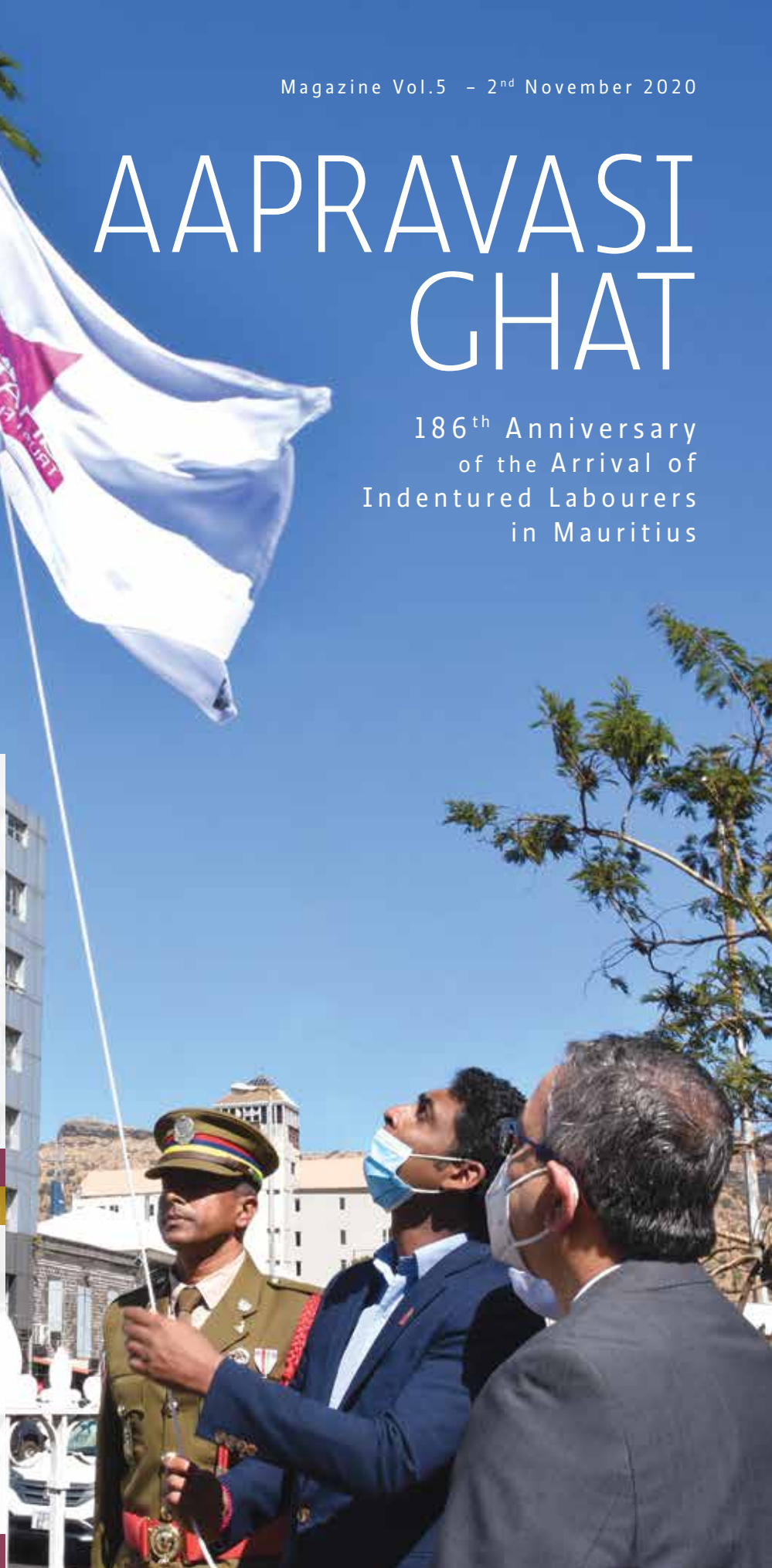


AAPRAVASI GHAT

186th Anniversary
of the Arrival of
Indentured Labourers
in Mauritius



- The 14th Anniversary of the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List
- Rethinking Public Programme in the Era of Covid
- The Action Area Plan for the Heritage District



