en le voyant, les juges qui m'ont condamné diraient, c'est RUPSING qui a planté cet arbre."

When the days of execution approached, Rupsing fell sick and 24-hours later, he died. He was wrapped in red clothes, and according to the Hindu rituals, his body was burnt.

Crime on sugar estates was a common feature during the indenture period. Colonial reports and articles published in newspapers revealed cases of vagrancy, petty theft, forgery, perjury, physical assaults, rape and poisoning. According to A. & S. Singh, "crimes" had more to do with the rigidities of control and exploitation than with the violence or other forms of generally unacceptable behavior. However, the case of Rupsing depicts a crime of an unusual violent nature and contradicts this argument. We have tried to demonstrate through this article a different form of crime other than robberies and vagrancy. It is also interesting to highlight the aspiration of a convict who wanted that a mango tree be planted in his memory after his death.



The Port Louis Prison © AGTF

A Presentation of the Life-Stories of the Indo-Christians in British Mauritius during 19th Century

Ashwin Nemchand, Research Assistant

It is estimated that 1 % of the total number of Indian indentured labourers who came to Mauritius was of Christian faith. Many of them came from the southern districts and sub districts of Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Negapatam, the French territory of Pondicherry, the Indians port-cities of Madras, Kariikal, Cuddalore and Tranquebar. Others also came from the districts of Chapra and Purolia in Bihar, Bombay, Hyderabad, Goa and Colombo.

Below are the case studies of Indo-Christians who arrived in Mauritius in the 1830s and 1860s. They came from Madras and Salem. These case studies help us to appreciate the diverse and rich cultural background of indentured labourers who came to Mauritius.

Israel Barder (Immigrant No. 4043), was an Indo-Christian who came to Mauritius from the Presidency of Madras on the 9th of December 1837 at the age of twenty. He was first engaged to Mr A. Adrien and married Marie Philamou Moutou in the district of Plaine Wilhems on 30th January 1879.

Tayno (Immigrant No7593) came to the island from the presidency of Madras. He was stated as being a Christian of 35 years old. Tayno was described as being low in stature and having a scar on each side of the forehead. Upon his arrival in the colony in 1838, he was engaged to Mr Dubuy. However, Tayno returned back to India on 9th May 1854 on board the ship named "Benares".

Naigum (Immigrant No. 275757) came to Mauritius, on board the ship "Defiance". The 28 year old man was accompanied by his 22 year old wife, Chooriamah (Immigrant No. 275758) and his 3 month old daughter, Antoniamah (Immigrant No. 275579). He was described as being a Christian measuring 1m 61 cm. His father's name was Aboolapen.

The date of completion of his industrial residence in Mauritius was on 22nd May 1867. The whole family came from Salem, south India.

The life stories of Indian immigrants of Christian faith have scarcely been explored in the modern Mauritian historiography. In this line of thought, the AGTF is carrying research in order to better document and understand this facet of the indentured immigration.



Chooriamah
(immigrant No. 275758.)
Source: MGIIA



Naigum
(immigrant No. 275757)
Source: MGIIA

The Journey of Gunputh and Mungur, Bihari Indentured Immigrants from India to Mauritius

Mrs. Suniti Obeegadoo, Office Superintendent at the Municipality of Port Louis with the collaboration of Satyendra Peethum, Researcher & Historian

My great grandfather Gunputh (Immigrant No.384931) arrived in Mauritius on 4th June 1878. He came to Mauritius with Mungur (Immigrant No.384925), his childhood friend in India, on board the "Ellora". Both originated from the village of Sekhunpore, Ghazipur in the eastern end of the ex-United Provinces, presently Uttar Pradesh, near the border with Bihar.

The parents of Gunputh, Kolahul and Rookmineea, are believed to be of mixed Bihari and Marathi ancestry. Those of Mungur were called Bheechook and Motteea. In addition, Gunputh and Mungur had elder brothers and both of their families belonged to the Bhur caste or a caste of agricultural workers. After the death of their parents and because of recurring droughts and crop failures prevailing in the district, Gunputh and Mungur left their native village, relatives and friends to emigrate to Mauritius.

At the entrance of Port Louis harbor, the "Ellora" underwent an inspection by the Immigration Depot's Medical Officer who reported that several of the immigrants were taken ill. As a precautionary measure, the "Ellora" and its pas-

sengers were put in quarantine at the Pointe aux Cannoniers Quarantine Station, 10 kilometers up the coast to the north of Port Louis. After 2 weeks in quarantine, the ship was allowed to drop anchor near the Immigration Depot.

On 18th June 1878, Gunputh, Mungur and their fellow travellers first set foot at the Apravasi Ghat. During two weeks, they remained at the Depot: they underwent a brief medical examination, and all formalities related to immigration were completed.

On 3rd July 1878, around a month after arriving in Mauritius, Gunputh, Mungur and several labourers from the "Ellora" were assigned to work for six years to Mr. H. Fabre, part owner of Etoile Sugar Estate, in Flacq district. The labour agreements of Gunputh and Mungur, along with those of other labourers who had travelled with them, were finalized in the presence of the indentured workers, the Protector of Immigrants, a representative of Mr. Fabre and a sirdar of Etoile Sugar Estate. They left the Immigration Depot and travelled by train from Port Louis to Camp de Masque village before walking for several kilometers to the estate camp of Etoile. It is on that particular sugar estate that they began their new lives as indentured labourers and where they worked and lived for more than 20 years.

**(The full version of the story of Gunputh and Mungur will be published at the beginning of 2012 in a forthcoming publication of the AGTF)*

239
Mungur



The picture of Mungur
(Immigrant No.384925)
Source: MGIIA

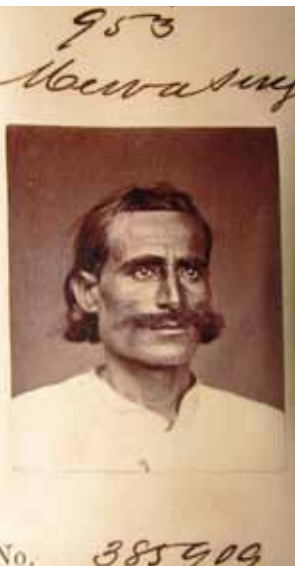
236
Gunputh



The picture of Gunputh
(Immigrant No.384931)
Source: MGIIA

Remembering my Ancestors: The Journey of Mewasingh, Ramlackhan and Lugnee from Bihar to Mauritius

Dewendrasingh Ramlackhan, Ex-Officer-in-Charge of the Sugar Industry Cane Nursery & Sugar Cane Planter with the collaboration of Satyendra Peerthum, Researcher & Historian



The picture of Mewasingh (Immigrant No.385909) which was taken in 1883 at the Immigration Depot or the Aapravasi Ghat. Source: Mahatma Gandhi Institute Immigration Archives

After a journey of 39 days on board the “Canada” in provenance from Calcutta, India, Mewasingh (Immigrant No.385909), my great grandfather, arrived at the Aapravasi Ghat or Immigration Depot in Port Louis harbour on 11th August 1878. He was 38 years old and came to Mauritius with his 26-year-old wife, Lugnee (Immigrant No.386053) whom he had married in 1870. They also brought with them a 4-year-old infant boy by the name of Ramlackhan alias Ramlackhan Mewasingh (Immigrant No.386150).

Mewasingh was born in the village of Beernah, Arrah, a region, well known for the cultivation of sugar cane in the region of Bihar, north eastern India during the 19th century, Arrah was also one of the most important districts of Bihar where thousands of indentured labourers were recruited to work on the sugar plantations of Mauritius and in other British and European colonies. During the late 1870s, the social and economic situation in western Bihar had worsened for the village peasants and small landowners.

Upon the arrival of the “Canada” in Port Louis harbour, the Immigration Depot’s Medical Officer inspected the immigrants on board. He suspected that some of them did not look well and suffered from an undermined illness. The Medical Of-

ficer recommended the Protector of Immigrants to order the ship’s captain to keep his vessel outside Port Louis harbour for a few days. Mewasingh, Lugnee and Ramlackhan spent an additional 11 days onboard under a state of temporary quarantine as required by the Immigration Depot regulations.

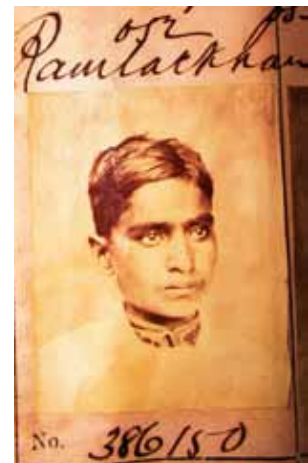
The Arrival in Mauritius and the Sojourn at the Immigration Depot.

On 22nd August 1878, with no signs of illness on the ship, the new immigrants were allowed to land at the Immigration Depot. Mewasingh, Lugnee and Ramlackhan spent around 8 days at the Immigration Depot where they were registered, provided with new clothes and underwent a brief medical examination. Furthermore, they were assigned immigrant numbers which formed an integral part of their identities in Mauritius. On 30th August 1878, Mewasingh signed a five-year indenture contract as a labourer of Bonne Terre Sugar Estate, a small sugar plantation which was owned by Elias Malac Company on the outskirts of the town of Vacoas in Plaines Wilhems district. A sirdar from Bonne Terre Sugar Estate took my ancestors and other indentured labourers from Port Louis to Vacoas.

Between 1878 and 1892, Mewasingh, Lugnee and Ramlackhan lived in the estate camp of Bonne Terre Sugar Estate where he worked as a labourer in the *grande bande* and then later on, as a labour contractor and sirdar. Following the closure of the sugar estate in 1892, Mewasingh and his family moved to Bassin Sugar Estate near present-day Palma, Quatre-Bornes. Between 1892 and the early 1920s, Mewasingh worked as a labour contractor for that sugar estate and he lived with Lugnee and Ramlackhan in Bassin estate camp. Between the 1880s and early 1900s, Mewasingh and Lugnee had six other children, one boy, Chitabahal Mewasingh, and five girls.

Between the year 1923 and 1924, Mewasingh, with the help of his sons, bought 2 plots of land in Solferino/Mon Desir. They build up a permanent residence in the larger plot of land comprising of nearly 12 rooms with all necessary amenities thereon to cater for the whole families. The building was covered with shingle roof (Bardeaux) (Colonial Type as we call it). The whole family left the estate camp in 1925 to live in their newly built house at Mon Desir.

Between the year 1923 and 1927, Mewasingh became a small sugar cane planter and died on the 19th January



The picture of Ramlackhan (Immigrant No.386150) which was taken in 1889 at the Immigration Depot. Source: Mahatma Gandhi Institute Immigration Archives



The picture of Lugnee (Immigrant No. 386053) which was taken in 1888 at the Immigration Depot. Source: Mahatma Gandhi Institute Immigration Archives

1927 at the age of 87 at Mon Desir, Vacoas. A few years later, Lugnee died on the 17th July 1929 in the same place.