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Aapravasi Ghat
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006



Table of Contents

Projects and Activities

1. AGTF Project 2020/2021 – *Dr Corinne Forest*
2. New Challenges in managing and revitalizing heritage post Covid-19 – *Natasha Kheddoo- Ramcharitar*
3. Rethinking Public Programme in the era of Covid – *Vikram Mugon*
4. Anniversary of the Inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on Unesco's World Heritage List
5. Covid-19 Sanitary Measures at the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Center and the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site – *Vijayalutchmee Beejadhur-Poteah*
6. A Logo and a Flag to commemorate the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius – *Babita Bahadoor-Rambhujun*
7. My work experience as Field Guide at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund - *Aarti Pydatalli*
8. Visit of His Excellency Eddy Boissézon, Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius at AGWHS
9. An Action Area Plan for the Heritage District – *Dr. Corinne Forest*

1. Determined to be Free : The DePlevitz Petition & the Resistance of the Indian Immigrants in British Mauritius (1861-1875) –*Dr. Satteanund Peerthum and Satyendra Peerthum*
2. The Indian Penal Settlement in Mauritius, 1815-53 – *Professor Clare Anderson*
3. Interview with Professor Clare Anderson of the University of Leicester & International Scholar of Convict Labor - *Satyendra Peerthum*
4. A South African Life-Story: Amir Singh: from Indentured Labourer to Flower Farmer, Loving Father, Grandfather and Icon - *Dr. Vicki Bismilla*
5. Nossy Be as a Hub for African Indentured Labour in the South West Indian Ocean – *Dr. Jehanne-Emmanuelle Monnier*
6. The Emergence & Creolisation of the Indentured Mozambican Community in Mauritius during the Age of Indenture : A Demographic Profiling of the Liberated Africans (1846-1931) – *Satyendra Peerthum*

7. Indian Indenture Era : Doctors and Diseases – *Raj Boodhoo*
8. Cause and Response to Inequalities in the Indentured Labour Diaspora : A Framework for Comparative Analysis –*Dr. Farzana Gounder*
9. Remembering Dr. Idrice Goumany during Pandemic –*Dr. Assad Bhuglah*
10. How the Indenture System Freed the Indian women from India's Stern Society –*Dr. Anand Moheeputh*
11. Indian indentured immigrants and their descendants in Fiji: An overview –*Dr. Rewa Singh*
12. Bittersweet Connections: The Mauritian Model in Hawai'i – *Dr. Nicholas B Miller*
13. Dutch Guiana or Suriname – *Prof. Chan Choenni*
14. Indenture-at-wide: learning from Madeiran sugar routes – *Dr. Cristiana Bastos*

History and Research

1. Kala pani : énigme, survivance et résurgence des images - *Minakshi Carien*
2. Why do the descendants of Makua slaves and liberated Africans remember history differently?: The case of the Durban Zanzibaris –*Dr. Preben Kaarsholm*
3. MGI Folk Museum of Indian Immigration - *Dreesha Teelwah-Dawooraz*
4. Flat Island- An insight into the Quarantine Station (1850s-1880s) – *Christelle Miao Foh and Ashvin Nemchand*
5. From the « Yamse » to the « Jako Malabar », a Focus on Religious Practices during Indenture in India and Reunion Island during the 19th and 20th Century –*Dr. Celine Ramasamy-Giancone*

6. Between Memory and the Past: The site of Bras d'Eau as remembered by the elders - *Babita D. Bahadoor*
7. Loto du patrimoine et crowdfunding : actions en faveur de la conservation et de la restauration du patrimoine en France - *Mirella Hoareau*
8. Kali/Mariamamma Worship in Guyana : A Brief Overview –*Dr. Marcelo Moura Mello*
9. The oral history of the descendants of indentured Indian immigrants: Inspiration for modern Mauritian woman – *Maurina Soodin-Runghen and Kiran Chuttoo Jankee*
10. My Grand-mom Recipes: Gato Patat (Sweet Potatoes Cakes) – *Aarti Pydatalli*

Cultural Heritage

Editorial Team:

Dr. A. Janoo, Chairman of the Editorial Committee | *Mrs. J. Dawoosing*, Vice-Chairman | *Mrs. S. Gokool*, Board Member | *Mrs. J. Cooshna*, Board Member | *Mrs. S. Ramlallah*, Board Member | *Mr. J. Jhummun*, Board Member | *Mr. S. Peerthum*, Historian | *Mrs. C. Miao Foh*, Research Assistant

Editorial

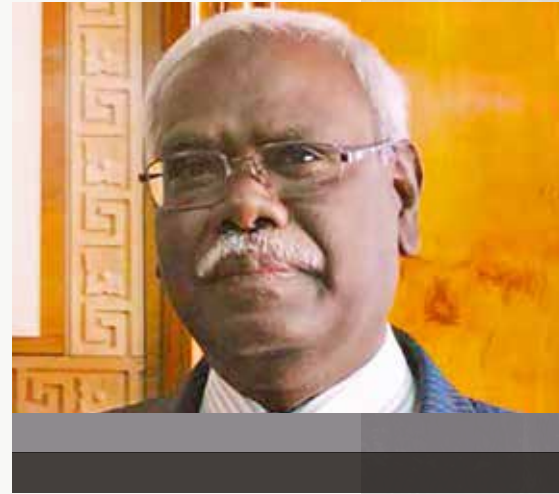
This 2nd November 2020, marks the 186th Anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius. The arrival of these brave Indian indentured immigrants and other contract workers from different parts of the greater Indian Ocean World or the Mare Indicum ushered a new period in Mauritian history. Their gradual introduction over a period of more than six decades forever altered the demography, society, economy and politics of our country.

It was by the sweat of their brows, indefatigable energy, and unwavering determination that our valiant ancestors made Mauritius the most important exporter of sugar in the British Empire and one of the largest sugar producers in the plantation world during the mid-19th century. As history bears witness, the indentured labourers and their descendants are the builders of Mauritius and have played a key role in shaping its history.

Mauritius shares a unique and special social, ethnic, cultural, and political relationship with Mother India, the country of origin of our ancestors. I am the descendant of Immigrant Dhuny, No. 315847 who came from Chupra Zillah of Bihar in Northern India. He reached the Mauritian Ghat from Calcutta in 1865 at the age of 14. He belonged to the Malee sub-caste which mostly refers to the vegetable sellers or cultivators' class. He was engaged on a five-year contract as labourer on 'Fiyette' sugar estate, presently known as Poste La Fayette in the district of Flacq near Bras d'Eau National Park. Today, I am proud to say that he is my ancestor.

The AGTF is one of the rare and important institutions in the world dedicated to research on indentured labour and indentured labourers. In order to achieve one of its major objectives, as recommended by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, to "document the extent and scope of indenture", the AGTF has established a long-term research plan and management plan with the view to focus on key aspects of indenture in Mauritius. In combining the results of research in archaeology and history including oral history, and anthropology and ethnography with heritage conservation, the AGTF generates the relevant multidisciplinary approach to undertake projects for the preservation and management of sites related to the history of indenture.

During the past two decades, with the collaboration of various stakeholders such as the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, the National Heritage Fund, the Municipality of Port Louis, and others, the AGTF has been able to ensure sustainable balance between heritage preservation and the requirements of the tourism industry. Integrated projects form part of the wider perspective of AGTF on heritage. This institution aims at reintegrating heritage in the lives of Mauritians. And in the current difficult context and impact of Covid, economic recession and government budgetary constraints, the AGTF is working on a new plan of actions developing strategies in order to attract visitors to the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and promote it as well.



Over the past six years, ever since I have assumed the chairmanship of AGTF, this approach has been exemplified. In 2014, the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC), the only major high-tech and state of the art museum dedicated to indentured labour, was opened, and since it has received more than 330,000 Mauritian and overseas visitors. The following year, the Indenture Immigration Archives of the Republic of Mauritius linked with the history of the Girmityas in Mauritius was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register and AGTF's contribution in this project has been lauded.