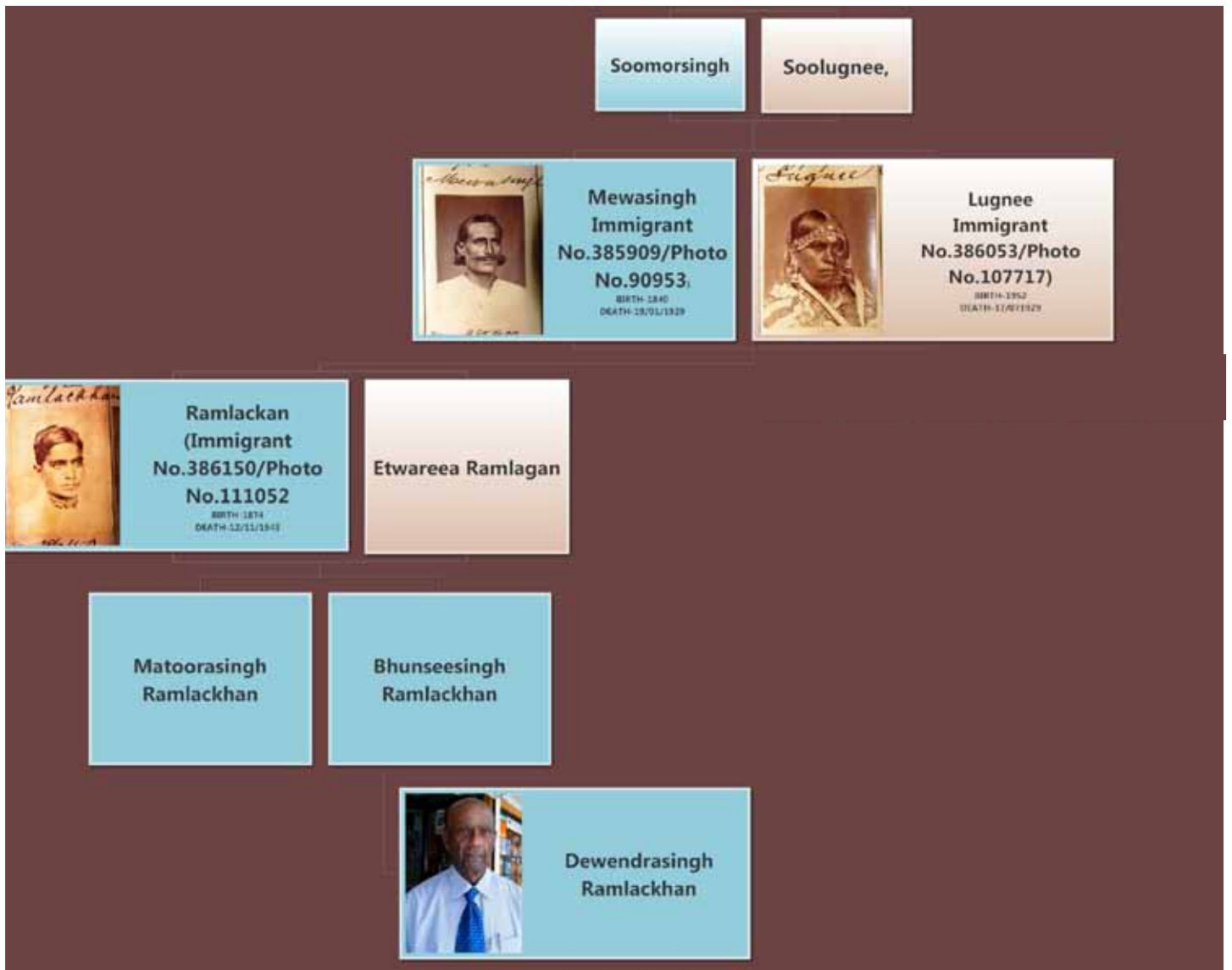
Ramlackhan, My Grandfather

Between the mid-1880s and early 1890s, Ramlackhan, worked as a labourer in the *petite bande* of Solferino Sugar Estate performing light work. Later on, he worked in the *grande bande* and eventually became an assistant labour contractor. Shortly after, he became a full-fledged labour contractor on Bassin Sugar Estate. Between the mid-1920s and early 1940s, Ramlackhan became a small planter and at the same time, he continued to work as a labour contractor on Bassin Sugar Estate. During the early 1900s, Ramlackhan performed

his religious marriage with Etwareea Ramlagan. Their civil marriage took place in September 1925 and they had two sons Bhunseesingh Ramlackhan, my father, and Matorasingh Ramlackhan.

Ramlackhan died at the age of 69 at Solferino or Mon Desir on 12th November 1943. The deaths of Mewasingh, Lugnee and Ramlackhan were recorded at the Civil Status Office in Plaines Wilhems and at the Immigration Depot in Port Louis. Today, the members of the Ramlackhan family, including myself, Dewendrasingh Ramlackhan are proud to be their descendants.

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AGTF Projects for 2012

Corinne Forest, Head of Technical Unit

The year 2011 was marked by major accomplishments: the buffer zone is now a legal entity for which planning guidelines now exist to monitor heritage development and create a dynamic city centre for Port Louis. The proclamation of the Planning Policy Guidance 6 – *Urban Heritage Area: Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property* (PPG 6) in June 2011 will bring a significant change in the way heritage was managed so far.

The Government set up a Technical Committee to examine the applications for development in the zone and thus, help in the monitoring and retention of the heritage component. To support this undertaking, workshops will be organized to facilitate the implementation of PPG 6, foster capacity building and reduce dependency on the services of foreign consultants. The ultimate objective will be to devise and implement an integrated managerial system for the buffer zone.

To ensure an efficient integrated management, the developments brought by the proclamation of the Planning Policy Guidance will be integrated in the Management Plan of the World Heritage Site. Indeed, provision is made to review the Management Plan consigning the commitments taken by the Government of Mauritius with UNESCO, every five years. The objective is to closely monitor the implementation and the progress of each project and also, to propose further actions and projects to retain and promote the World Heritage Site. The Management Plan is being reviewed by AGTF team who has gained experience in heritage throughout the years in collaboration with Dr Odendaal, Heritage Consultant.

The framework established through the Planning Policy Guidance, the Heritage Management Plan, the Conservation Manual and the Development Plan aims at directing development towards the enhancement and revitalization of the area surrounding the World Heritage Site. This framework encourages the development of a historic centre in Port Louis and tourism activities. This objective will be supported by a Tourist Strategy currently being devised to create a suitable framework for the promotion of the World Heritage Site and the Beekrusing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) which will open next year. BRIC will be set up to respond to the expectations of an increasing number of visitors and

bring a significant development at World Heritage Site: it will concentrate all activities for local and foreign visitors and offer interpretative tools to understand the history of the former Immigration Depot.

The Interpretation Centre will give the opportunity to share knowledge on indenture in Mauritius and in the world. The presentation of research results in BRIC will be further supported by publications. Indeed, the AGTF plans to publish three volumes on indenture and the papers to be delivered by participants at the International Scientific Conference to be held in December 2011 at the University of Mauritius. These publications will shed light on research undertaken by Scholars and young Researchers around the world. This will contribute to the development of research on indenture, an under-researched area. In this respect, AGTF wishes to contribute further by implementing its research programme consisting of continued research in the archives, archaeological research and oral history / oral traditions projects dealing with intangible cultural heritage related to indenture and the life of immigrants in the sugar camps with a focus on Trianon.

Inter-disciplinary research on Trianon will support the elaboration of an exhibition space in a near future that will form part of the development plan for the heritage site. We hope to implement this plan including visitor infrastructures so that visitors can appreciate the cultural significance of Trianon site, and for the first time, discover life on the sugar estate.

Before hand, our priority in 2012 will be to complete the restoration of former labourers' barracks. Concurrently, a development plan for Vagrant Depot heritage site, former place of incarceration, will also be devised with the aim to open the site to the public in the years to come.

The main purpose is indeed to share heritage and research undertaken with the population at large in a dynamic manner. This will be achieved through the continuation of our outreach programme targeting mainly schools and associations. It will also include a permanent programme for children and adults at the Interpretation Centre offering educational activities widening the scope of knowledge on indenture to better appreciate the essence of Mauritian specificity.





Beekrumsing Ramlallah © GIS

Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre

Corinne Forest, Head of Technical Unit

In 2012, an interpretation centre will open at the World Heritage Site to present the history of the Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot and the experience of indentured immigrants during their first days in Mauritius. The Interpretation Centre will be set up in a warehouse adjacent to the Aapravasi Ghat built in 1866.

A professional team comprising of Architects, Interior Designers, Engineers, Graphic Designer, Museologists and Researchers has now finalized the designs of the Interpretation Centre and the landscaping of the World Heritage Site. The main concern of the team was to help the interpretation of scientific data by adults and also by the young generation which was a specific object of attention.

The core objective was to create a dynamic place focusing on visitor interaction which is considered as a key element to raise public interest and understanding. The display will present the archaeological features uncovered in 2010 and 2011. Multimedia tools together with reconstitutions, artefacts and strong visuals will be used to better convey the experience of indentured labourers at the Immigration Depot.

The opening of the Interpretation Centre will mark a significant evolution at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site: it will materialize the intention of the AGTF to share the knowledge of our heritage with the population at large and also with foreigners to better appreciate Mauritian culture and identity.

The Conservation of the Vagrant Depot

Renganaden Andiapen, World Heritage Site Manager
Ashwin Nemchand, Research Assistant

The newly restored Entrance Gateway of the Vagrant Depot was inaugurated by Hon Mookhesswur Choo-nee, Minister of Arts And Culture on Thursday 21st April 2011 at the Vagrant Depot, Grand River North West

The Vagrant Depot was decreed a National Heritage in 1958. It is one of the most important indenture sites in Mauritius as it is the only surviving testimony of the place where convicts and Indentured Workers were imprisoned.

Consequently, the Vagrant Depot stands as a legacy of our shared history and heritage. However, the Entrance Gateway of the Vagrant Depot was severely damaged during the riots of 1999. The roof and windows were completely damaged. Since then, the building was left in a state of abandonment. In order to prevent further deterioration and to prolong the lifespan of this National Heritage, the AGTF undertook the restoration and conservation of the building along with historical research.

The first phase of the conservation project of the Vagrant Depot was completed in 2011. The conservation process is based on international norms and framework of Heritage Conservation. This framework aims at



Entrance gateway after restoration
© AGTF

developing and propagating good practice pertaining to the preservation of built heritage.

The Conservation Process entailed the undertaking of a non-intrusive archaeological survey of the site and the architectural documentation of the Entrance Gateway prior to restoration works. Thereafter, the wooden roof and main gate of the Entrance Gateway were restored based on detailed archival plans of the depot and in accordance with international norms of conservation.

The second phase of the Vagrant Depot Conservation project entails the consolidation of the walls of the Gateway and other surviving structures of the depot. Furthermore, a heritage development plan of the area will be developed on the long term to promote the Vagrant Depot as a major heritage site in Mauritius.

Industrial Archaeology At Aapravasi Ghat: Goods, Ports And People Histories

Dr Diego Calaon, Archaeologist



Figure 1 Excavation works in the warehouse © D. Calaon

Between November 2010 and January 2011, an archaeological excavation was carried out in the warehouse where the future Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) will be set up. In the 19th century, the warehouse was located in the proximity of the “Hospital Block” and nearby the “Immigrants’ sheds” of the Immigration Depot. The excavation represents an exceptional opportunity to investigate the topography and material culture of a key area: it deals with the part linking the landing place of the immigrants, as shown in the maps dated 1857, and the Aapravasi Ghat as a former Immigration Depot.

The archaeological investigation allows to recover walls, floors and structures in use between 1834 and the 1920s: these were exactly the same structures, adjacent to the narrow strip of coast, where the Indentured labourers made their first steps when they arrived in Mauritius. More than 450 000 immigrants were called to work on the Mauritian estates and half of them settled on the island. The area excavated in the warehouse was one of the first places seen by the future Mauritians.

The stratigraphy of the archaeological excavation permitted to better understand the history of the waterfront facing the Aapravasi Ghat with greater precision (fig. 1). The archaeologists have a privileged viewpoint through the investigation of the archaeological layers preserved under the warehouse’s floor giving a precise chronology. Three main archaeological phases characterised the area: the first one is linked with the construction of the French dock, made by M. De Tromelin in 1771-1783; the second represents the transformation of the dock in a “Port Slip” during the first half of the 19th century; the last phase corresponds to the construction of the warehouse, used to store the sugar designated to be exported on the same boats which were used for the transportation of indentured immigrants.

The French dock (or a dry dock) was rectangular (35 metres length, 15 metres width). The sides were built with

strong walls made by well squared blocks. According to its dimensions, it was used to restore medium and large ships. An old map dated 1758 shows the presence of the mouth of a stream exactly under the excavated area: the dock was dug taking advantage of the natural depression created by the watercourse.

The dry dock was also provided with two stone stairs, used by the woodworkers to repair the ships. During the British occupation, the dock was filled up and transformed in a Port Slip, or rather in a more elaborate structure for dredging the vessel. The slip was very similar to a “Patent Slip” and it assured the possibility to quickly hauling the vessel on shore, caulking and repairing the bottom and top sides (fig. 2).



Figure 2: Simplified 3D model of the Port Slip in 1856 © D. Calaon

Thanks to the port slip (or marine railway), it is possible to take a boat out of the water during one tide, make the repairs and return the boat to the water on the next tide. The port slip consisted of an inclined level which extended into the water, and a wooden carriage (or cradle) onto which a ship was floated. The ship was then attached to the cradle and hauled out of the water up on the slip.

The carriage was hauled up and lowered away in the water using a mechanical winch. The carriage was dragged on iron rails. The archaeological excavation allowed to recover

the squared stones which were used as bottom part of the way, and it was also possible to find many iron trails which testify the presence of the rails. A great number of metal objects (nails, tools, iron bars etc.) and many pitch and colour drops cover the soil nearby the slip way. A lot of post-holes witness the use of scaffoldings for reaching and repairing the high parts of the hull.

The slip was used up to the half of the 19th century: in 1850, the new Immigration Depot was completed and the slip area was converted into a warehouse. The whole area around the port slip was reshaped. According to the plan, a new larger site for the reception of the immigrants was established. At the same time, on the other side of Trou Fanaron bay (Taylor Smith area), other two port slips were built near the two dried docks, still in use today.

The slip was certainly used up to 1856-59: a topographic map records that the slip was in use in 1856, while in 1859, a development project shows the area of the former port slip, is overlapped by the rectangular shape of a new warehouse. In 1860-61, the warehouse was built and was in use. The transformation of the area in a sugar warehouse is not only accidental. There was a general urban plan which designed the East side of the Trou fanaron bay for the Indentured arrivals.

While the port slip was in use, the landing place for the immigrants was probably a jetty in front of the Depot. After 1860 the landing place was at the end of the road which passes between the warehouses and leads to the city centre. From this point, a special path was reserved for the Immigrants: they turned left, they passed in front of the warehouse and then they reached the emblematic “steps” of the Apravasi Ghat which introduced them into the Mauritian colonial labour system (fig. 3).

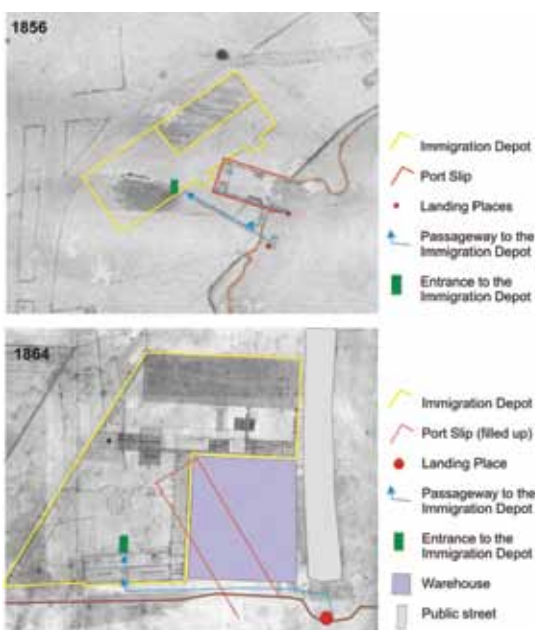


Figure 3: The passageways to the Immigration Depot: 1856 and 1864

As easy as they were able to reach the Immigration offices, the sugar stored in the warehouse was loaded onto the same ships which carried the immigrants: immigrants and sugar where both “trading goods” for the shipping companies. For some seasons, the slip was not in use, before the construction yard of the warehouse was set up. The excavation documented a phase in which all the iron structures (winch, rails etc.) were spoiled and the area was left open and out of use. In this lapse of time, the slip became a dumping area and an extraordinary archaeological level was dug up, full of the daily objects literally thrown away by the people who lived and worked nearby.

For the Archaeologists, this was an opportunity to catch a picture of the material culture of Port Louis in the mid of the 19th century. Broken glasses, ceramics, metals, tiles and bricks considered as waste in the past, are now objects and important records for the reconstruction of past societies. The majority of the archaeological finds are glass fragments (more than 1,000): bottles, cups, cruets, windows glass. Many of them are fragments of small bottle, probably perfume or drug’s bottles (fig. 4).



Figure 4: Drug’s bottles, stoneware and glass © D. Calaan

In fact, the area is just at the back of the hospital block and it is most likely, the people who worked there eliminated their waste in the empty area where the port slip is located. Also that some ceramic objects could be interpreted as medical pot, for ointments, creams or medical powders. Among the metal finds is half the part of scissors, which could be a medical tool. At a first sight, the percentage of “western” (French or British) ceramic objects compared to “Indian” or “African” ones is impressive: only 1% of the ceramic assemblage can be assigned to an eastern (or Indian) production. The 99% is represented by European products, used by British officers and by the sailors.

This data shows exactly the opposite situation, in terms of percentage, of the people present in the area: thousands of Immigrants and few Europeans. It is easy to explain the reason of this disproportion: the Immigrants were only in transit, and probably they did not carry with them many items. They brought only personal belongings, and among them some oil lamps for religious purpose: the fragments of these lamps are the breakable tangible elements which describe exactly the difficulty of being Indentured Labourers arriving in the island (fig. 5).



Figure 5: Indian oil lamps © D Caloon

The overall picture given by the analysis of the archaeological excavation is quite interesting. The newcomer Immigrants were immediately involved in the Colonial Economic system of the island: they started to use the European objects available in the market and they will continue to do so in the future (as excavation at Trianon has shown in 2010). Their cultural identity was moulded also by the objects of the Global Colonial System, which is in a way still visible nowadays in Mauritius.

An insight of the Immigration Depot in the mid 19th century: Indentured labourers at the Depot

Christelle Miao Foh, Research Assistant

The Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot stands for the only remaining example of the “Great Experiment” initiated by the British Colonial Government in 1834 to evaluate the viability of a ‘free’ system of recruitment after the abolition of Slavery in the British Empire. This article will look at the different stages of which an Indentured Labourer had to undergo at the Depot.



Ticket with photograph.
Source MNA/RA
1750/LR 3176/
(1864)

Newly arrived immigrants

Upon the arrival of the ship at Trou Fanfaron, the immigrants were brought on the upper deck where they washed themselves. The Immigrant Inspecting Officer from the depot together with the peons examined and distributed clothes to the immigrants.

Once in the depot, the newly arrived immigrants were seated in the yard for inspection by the Protector of Immigrants. They were counted and questioned to ascertain whether they had any complaint. Should there be any; an enquiry was conducted by the Protector. Afterwards, they were registered and were provided with an immigrant ticket with information on the latter. After the registration process, the immigrants were brought together into bands to be sent to the sugar estates. The immigrants who came with their families were kept together in various bands. Single women were placed into the band of their choice.

The newly arrived immigrants were not allowed to go out of the depot without permission from the Protector. According to the Order Council No. 18 of January 15 1842, the Indentured Labourers could only sign a contract after a 48 hour stay ashore. During that period, those who were sick were sent to the Civil Hospital. The expenses for treatment were incurred from the immigration funds. At the expiration of the 48 hours, the hospital expenses were credited to the employers at the rate of twenty-five cents per day for each individual.

The Indentured Labourers were fed by the Depot Keeper according to a dietary-scale. Food was cooked at a common kitchen. However, in some cases the immigrant was provided with rations to prepare his own food. The provisions consisted of mainly rice, dhal, salted fish and ghee which were cooked in large iron pots over firewood.

During their two day stay at the depot, the immigrants used Lavatories which were put at their disposal. Each of them was given 4 ounce of soap distributed by the Surveyors in order to ensure good hygiene. In addition to the clothes given to them in India, they received 8 yards of calico and 1 cumly once in Mauritius.

Once the immigrants arrived at the depot, the public had free access to the yards. The representatives of sugar estates would meet up with the immigrants. The latter would obtain all information related to his future employment and he was allowed to visit the Estates prior to his engagement.

The Distribution Day

The distribution day was generally fixed two or three days after the arrival of the Indentured Labourers. A notice was placed an hour before distribution to announce admission to the depot. The Depot was opened to planters who could be accompanied by a Sirdar – interpreters and any other people who wished to engage Indentured Labourers. The distribution normally started after 10 o'clock for the convenience of the planters.

The Indentured Labourers would prepare themselves for the distribution and they would generally form themselves into bands. After the settlement of the agreement regarding the conditions of service, the engaged band was taken by the Planter to the Stipendiary Magistrate Court. The protector would give the planter a note for the Stipendiary Magistrate concerning the engagement modalities. The Magistrate would then deliver the contract between the planters and the labourers.

Immigrants without papers, Invalids and other immigrants to be embarked at government expenses or at their own expenses.

Indentured Labourers who were already in the colony also came to the Depot for different reasons at any hour of the day or night. Each time an Indentured Labourer came to the Immigration Depot, he had to make an application to the Gate-Keeper at any hour of the day or night. The applicant had to provide his/her identification details as well as the reasons for his/her application at the Depot.