In 2016, *Geet Gawai* which is associated with the oral traditions of the *Girmityas* was inscribed on UNESCO's list of Masterpieces of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The following year, the first International Scientific Committee of the Indentured Labour Route Project was held in October in Mauritius. It was a laudable success. It led to the establishment of the ILRP Secretariat at the AGTF which had been working on several related projects. In May 2019, the conservation works on the Old Labourers' Quarters at Trianon were completed after several years and it is AGTF's 3rd major conservation project after the Apravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and the Vagrant Depot.

Between 2016 and 2019, commemoration ceremonies highlighted by cultural programmes were held at Antoinette, Forbach, and Belle Mare with a view to valorise these significant indenture sites. In addition, during the past 6 years, the AGTF launched several publications and exhibits on indenture and indenture sites in Mauritius, the region, and the world. In July 2020, after a struggle of more than 3 long years, the AGTF's flag was finally unveiled, during an auspicious ceremony marking the inscription of our site on the World Heritage List. It should be noted that this ceremony was graced by two eminent personalities, namely the new and dynamic Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage and Indian High Commissioner. This new flag embodies the essence of our site and we are proud it.

In line with the objectives of its Act, the AGTF is honoured to launch on this 2nd November its annual magazine and, for the first time, an exhibition on indenture in the world on-line and in softcopy which will be followed by video messages by our Minister and scholars of indenture from the different parts of the world.

Lastly, in line with its mission the AGTF is committed, as it has been doing for the past two decades, to promote the Apravasi Ghat World Heritage and other indenture sites, and the history of the brave indentured workers in Mauritius, the region, and in different parts of the world,

Dharam Yash Deo Dhuny.
Chairman, AGTF

2nd November 2020



Republic of Mauritius

President's *Message*



It is my immense pleasure to be associated with the Commemoration of the 186th Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius through the issue of an e-magazine by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund.

Every 2nd November, we have a *devoir de mémoire* to honour the courage, sacrifice and hard work of the Indentured Labourers. Commonly known as the “*girimityas*”, they have had a significant demographic, economic, cultural and social impact in Mauritius.

The indentured labourers have bequeathed a rich legacy of tolerance and adaptability which has helped to cement ties with other migrants with diverse origins and cultures, and have been instrumental to the emergence of a true Mauritian identity.

Furthermore, despite their harsh working conditions, discrimination and even humiliation, our forefathers preserved their culture, language, beliefs, rituals and cultural practices. The indentured labourers will forever be remembered for their inherent values, hardworking nature and most importantly their remarkable resilience while being accommodating.

At a time of global uncertainties amid the current pandemic, let us be inspired by the virtues of our forefathers which forms the basis of the Mauritian nation living in unity, peace and harmony, while sharing the values of compassion and a resolute desire to thrive.

Prithvirajsing Roopun, G.C.S.K
President of the Republic of Mauritius



Republic of Mauritius



Prime Minister's *Message*

I am delighted to have the opportunity of writing this message for the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund magazine published on the occasion of the 186th Anniversary of the arrival indentured labourers in Mauritius.

This magazine not only illustrates the achievements and progress made in terms of research on indenture, but it also pays a fitting tribute to our ancestors who first entered the island through the Immigration Depot, known as Coolie Ghat until 1987.

Since its creation in 1849, the Immigration Depot has witnessed the arrival of hundreds of thousands of our forebears from different parts of the world. The perseverance, resilience, and hard work of these immigrants have helped transform our country into a peaceful, multi-ethnic, and democratic country, which serves as a shining beacon to the rest of the world.

The Republic of Mauritius may pride itself with the fact that it is the only country that houses two World Heritage Sites related to Slavery and Indenture, namely Le Morne Cultural Landscape and the Aapravasi Ghat.

Government is determined to support projects that raise awareness on the experience of indentured labourers and the key role of Mauritius in the process of indentureship. This will ensure transmission of values, history, and culture to the upcoming generations.

Recent successful projects that have contributed to promote a part of history that was hardly known include the setting up of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Center; the inscription of Indentured Immigration Records of Mauritius on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, and of the Geet Gawai on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of the UNESCO; and the Trianon Barracks Conservation Project. The Indentured Labour Route Project is underway with the setting up of the International Scientific Committee. Moreover, the multidisciplinary research on the history and heritage of indenture in Mauritius and the world continue to add to our understanding of our past.