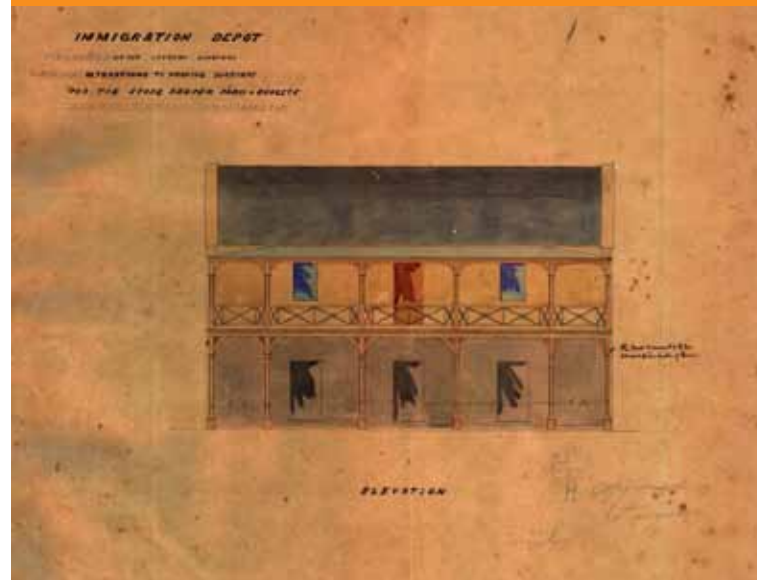
The Immigration Depot was also used by returning immigrants whose contracts had come to an end and who wished to return to their homeland.

Whenever there were cases where the Indentured Labourers were reported sick, they were examined by the Depot medical officer. In worst cases where the Indentured Labourers passed away during the day, the case was immediately reported to the Protector. When the Immigrants died during the night, the case was reported to the Protector early the next morning by the depot-keeper. The Protector would then allow the removal of the corpse and the place where it had been kept was fumigated, cleaned and ventilated.

As described above, the Apravasi Ghat Immigration Depot was a central place for the Indentured Labour System in Mauritius. It aimed at catering for the well-being of Indentured Labourers as well implementing the usual administrative procedures of the colonial Government.

An insight of the Immigration Depot from the 19th century Duties of the Depot Staff

Christelle Miao Foh, Research Assistant



Immigration Depot- Plan of the Depot Keepers Quarters © National Archives

This article will provide an insight of the functioning of the Apravasi Ghat Immigration Depot as from the mid-19th Century. The Depot was administered under the rules of the British Governor. Each staff had specific duties in the Depot to ensure its proper functioning. The immigration department consisted of various branches addressing legal, financial or security considerations among others.

Below is a short description of the posts held by various officers and their duties regarding the administration and maintenance of the Immigration Depot

The Protector of Immigrants was in charge of the management of the Depot. His main duties were to assist the immigrants from the time of their arrival in Mauritius to their return in India. Moreover, he registered the complaints of immigrants and as a result he conducted enquiries.

The Chief Clerk's role was to supervise and control the work of all the clerks in the office. He was in charge of issuing tickets, passes, permits and other documents liable to fees. Furthermore, he verified all bills, returns and accounts before they were approved by the Protector of Immigrants. He was also responsible to conducting the daily interviews in the absence of the Protector of immigrants.

The Head-Clerk of the ticket's Branch was responsible for all the work performed in his branch. His duties were to verify every ticket, pass and every document prepared in his branch, before submitting it to the Protector or the Chief-Clerk. Every document issued from his branch bore his initials.

The Clerks of the Ticket's Branch who were four in number helped the Head of the Ticket Branch in issuing documents such as, passport, passes, tickets, permits to work, marriage certificates, permits to marry and permits to engage. They were also entrusted with the task of distributing clean clothing to newly arrived immigrants and of preparing the lists of passengers for embarkation.

The Accountant managed the finance section of the Department. His duties consisted of making "the abstracts for salaries and allowance and the requisition for authority to incur expenses and helped in the verification of the statements prepared for the Protector's annual report".

The Cashier was the only person in the Department authorised to receive money. When receiving cash, he would record the name and number of the person in a cash book.

The Store Keeper was in charge of all the stores and supplies. The Store Keeper worked in collaboration with the Accountant and both of them had to present an inventory twice a year, "of all furniture, tools and implements belonging to the Department, distinguishing all unserviceable articles from those which are in good condition". Thereafter, a full report was provided to the Protector.

The Statistical Clerk had the charge of all documents related to the Statistical-Branch. His duty was to prepare all the returns and statements which were required by the Protector for the writing up of the Annual Report. He was also responsible for all other returns concerning the department and was

in charge of the Correspondence Books.

The Inspecting Officer duties and that of the Head Clerk of the Distribution-Branch had been amalgamated. The latter officer will have to inspect all the ships arriving or departing with coolies and to prepare all reports connected with such inspection.

The Gate-Keeper was in charge of access of the entrance at the Depot on a 24 hour basis. He allowed and recorded admittance of immigrants to depot at any hour of the day or night. The admittance book was submitted to the Protector every weekday at 10 a.m.

The Depot Keeper was in charge of supervising the guards and peons. He had to inspect the wards, sheds and other parts of the Depot". He also had to maintain the cleanliness of the Depot and to attend the distribution of every meal and shall see that the food is of good quality, well cooked and fairly distributed".

Interpreters and Peons were essential at the depot as they facilitated communication with the immigrants.

A depot Photographer was appointed in 1869. The appointment of the photographer followed the protector's announcement that in 1864 that new tickets would henceforth include the bearer's photograph, a measure subsequently incorporated into the labour law of 1867.

Police Officers were required to ensure law and order in the Immigration Depot on the request of Protector Hugon as from 1857 with the arrival of a large number of labourers.

With the increasing number of immigrants, hygiene became an important issue at the Depot. At the peak of immigration, the depot accommodated more immigrants than it was built for. In 1856, the accommodation capacity of the depot was for 700 people. However, during the peak season of immigration, more than 1000 immigrants were lodged at one time on the site. Thus more staff was recruited to ensure good hygienic conditions on site. From 1860, a Medical Officer was appointed to examine inmates and new arrivals and to provide vaccinations and report deaths. In 1864, a request was made to engage a Cook and a *Topass as permanent staff of the Immigration Establishment* so as to attend the invalids and convalescents and for the maintenance of cleanliness in the Depot.

The rules and regulations regulated by each member of the Immigration Depot allowed the institution to manage and incorporate all immigration process in Mauritius.

The Conservation of Trianon Barracks

*Renganaden Andiapen, World Heritage Site Manager
Ashwin Nemchand, Research Assistant*

The Trianon Barracks also known as the “Old labourers Quarters” formed part of the Trianon sugar estate, which was established in 1803 by Martin Monchamp. The Trianon barracks constitute one of the rare surviving structures, exemplifying the living conditions of indentured labourers during and after the indentured period in Mauritius. The Ancient Monuments Board decreed the Trianon barracks National Monument through Government notice No. 666 on 22 July 1974.

Overview of the barracks

The barracks comprise of a row of fifteen rectangular arched compartments of about 18 m² each and constructed on a stone base. The chambers were constructed out of basalt stones, available locally. The stones were sealed with lime mortar and the interior of the chambers were coated with a lime wash. Several layers of lime visible on the walls indicate that they were lime washed periodically. Traces of wooden partition suggest that the chambers were separated into two halves. Oral history revealed that each part was occupied by a family. However, in the 1960s, several modifications were carried out in the chambers. Kitchens were built at the rear-most portion of the eight chambers with cement and concrete blocks. The entrances and the ventilation system of the chambers were also amended. A drainage system was also built along the rear side of the chambers.

After investigation, it was revealed that the original flooring of the chambers were constituted of basalt stones pointed with lime mortar. However, in course of time the original flooring were covered with a layer of red oxide. It is presently in a fair state of conservation. However, vegetation and the aging process have contributed to the deterioration of the flooring in some chambers.

The state of conservation

The labourers' quarters have been in a state of abandonment since the 1970s. Time, nature and human interventions, not always considerate of the conservation of the building, have further added to the degeneration of the structures. The growth of plants and roots above the vaults, walls and floor of the barracks has contributed in the major deterioration of the structures. The spread of the roots has led to a fractional crumpling of the structures in certain areas of the building. Furthermore, structural cracks in the arches and walls are highly visible in most of the chambers.



Trianon barracks in a state of abandonment © AGTF

Moreover, the accumulation of rain water in the closed apertures of the barracks is another cause of rapid structural weakening. It not only contributes to the fast growth of flora but also enfeebles the structure and the basement of the building. The water retention in the walls is accelerating surface algal and fungal development thus leading to the corrosion of the lime mortars and lime layers. The iron fixtures like door hinges and locks have all rusted.

Conservation Measures undertaken

In order to halt further degradation, the AGTF Technical Unit undertook emergency preventive measures between June and September 2010. Thus, the thick vegetation in and around the barracks were removed. Thereafter, a





Major spread of roots in the barracks © AGTF



Roof collapsing due to the growth of vegetation and roots © AGTF



Fungal development on the walls of the barracks © AGTF

detailed stone to stone architectural survey was carried out to document the pre-conservation state of the structure. Based on the architectural documentation, a Conservation Plan was devised by the Conservation Architect and consultant to the AGTF, Mr. Munish Pandit.

The conservation plan identifies the main elements affecting the sites and makes provision for intervention measures, necessary to the restoration of the building to its original state.

Preliminary interventions as per formulated by the conservation plan are underway. Removal of algae from the inside walls of the Barracks are being carried out. The cement plasters from the eastern wall of the structure are being removed to prevent further deterioration. One of the most important steps of the conservation works is the killing and removal of roots from inside the stone walls and the vaulted roof. This operation is being carried out under strict supervision in order to prevent the roof from collapsing.

These actions represent the continuous efforts of the AGTF to preserve the Mauritian heritage for the benefit of future generations and sustainable development. It is expected that the major conservation works will be completed by mid-2012.



Emergency measures undertaken to remove vegetation in the barracks © AGTF

Preserving The Buffer Zone: Developing Tools For Conservation And Revitalization

Corinne Forest, Head of Technical Unit

Jumrah Mosque

A Buffer Zone was delimited around Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site to allow the full expression of the outstanding significance of the World Heritage Site as per UNESCO *Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. In its Convention, UNESCO explains that the buffer zone is important as it represents the context in which the World Heritage Site has evolved through time. As such, it is a fundamental element supporting its cultural significance at national, but also, at international level. This is the reason why appropriate measures are enforced in the buffer zone to protect, preserve and promote the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. The ultimate objective is to create a suitable environment supporting the retention of the heritage in the buffer zone, and also, its sustainable development.

To meet this purpose, a framework for the buffer zone was established through the Heritage Management Plan (HMP) which sets out guidelines and establishes a managerial system for the buffer zone. As such, it constitutes the second part of the Management Plan for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property. The HMP and the Planning Policy Guidance are supported by a third document, the conservation manual, developed to provide guidance to anyone planning development or undertaking building works in the buffer zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site.

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund developed this manual to assist developers in their development undertakings so that the special character of the buffer zone is enhanced and not destroyed. The best way to achieve this goal is to use the appropriate methods to repair or maintain buildings. Indeed, the buffer zone is a unique place where the first urban settlement took place in Mauritius.

It is also the place where most of the ancestors of the current Mauritian population arrived on the island at various periods in time. It constitutes the heart of the nation as it still bears the traces of the numerous waves of immigration that brought people from all walks of life to Mauritius. Their contribution to the constitution of the Mauritian nation is still perceptible today through tangible and intangible heritage present in the area.

This manual was elaborated to establish guidelines respecting this unique character while enabling repairs, changes and developments to better enhance this heritage. If the heritage is maintained and enhanced, it will revitalize the area and allow its sustainable development. The buffer zone constitutes the very vibrant historic centre of Port Louis and deserves peculiar attention to retain the authenticity and the integrity of Mauritian culture.



By the central market © AGTF

Using GIS For The Monitoring And Heritage Management of the Buffer Zone

Maurina Soodin-Runghen, Researcher

GIS and Heritage Management

The aim of heritage management can be described as the preservation of a site's cultural and natural values. It also includes conservation and maintenance, development and presentation to the public, while minimizing the risk of damage and deterioration caused by natural and human factors. In Mauritius, the main stakeholders in the field of heritage are the National Heritage Fund, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, Ministry of Arts and Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Leisure and local authorities. Each stakeholder needs information of different nature to meet their needs of management of Heritage assets. In order to avoid duplication of work and isolation, collaboration and co-ordination among institutions are beneficial to efficient management.

In many countries, Geographical Information System (GIS) is used as an efficient heritage management tool. GIS is a computerised system used in recording, maintaining, analysing and managing data about geographic space. It records the geometrical information of an object along with its location on a geo-referenced map while other non-spatial attribute data such as ownership or historical information are then recorded in the attached databases.

GIS and heritage management in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property

Following the proclamation of Planning Policy Guidance 6 for the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property, the need to ensure proper monitoring of the area was highlighted by various authorities. To this end, the AGTF performs weekly monitoring visits which result in detailed reports and photographic records of every change noted in the fabric of the Buffer Zone. In addition, the benchmark data is continuously enriched by on-going research.

As the amount of information keeps increasing, relying on paper copies of reports and photographs tends to make access tedious. Given the high volume of information required by all stakeholders and the different formats and me-

dia on which it is stored, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is compiling all information on a common platform using ArcMap 10. It is hoped that the sharing of information and its updating will also be facilitated.

The information required to monitor heritage is held by many institutions in various data recording formats. Consequently, while designing the database, it is important to understand the different sources of information, organise the different types of information into related tables and identify methods to digitise them.

The main characteristic of GIS is to provide the possibility of managing various types of information, and can therefore be seen as an efficient management tool. Indeed, layers can be created to show different types of information such as multiple uses of a place through time or changes brought to the building itself over the last two centuries. On the other hand, the site managers can easily upload and access specific information such as conservation measures, threats and the chronology of changes to buildings and sites. Using GIS therefore enables the Heritage Manager to plan conservation and heritage management policies while taking into account the important factors of change, which can be either temporal or dimensional, or even both.

The aim of AGTF project is to develop a map layer associated to various digital databases containing comprehensive information on all buildings and properties located in the buffer zone. Connecting various layers of information will also facilitate the association of information with other elements such as drains, pavements, street furniture and embellishment among others, that contribute to the significance of the area. In addition to this, the overlaying of archival maps onto modern maps in GIS will be one of the main steps leading to the creation of the archaeological mapping of the buffer zone. This map will contribute to the identification of heritage assets and help in the evaluation of private development applications and also, to plan restoration and conservation works to be undertaken by the public bodies.

In the long run, it is expected that the GIS based database will enable an integrated conservation, planning and management of the built environment and cultural landscape in the Buffer Zone. It will facilitate decision-making process based on the study, analysis and evaluation of the built environment and its significance as an urban cultural landscape in the present natural, physical, cultural, social and economical context.

Encouraging Heritage Development in the Buffer Zone: Towards The Revitalisation of The City Centre

Corinne Forest, Head of Technical Unit

The process of consultation for the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) raised the issue of the definition of development in the buffer zone. The Planning Policy Guidance was generally perceived as refraining development in the area. This perception probably emerged as the PPG proposes height restrictions to establish and encourage an architectural harmony in the area and an integrated development in favour of the revitalisation of the area.



Royal Street, Port Louis

To support this objective, the AGTF enlisted the services of Dr. Odendaal in view of preparing the development plan for the buffer zone in collaboration with stakeholders and the local population. Surveys and consultations took place to integrate the expectations of all into the development plan and hence establish a framework favourable to the development of the area. The Development Plan will be a document proposing development and revitalisation opportunities for the buffer zone. It will encourage sustainable development through adaptive reuse of historic buildings in contemporary

Port-Louis. The plan will address issues related to potential economic benefits that may be generated by the Heritage Industry.

Many countries in the last thirty years have developed policies in favour of heritage rehabilitation as it revealed to be a thriving enterprise. These countries directed their investments towards heritage rehabilitation especially in times of crisis. France has committed 100 million euros per year for the restoration of heritage buildings. In Hong Kong, the Government is doubling the amount of money made available for heritage conservation; half for investment in government owned buildings, and the other half as grants to private owners of heritage structures. In Norway, the national budget is highly oil revenue dependent. The oil crisis led the Government to create a financial crisis package directed towards investment in long term assets and hence invested 26 million euros for heritage conservation, most of which going for rehabilitation and maintenance of privately owned historic properties. For countries investing in heritage, investments are effected to create jobs, sustain local skills and support the local economy.

This approach emphasises the need to support local economic actors. Indeed, the policies in favour of heritage rehabilitation are part of a global planning policy favouring the sustainability of urban development. The notion of heritage rehabilitation therefore needs to be envisaged within a global approach to consolidate the assets of the country for the future.

In this respect, heritage has proven to be a safe investment in times of crisis contrary to the general perception. Many examples show that heritage is not only compatible with development, but it can also be vector of economic cohesion and serve a sustainable approach to urban development. This aspect is rarely envisaged in the Mauritian context. However, we believe that heritage rehabilitation could support cultural tourism policy for Port-Louis by promoting the authenticity of Mauritian architecture for the benefits of the population.

“Many countries in the last thirty years have developed policies in favour of heritage rehabilitation as it revealed to be a thriving enterprise.”

Consultation with the Local Community for the Development of the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property

Maurina Soodin-Runghen, Researcher

In order to benefit from popular participation during the preparation of the managing documents for the Buffer Zone (BZ) of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property (AGWHP), a number of meetings were held, namely Consultative Committees and individual working sessions.

Consultative Committee meetings

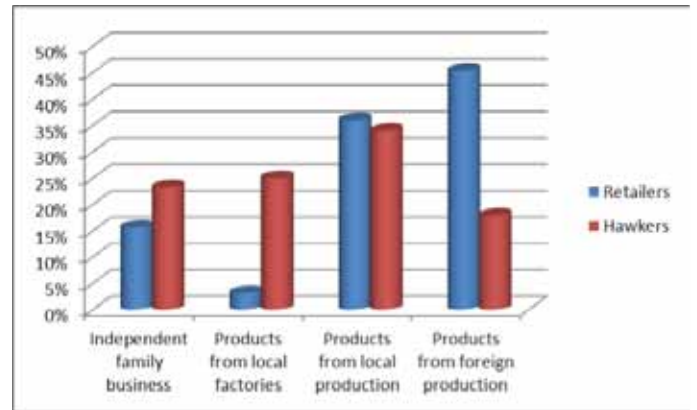
According to the UNESCO Operational Guidelines and the AGWHP Management Plan, effective management of the Buffer Zone is essential. Good management requires consultation with the public and can be achieved through Consultative Committee meetings. Three Consultative Committees were organized by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Port Louis in 2011. The aim of these meetings was to integrate the concerns of stakeholders, operators and owners in the BZ in the formulation of measures for the management of the area.

The first meeting held on 21 January 2011 aimed at introducing the purpose of the development plan. It also was also to consult members on the way they perceived development in the BZ. Thus a collective vision for the area was sought. The second meeting was held on 17 March 2011 to present the outline of the Development Plan and collect views of the local population on the proposed development strategies. The third meeting was held on 23 April 2011 to introduce the Heritage Management Plan to the local population. A presentation was made to outline the proposed management framework and main strategies outlined in the draft document.

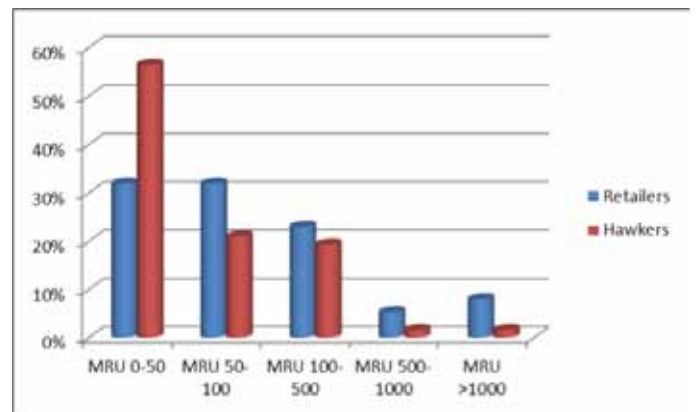
Hawkers & Small Business Survey

The AGTF has conducted surveys targeted at the operators who constitute the majority in the BZ, namely owners of small businesses and hawkers. The information thus gathered is being used by Dr. Odendaal in the preparation of the Development Plan for the BZ.

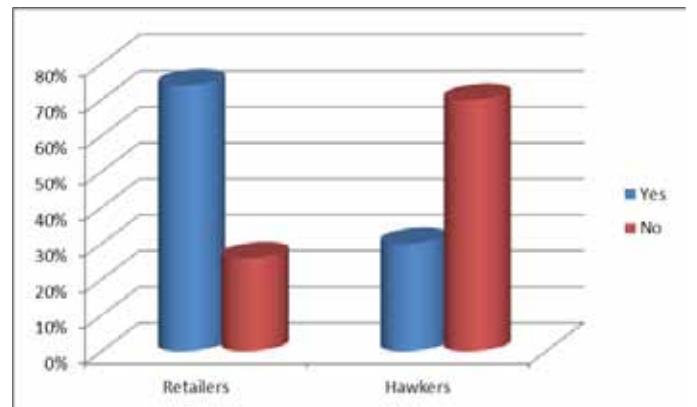
The surveys revealed the following:



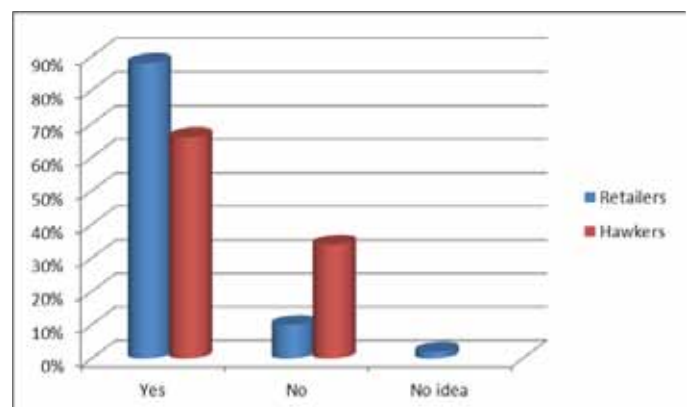
Origin of products sold by hawkers and small retailers



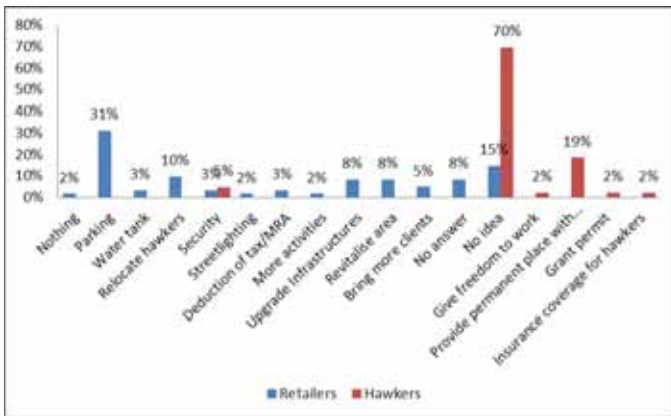
Price range of products



Are the activities of small retailers and hawkers compatible?



Do you think more tourists would be beneficial for your business in this area?



Suggestions to improve working conditions/business

An Overview of Trade in the Surroundings of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property during Indenture Period

Natasha Kheddo-Ramcharitar, Research Assistant

Mauritius underwent growing development after the arrival of indentured labourers initiated in the 1830s. The British focused on the development of sugar cane which eventually led to the expansion of commerce. The population growth encouraged traders from other countries to settle on the island. Traders from India and later China showed keen interest to invest in the island and specifically by the port. This resulted in making the surroundings of the Aapravasi Ghat a commercial area and till today this tradition is maintained.

Generally most of the traders from India originated from Gujarat, Surat and Ahmedabad. Majority of the Gujaratis were Muslims and were known as the Surtees. The renowned traders were the Bahemia, Atchia, Rawat, Ansrod, Timol, Toorawa, Ghanty, Currimjee, Torabully, Dawood, Joonas and Patel families who arrived in Mauritius during the mid-19th century. One interesting fact about the name Patel is that one of its meanings is “village chief” or “headman”. Gujaratis who migrated to other countries during British rule, sometimes adopted the surname “Patel” and this surname was then subsequently passed onto their descendants. These families settled in Port Louis and operated mainly at Royal Street, Queen Street, Desforges Street, Pasteur Street, Farquhar Street and Corderie Street. This is why during those days Corderie Street was known as “Surtee Bazaar” as most of the traders from Surat had established their business in that street. Normally Corderie Street got this name as ropes (La Corde) for ships were sold at the entrance of the street.

The traders were dealing mainly spices, wheat, rice, soaps and textiles. The goods were imported in large quantity from India and supplied to sugar estates. Traders did not possess any warehouse for the storage of their goods. Their goods were stored in docks owned by the descendants of Europeans for instance the United Docks. However, they owned the shops where they were operating on daily basis. The Ibrahim Bahemia family constructed a building at the corner of Corderie Street and Royal Street during the early mid-19th century where they started the business of coconut oil and later started investing in hardware goods. The current generation is still operating in the same location and doing the same business.

Work Experience at the AGTF

Semila Moonesawmy, University Student

Work-Based Learning programme has given me the golden opportunity to work twice at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund during which I completed the two modules WBL1000 and WBL 2000. My first work placement was between 8th June to 16th July 2010 and the second one was between the 6th June and the 15th July 2011. Being a History student, it was a great honour to have been selected to work in this prominent institution; it provided me with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained at the University. Various modules, namely Mauritian History, Reading and Writing Skills, Documents and Methodology at the university have been relevant during my work placement. It helped me to enhance my knowledge in a working environment.

My first work placement has been of tremendous importance to the writing of my dissertation. I learned more about the oral history interviews of which I have made effective use in the methodology. My second work placement helped me in getting over my introvert personality, as I had to deal with different institutions and organisations. My two work placements in this prestigious institution was an enriching experience and contributed to the development of my employability skills. Besides, it provided me with an opportunity to reflect and engage in the self-assessment of my performance abilities in the work place, my perceived personal strengths and weaknesses and future development needs.

Many traders originated from India were staying at the Toorawa Building situated at Farquhar Street. These traders were coming on a temporary basis for resting purpose only before they chose to move to Madagascar, South Africa and Reunion Island with the aim of investing in business. The Hindu Gujarati traders were very few and among them were the Geegabai, Vasanbai, Bhagwan and Desai family.

The Soondron and Sunassee family originated from the South of India and were selling spices at Corderie Street. Similarly there were the Canabady and Saverymootoo who were importers of gunny and *vacoas* bags which were used for the transportation of sugar. Their shops were found at Corderie Street and Louis Pasteur Street.

At the beginning, settling in Port Louis was more convenient to all the traders. Gradually other regions developed and led to the establishment of traders who moved from Port Louis to Rose Hill or Mahebourg like the Kathrada family who settled in Rivière du Rempart where they opened shops and also constructed the first mosque in that area.



Central Market, Port Louis
© AGTF

Unlike the Indian traders who started settling in the early mid-19th century, the first Chinese traders arrived in the late 19th century. Majority of them intended to stay in Mauritius for a short-term to then return to their country of origin. However, most traders stayed in the island following the outburst of World War II reducing social and economic mobility. Chinese traders steadily developed China

Town. They were selling spices, cigarettes, matches, biscuits, soaps which were imported from China and some also had wine factories like the Lai Min, Lai Wan and Lai Chin Kon families. The evolution of the sugar industry encouraged them to move to sugar estates and villages to open small retail businesses which came to be known as "La Boutique". They initiated the "credit" system consisting in selling articles on credit to the local population.

Port Louis became undoubtedly a trade oriented area during the indenture period as besides the well-known traders there were also small traders who were engaged in various types of small commercial activities such as carpentry, butchery, jewelry, bakery, cart transportation, boat building, dressmaking, blacksmith, masonry and hairdressing among others. The families which started their business in the mid-19th century are still very active today and successful in their endeavors. Most of their shops are located in the Buffer Zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property.

Indian Diaspora and the Problems of Modern Development

Professor Soodursun Jugessur, GOSK
President, Suki Parivaar

Introduction

When our ancestors migrated from India to different parts of the world, either as indentured labourers or as free tradesmen and professionals, they took with them a wealth of ancestral values, values that had been imbibed through generations living in well structured units, handed down from one generation to the other.

They were the inheritors of a five thousand old civilization that had taught people how to live and use the resources of the globe without destroying the environment, how to see the Spirit in all existence and to how worship the same through a scientific sacrificial ceremony called Yajna.

However, in their new environments they were forced to adapt to new circumstances, new external influences, and many rapidly lost their initial moorings. Their offspring were very fast absorbed in the new culture of the country, and the eternal generation gap problems exacerbated. The distance between parents and the children grew to an extent where certain inherent values of mutual understanding and support, love and respect initially present amongst the members of the community, dwindled and disappeared. Materialistic consumerism and pronounced individualism replaced a spiritual life of loving, giving and sharing.

With what outcome?

Global warming and climate change, increased spread of new diseases due to mutating bacteria and viruses, intense natural catastrophes striking unprepared countries, global financial crisis with millions of people losing their daily livelihoods are the result of such living. These are compounded by social upheavals and a spread of unhealthy and unethical lifestyles leading to constant wars, terrorist attacks and border disputes. All around we see escalating violence, family bonds weakening, and we ask ourselves what can be done. We often lay the blame on the government or on our educational institutions, or on our socio-religious leaders, but rarely do we ask ourselves: Where did WE go wrong? Are we also not responsible for what is happening?

In order to better educate the people on sustainable lifestyles, limit and arrest the spread of violence in our surroundings and in our families, violence including child abuse, women battering, suicides, and social evils like drugs, alco-

hol addiction, child pornography, HIV/AIDS, and others, a concerned group of citizens from every religious and ethnic community has started a nationwide campaign called SUKHI PARIVAAR, or the Happy Family. The main objective of this campaign is to make family members, especially the parents and the elderly, assume their own critical responsibility in their homes and not wait for others to solve their problems as well as those around.

What does this require?

This requires a dose of determination and commitment by each and everyone in the family, often more easily said than done, but with a belief that things CAN change if we make the necessary efforts individually and collectively.

We are requesting all parents to make a small sacrifice of their precious time. Everybody in the family, young and old, should get together daily before dinner just for half an hour. We call this a Family Communion. During this short while, for two to three minutes, they pray together for the welfare of one and all, preferably in a language that all understand. After that they communicate with one another. The children relate their day's experience, their problems at school or with friends, the class lessons they learnt, and the parents relate what they have done, and what problems they faced. They also relate the happy moments they had during the day, and share their joys and sorrows with all the members. At times they can relate a short story laden with values, from our scriptures or from good books. This will transfer certain eternal values in the spirit of memory imprinting to the younger ones. This session has to be done preferably before dinner in order to allow a more relaxed enjoyment of the dinner.

During this brief session, the stress is on communication and frank, open, heart to heart communication between the members. This will build empathy and trust between the members, and once these basic values are established, external influences will be minimal. Our mutual love will grow, and we can, as a family, rely on one another's support, and build a solid and happy family. This is more important than extra money.

Immigrants at arrival © Mauritius National Archives



When this is taken seriously, the elders themselves will have to mend their habits, stop smoking or abusing of alcohol, using bad words and shouting. They will be afraid of giving the bad example to their children, and become role models. If this family communion is done in every home, the entire society will change in due course, and all forms of violence and social diseases will reduce. This is the spirit of SUKHI PARIVAAR, and the concept of Sanskar or modern memory imprinting in our midst. Community seminars, group sessions, pamphlets, and educational programs can then supplement these basic family communions.

Conclusion

Our future and the way we want it to be are in our hands! We reap what we sow! We all want our family to be happy in a world where love, peace, harmony and solidarity prevail. It is never too late to start the Sukhi Parivaar program in our homes, for God only helps those who help themselves in a spirit of sacrifice.

Geet Gawai: An undeniable Presence of Intangible Heritage in Mauritius

Dr. Sarita Boodhoo

It is now a recognized fact that if the Aapravasi Ghat became a World Heritage Site among 830 other sites in June 2006, this recognition is due in no less a measure to the intangible heritage that indentured Labour immigrants brought along with them and preserved intact in multi-farious forms to this date.

We see these multitudes of intangible cultural facets being performed in our day to day life all over the island. At this juncture, it is pertinent to highlight the happy constat that the UNESCO adopted in 2003 the Convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In conformity with this Convention which Mauritius signed on 4th June 2006 the Government had undertaken the formidable task of making a first list by producing an inventory and documentation of the intangible cultural heritage in the Republic of Mauritius.

Therefore what was considered as mere "tradition" with a pejorative slant, or taken as mere "passeist" practices

and caused to be relegated or dumped have, thanks to the UNESCO 2003 Convention, been restored to esteem and placed on the same pedestal as the cultural manifestations of humanity.

What does the UNESCO say about the intangible heritage? "The intangible heritage provides us with a sense of identity and belonging, linking our past, through the present, with our future."

Mauritius had a rich repertoire of oral traditions. I will take here for this article a case in point: the bhojpuri folk songs sung at *Geet Gawai* sessions on marriage occasions. They are varied, multi-faceted and constitute an important treasure-house of this age-old heritage. In the wake of the Indian indentured immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries (1834-1924), this important movement from Calcutta and its hinterland namely Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, was directed towards Port Louis as a first experiment.



Women tradition bearers performing at the 150th anniversary of the commemoration of Indian Indentured Labour Arrival at Antoinette-Phoolyar in 1984. © Sarita Boodhoo

The migrants brought little material belongings but much intangible richness: their religious tenets, their customs and traditions, rites and rituals, folk medicine, folk art, folk beliefs, tales, children's games, proverbs, riddles and idioms and variants of the Bhojpuri language. These have today become encrusted profoundly on the Mauritian soil so that they form part of the linguistic and cultural mosaic of the island.

Bhojpuri folk songs may be related to (a) sacraments, (b) seasons, (c) festivals and fasts, (d) work and labour and (e) various unclassified types.

The Bhojpuri marriage songs sung on the occasion of marriages in Mauritius are colorful aspects of Mauritian culture. They highlight and sustain every aspects of Hindu marriage right from the pre-wedding, the wedding to post-wedding rites. They include the *Sandhya*, ode to the Evening Goddess, the *Mahadev*, in honour of Lord Shiva and his marriage to Parvati/Gauri; *Devi Devta*, hymns to other gods and goddesses, the *hardi* songs, the *Suhag*, *barachia* (betrothal song), the *Jumar* (dance and song items), the *Teelak* (on the occasion of formal acceptance of bridegroom), the *Lagan Kholai* (auspicious date of marriage), *Matikor* (digging of sacred earth to make the marriage space-the *Vedi*), *Imlighontai* (the blessings given to the mothers of groom/bride by their brothers and family), the *parchawan* (auspicious welcome of bridegroom

by bride), *Kanya Dan* (the sacred rite of giving away of daughter), *homa* song (at the chanting of mantras by Pandit to light the sacred fire – the chief witness of the wedding), the *sindur-bahoran* (appliance of vermilion of bridegroom in bride's mid hair parting) and many others. They carry the message of love and romance. These songs are moreover based on the love of legendary heroes and heroines, the ramifications of family ties, folk beliefs and prevalent customs. They also reflect prevailing socio-economic and political nuances, mature and life in general and very often the love of the Indian woman for jewellery and colourful dresses – the solar *shringar*.

These songs set the tone for the wedding atmosphere. Indeed, they have their origin in the ancient gathas that is ritual songs that have been propagated by folk singers since the early Vedic period. Not only do they create an atmosphere of gaiety, but they spell a charm and create an aura of auspiciousness which prevail throughout the duration of the wedding period.

The *kathaka Samhita*, a component of the *Rig Veda* (xii -1) says that eight women whose husbands are alive should feed the priests and sing appropriate songs to the tune of the drum and the Veena (lute) and four women may also dance. In Mauritius, women singing groups, the *geetharines* passed over this age-old tradition to successive generations of tradition bearers. They hold these preliminary folk music sessions in chorus known as *geet gawai* on the eve of marriages and some sing the songs pertaining to particular rites and customs at their actual performance. Today they have come out of the confines of the inner chambers of the house to perform publicly and with confidence, grace and style on stage at various public functions. They claim a fee whereas formerly the parents gave them a little *neg* – a token of appreciation. Such *neg*-tokens are still given to them at the *geet gawai* sessions. However, the commercial aspect of today's life is turning these groups into some sort of enterprise or business ventures.

The women sing accordingly to the rhythm of the *dholak* and *jhals* (cymbals). They use a copper pitcher – the *lota* which they hit rhythmically with two spoons on which they dance the *jhumar* songs. They also sing and compose songs full of humour and wit, laden with sexual undertones at some point of their session where they reach a climax in their performance to the joy of the family where they perform. Some of these folk songs have been retained intact whereas others have undergone transformation.

Promotion and Identification of Elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

Kiran Chuttoo-Jankee, Research Assistant

On 24 June 2004, Mauritius became the second Member State to ratify the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Two years later, the former Immigration Depot of Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed under criterion VI on the World Heritage List. This recognition identified intangible cultural heritage as a major component of its historical significance. This international symbol of the 19th century indenture labour system represents not only the development of the modern system of contractual labour, but also the memories, traditions and values of these men, women and children that left their countries of origin to work in foreign lands. Subsequently, they bequeathed this heritage to their millions of descendants for whom the World Heritage Site holds great symbolic value.

As a signatory State of the Convention, Mauritius is committed to undertake fieldwork and research to collect elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage before they disappear. The cultural traditions, expressions and customs associated with indenture experience were transmitted from generation to generation. Many of these were passed on through oral traditions, either in their original form or in new forms incorporating changes resulting from modern practices and beliefs or from the influence of other cultures.

E-book of three folk tales in five languages

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is fulfilling its mission of safeguarding and promoting the Intangible cultural Heritage through various activities. On 2nd November 2011, the AGTF launched an E-book (an audio-visual DVD) comprising of a folk tale in five languages namely Bhojpuri, Creole, Hakka, English and French. Two other E-books will soon be published. The three stories are 'Calou and Lalou', 'The Six wicked brothers' and 'The Lion and the Old Lizard'. The E-Books for pre-primary and lower primary children fulfill not only the purpose of sharing the folk tales narrated by grandmothers with the young generation, but also promote vernacular languages such as Bhojpuri, Creole and Hakka. These were the languages of our ancestors. The E-Books not only

impress children with sounds and drawings but also provide the option of printing the drawings to colour them. These E-books will form part of the second series of the Intangible Cultural Heritage published by the AGTF.

'Sohar'- Birth songs from Mauritius and India

Last year, the first edition of Intangible Cultural Heritage was a CD of birth songs in Bhojpuri entitled 'Sohar'. It contains songs collected from tradition bearers of Bhojpuri culture in Mauritius and in India. The objective was to allow a comparative study of the Bhojpuri language, the tunes of music, the culture, practices and beliefs in the two countries. Some differences exist among which the absence of songs to celebrate the birth of a daughter in India. Only the birth of sons is celebrated whereas in Mauritius, the birth of all newborns is celebrated irrespective of their gender.



A grandmother warming up her new born grandson with the heat of burning charcoal and baby oil ©AGTF

Inventory of elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage

In March, this year, the AGTF completed a project of inventory of elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage to identify, safeguard and promote Intangible Cultural Heritage with a view to proposing elements for inscription to UNESCO. Irrespective of domains (i.e. oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices, or traditional craftsmanship), the project inventoried some 70 elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage related to the indenture labour system.

This inventory responds to the need to preserve a disappearing heritage in Mauritius. The inventory conducted by AGTF will be part of the national inventory created under the purview of the National Heritage Fund. Up to present, Intangible Cultural Heritage was under-researched. This inventory is an opportunity to consider this heritage on a global scale, as well as to encourage its recognition at a national level.

Beyond the inventory, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage through other activities such as annual living exhibitions entitled 'Varshik Parampara Utasav' in which young and old generations present folk songs and dances and also, traditional games and crafts to promote traditional knowhow and share these unique expressions of intangible heritage. Through these initiatives, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund hopes to contribute to the recognition of the Intangible Cultural Heritage related to the history of indenture, and to open a new scope of research on colonial history

Invaluable Ancestral Culture

Aartee Pydatalli, Field Guide

People came to Mauritius from different parts of India. They brought along with them the practices and traditions of their respective Presidencies. One of the most popular and important traditions of the Telugu is the *Raamabhajanam*. This event is generally practised in every Telugu household throughout the whole year.

Raamabhajanam is a religious ceremony dedicated to Shri Raama, the fourth avatar of Maha Vishnu. The Raamabhajanam has survived over the years, from the time our forefathers came to Mauritius, 160 years ago.

This tradition originates from Andhra Pradesh, where most of Telugu people emigrated to Mauritius. A very popular temple in honour of Shri Raama is found at Bhadrachalam in Andhra Pradesh. This temple was constructed by a great devotee of Shri Raama called Kanchana Gopanna. His devotion was so intense that he sacrificed all his wealth and other gatherings for the sake of the temple. He collected contributions from the people but the Nawabs, who were ruling over India, imprisoned him for this deed. The Nawabs thought he used the government's money for the construction of the temple.

During his imprisonment, Kanchana Gopanna, composed thousands of songs dedicated to Lord Shri Raama. The songs described the pain he was going through in jail. They depicted strength in the prayer he addressed to the Lord to get him out of his turmoil. He was a great devotee: Shri Raama along with his brother Lakshmana came in the dreams of the Nawab and intimated him to release Kanchana Gopanna. He promised to return to the Nawab the money that was spent in the construction of the temple. As matter of fact, when the Nawab woke up in the morning, he discovered that his safe was full of gold coins inscribed with the effigy of Shri Raama. He was so moved that he immediately released Kanchana Gopanna and he conferred on him the title of *Bhakta Raamadaasu* meaning Servant of the Lord. Since those days, the administration and maintenance of the temple are under the responsibility of the Government.

Our forefathers were also in distress so the song of *Bhakta Raamadaasu* suited their appeal to the Lord. On Saturdays, they would sing those songs throughout the whole night around a big lamp. They believed that this prayer was

so powerful that whatever difficulties they were going through there, would vanish away.

Even though the indentured labourers were illiterate and not well versed in scriptures, their devotion was so strong that they have perpetuated those traditions. It is believed that in the lifetime of a Telugu, he must organise a *Raamabhajanam* in his house. So this has become a household activity that would take place during the whole year.

However, in temples, *Raamabhajanam* is held during the month of April or May when Shri Raama Navami is celebrated. The *Bhajanam* would normally start at 18.00 hrs with rituals dedicated to Lord Shri Raama followed by *Bhajanams* that would last for the whole night. A big copper structure with multiple small lamps around and a bigger one at the top, is lit. The bigger lamp symbolises the Lord (*Paramaatma*) and small ones are the creatures (*Jeevatma*). According to the Hindu religion, it is believed that the goal of each creature is attain salvation (*Moksha*) that is to become One with the Lord. From birth to death, we struggle to attain this liberation. Until we are not in perpetual meditation, this is not possible: so, continuous praise to the Lord helps us to this goal.

Raamabhajanam is a rich and much valuable Intangible Cultural Heritage, which has been preserved on the island.

Rambhajanam at Ramdo family





Visitors at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property

Vikram Mugon, Researcher

Learn by Fun about the Aapravasi Ghat

Vikram Mugon, Researcher

The AGTF proposes several pedagogical activities such as:

1. Story Telling sessions of 'Rajah at the Aapravasi Ghat'. It is the story of a little boy who leaves his homeland with his parents, employed as indentured labourers in Mauritius.
2. Participatory activities whereby children learn about traditional construction techniques and the making of lime mortar.
3. Archaeological digs where the young ones get to learn about the basic principles of archaeology.

Moreover, the AGTF is endeavoring towards the broadening of the range of activities proposed to the public. Thus, the *Journées du Patrimoine*, organised in September 2011 a new pedagogical activity, namely a puzzle was tested.

After a guided visit of the site, children visitors were invited to participate in the activity. The puzzle depicts the journey of an Immigrant, travelling onboard a ship, passing through the immigration depot and finally reaching their working place, a sugar estate. All while providing us with a tool to evaluate the level of information gathered by the children during the guided visit, the participants were called upon to develop their problem-solving and team working skills. While the main targeted audience was children, it was pleasantly noted that parents too joined in the activity.

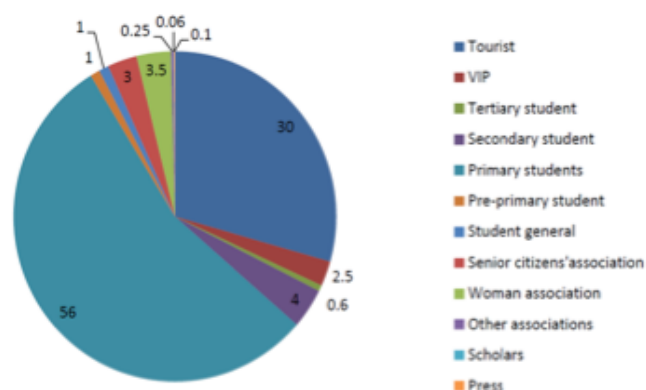
With the setting up of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre the AGTF hopes to propose further activities which would promote, and educate the public as well as youngsters about the importance of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property and the history of indenture in a simulative manner.

The UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL) sets out to represent the very best of the world's natural and cultural heritage. As such, the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on this list confers to the site an image of must-see. Since its inscription in July 2006, there has been a significant increase in number of visitors. From 2 588 visitors in 2003, some 25 000 visits are expected by the end of 2011. This represents an increase of about 965%.

Number of visitors



Visitor Profile - Year 2011



At present, the majority of our visitors, is composed of students, with 56% of children from primary schools. This is to a great extent due to the fact that the study of indenture immigration forms part of their school curriculum. Continuous outreach and promotion programmes in schools along with the distribution of school kits aiming at creating awareness about the site has furthermore encouraged school visits

to the site. As per survey conducted in July 2011, 26% of our visitors got to know us primarily through their schools.

The same survey revealed that the organization of mediated recurrent events such as the ICOMOS *International Day for Monuments and Sites*, *Journées du Patrimoine*, and *Varshik Parampara* has additionally helped in creating better awareness of the site among the local population.

In spite of a restricted marketing strategy targeting foreign visitors, due to limited availability of visitor facilities at site, an increasing number of tourists has been also noted. From 53 foreign visitors in 2007, the site counted about 7500 till October 2011. With the opening of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and appropriate landscaping works clubbed with a more vigorous marketing strategy, it is expected that some 55 000 visitors will visit the site in 2012.

While such an increase is portent of economic gains, contributing to the protection and restoration of the Aapravasi Ghat and indenture sites, it also highlights the need to preserve the delicate balance between interpretation, conservation and the provision of visitor facilities. As it has been observed, the visit to the Aapravasi Ghat is often a moment of intense emotion and contemplation. A large number of people at the site might lessen the opportunities for solitude, and subsequently visitor experience and satisfaction.

In view of preparing for this increase, the AGTF is currently reviewing the visitors' management plan and is working towards the elaboration of a tourism strategy. These plans will update the strategies envisaged in the Aapravasi Ghat Visitor Management Plan 2008-2011 to conserve and manage the WHP so as to sustain and enhance, through the conservation of the cultural heritage assets of the inscribed property, its buffer zone along with the Outstanding Universal Value. The reviewed plan also takes into consideration the improvement of the interpretation and presentation of the site to allow present and future generations to enjoy and appreciate it fully.



Varshik Parampara Utsav- Activities for the Promotion of Intangible Heritage from the Indenture Period

Kiran Chuttoo-Jankee, Research Assistant



In the context of the commemoration of the 176th arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund in collaboration with the Hindi Speaking Union organised a two hours concert entitled '*Varshik Parampara Utsav*' on Saturday 20 November, 2010. This activity aimed at promoting the Intangible cultural heritage resulting from the indenture system in order to safeguard this memory for future generations. Several groups from different parts of Mauritius sang traditional songs on related fields and everyday life in the camps.

Inscribed under criterion (vi) of the World Heritage Convention, the Aapravasi Ghat is a World Heritage Site related to intangible heritage which enlists traditional songs, poems, beliefs, knowledge and a set of elements that constitute our intangible heritage. It is this heritage that AGTF aimed to promote in the context of the annual commemoration of 2 November 2011 by inviting the community to participate in this event.

Criterion (vi)

"Be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, ideas, beliefs, or artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. "

The 5th Anniversary of the Inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List

Indira Devi Gyaram, Programme Coordinator

To mark the 5th anniversary of the inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage list, the AGTF organized an official function on Saturday 16th July 2011 at the Ex S.T.C building, next to the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage site in collaboration with “Le Mouvement pour le Progrès de Roche-Bois (M.P.R.B)” and “La Comédie Mauricienne”.

This was an opportunity for the AGTF to hand over certificates to participants to a three day on-site practical training in conservation techniques for Heritage buildings. This training which aimed at sensitising and involving the local community in the preservation of the Aapravasi Ghat was attended mainly by young adults from the region of Roche Bois. It was also the occasion for the young members of M.P.R.B and La Comédie Mauricienne to present a thought provoking play on the fight against corruption, entitled “Zis Enn Minit”.

The audience further, learnt about the important contributions of the Port Workers in the development of Port Louis through a PowerPoint presentation made by Mr. S Peerthum. In addition, the public got an overview presentation of the upcoming Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre.

Participants to the three-day training organised by the AGTF © AGTF





The President paying homage to the memory of indentured labourers © AGTF

The Visit of Her Excellency Shrimati Pratibha Devisingh Patil, the President of India April 26 2011

Vikram Mugon, Researcher

Expressing her feelings, Her Excellency wrote:

"Over 175 years ago, a group of men and women landed on this historic site. These courageous souls graced the inhospitable terrain and struggled against all odds to change the course of the history of Mauritius through their determination and their indomitable spirit. I am very happy that this historic site, which has established a permanent immortal bond between the peoples of the two countries, is being preserved as it was many years ago, to serve as a reminder to the current and future generations of the many contributions made by their courageous forefathers in making Mauritius what it is today. I pay my respectful homage to these Aapravasis."

The presidential visit was also the opportunity for Her Excellency to remit to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund the Archival Exhibition-*'Journey of Girmitya'* from the National Archives of India, New Delhi. The AGTF plans to exhibit these documents around the island.

The President of AFRICOM Visits the Aapravasi Ghat, the First World Heritage Site Conferred to Mauritius

Saloni Deerpalsingh

During a three day visit to Mauritius in, July 2011, the President of AFRICOM, Mrs Deirdre Prins Solani, the Executive Director, Dr. Rudo Sithole accompanied by Indian Ocean Islands representative, Mrs. Saloni Deerpalsingh had working sessions with National Museums Council and heritage stakeholders in Mauritius. The aim was to develop a network of support and partnerships in the Indian Ocean Region for museum and heritage development and meet current regional needs.



© AGTF

The International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM) affiliated to ICOM (International Council of Museums) was established in 1991. It is an autonomous and fully-fledged non-governmental organization for museums and heritage professionals with a pan-African scope. The delegation visited Aapravasi Ghat; the first world heritage site conferred to Mauritius by UNESCO and had a working session with Dr. Vijaya Teelock, Chairperson of AGTF and Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) technicians. The International Council of African Museums is based in Nairobi, Kenya and is committed to the 'safeguarding, conserving, sharing of African Heritage resources through resource mobilization, advocacy, support of capacity building efforts, networking and awareness raising so as to achieve a rich vibrant heritage in Africa.'

The Strategic Planning programme of AFRICOM was presented during the working session. Contribution to the development for the Indian Ocean Islands Museums, heritage programme and institutional needs and development was discussed and appraised. The forthcoming BRIC project was presented by Mrs. Corinne Forest and a guided tour was organized for the visitors.

Those who are in the field of museology and heritage can visit AFRICOM website and are invited to register for AFRICOM membership. The link is <http://www.africom.museum>

Feelings Expressed by Some Foreign Visitors at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property 2010 – 2011

Christelle Miao Foh, Research Assistant

“Quelle chance que ce site ait pu être préservé ! Merci a notre guide pour cette visite »

Annabelle and Patrice Murillon – Tourrettes sur Loop, France
– December 3 2010

“This is great to be here at such a historical place.”

Mr. Cho Sunhee – Jeju Culture & Art Foundation –
December 16, 2010

« Extremely important for all to know where the Mauritian society was supported to be. » Melissa Epple – 20 village La Sautafe, USA – December 16 2010

“Very Touching.”

M. Makihama – Tokyo Japan – April 28, 2011

“It is a great moment of pride to visit Aapravasi Ghat when people from India landed in 1834 and they have achieved respect in people of Mauritius with hard work and love. I wish all the best to the prosperity of this great country.”

The Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Mr. Dilip. WALSE PATIL - April 4, 2011



“An extremely inspiring exposure to the ancestral contribution to what we are today. A lofty and hearty recall that make us indebted to our former generations. Thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Mauritius.”

Director of S.I.T.A, leader from the Team A.P; Dr. C. Vijaya Raghava Chavryulm, – July 7, 2011

“I came with my team of Devastanem along with Director Sita AP Hyd. I was very much wonder to see and note the Indians old culture and heritage at Beautiful country Mauritius. The Aapravasi Ghat had really inspired me as well as one team.”

The Executive officer & Spl.G Dy. Collector. Simhadin Appanna temple Simhachalem , Mr. Narasinga Rad -- July 7, 2011

A team of Consultant from Singapore came on to assess the development of Cultural Tourism in Mauritius - September, 14 2011

“A moving tribute to the history and heritage of early Mauritius. Important to memorialize such sites which marks significant moments in history of mankind.”

From Mr. Christopher Koo.



“A monumental historical site, definitely worth preserving and promoting.” From Mr. Evan Cheah.

“ An excellent effort which will stay as a witness to the contribution of the pioneers of Mauritius.” From Mr. Too Pway Kim.

Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

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Obituary

Remembering Marie Livie Chaton: a lesson of joy and happiness

On 29th January 2011, Marie Livie Chaton passed away unexpectedly at the age of 65 years old. When she joined our institution as an Accounts Clerk in 2006, she brought a significant contribution to the AGTF. Her sincere and joyful personality was an example of dedication and loyalty for all of us. The staff of AGTF wishes to pay a solemn homage to the memory of Ms. Livie and address our deep regrets to her family.



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