I would like to congratulate the dedicated team of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for their efforts in preserving, protecting, and promoting the site at national and international level. I wish them plenty of success in their future endeavours.

Pravind Kumar Jugnauth
Prime Minister

04 September 2020



Republic of Mauritius

Minister's *Message*



I am pleased to be associated with the publication of this Annual Magazine which marks the 186th anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers in Mauritius. The first Indian immigrants who arrived in Mauritius on 2nd November 1834, were the pioneers and the precursors of almost half million immigrants who eventually called this small Indian Ocean island their home.

Our diversity is our strength and the values from our ancestors make us stand strong and face difficult times. Unity is best seen when an adversity hits us. Setting aside our ideological and political differences, as one people we assembled on the same boat to face the storm. As one nation, we stood unified in solidarity successfully faced the Covid-19 challenges.

With the outbreak of the Covid-19, cultural sites as well as World Heritage Sites had to close down. During the UNESCO's webinar of all Ministers of Culture new measures had to be defined to support cultural actors and we came up with a 13-measures Post Covid-19 Action Plan. One of the main actions which has already been implemented is the introduction of a website enabling the virtual tour of the World Heritage Property. This property is now accessible anytime and anywhere.

I take this opportunity to commend the Chairman, the Board, and the Staff of the Apravasi Ghat Trust Fund for the various projects and initiatives undertaken to preserve and promote this World Heritage Property.

I wish the Apravasi Ghat Trust Fund success in their endeavors.

A. Teeluck
Minister



City Hall - Port Louis



Lord Mayor's *Message*

It is a great honour and privilege for me to address a message in this Magazine on the occasion of the 186th anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

The Aapravasi Ghat is a “Lieu de Mémoire” to the pain and anguish of the early pioneers who began their journey 180 years ago. Through their hard work, sacrifices and sufferings they paved the way for the freedom and prosperity that is now being enjoyed in Mauritius.

These very first footsteps changed the course of history in Mauritius. I am thankful to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for giving me the opportunity on this auspicious day to pay tribute to our ancestors, that is, those who landed on the shores of this rainbow island from India and other parts of the world.

The Aapravasi Ghat holds great symbolic meaning. It is the surviving example of this unique modern diaspora and strands as a major historic testimony of the indentured workers. The UNESCO classified it as a World Heritage Site, a stepstone for nation building in Mauritius. It enriches humanity and enhances values and morality among people of different cultures and creed.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the Chairman and members of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board as well as the employees for their commitment and wish them great success in their future endeavours.

Mahfooz M Cader Saïb
Lord Mayor of Port Louis

21 July 2020



High Commissioner of India

Message



Human history has been one of migrations in different forms and under different circumstances. Understanding one's roots is a fundamental desire among all peoples. Not only at the individual and family level but also at a broader level of the society and a nation.

The Aapravasi Ghat is a solemn place that symbolizes a phase of a bygone colonial era based on an exploitative economic model that had profound implications. For millions of migrants who left their homes to travel thousands of miles across the oceans to land on distant unknown shores to take up completely new lives, at a time when there was little possibility of communication with families and friends left behind.

This migration transformed the histories and economies of remote islands, which these migrants made their home and where they lived and toiled for more than a century. The ongoing story of these workers and their families is intimately linked to the story of Mauritius.

Aapravasi Ghat remains a special place today not only for those whose ancestors climbed this Ghat to first arrive in Mauritius but is also a reminder of the economic and other forces that drove those developments. It can help us learn from our past and to understand the context to contemporary developments and progress.

Today as one retraces these 16 iconic steps, it touches one's heart to imagine the myriad emotions of the hundreds of thousands of workers who reached these shores on sailing ships, and climbed these steps to commence a new life here on Mauritius island.

It is fitting that the international community at the United Nations recognized this as our collective World Heritage to remind us of those times and circumstances.

I compliment the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and all the historians, experts and other specialists and leaders who have worked on preserving this historic site and creating a wonderful and informative museum.


Tanmaya Lal
High Commissioner of India

AGTF Projects 2020/2021

Dr. Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit

This year has been an exceptional one for the world at large. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought a number of unprecedented measures leading to think of new ways to promote and take care of our heritage. The pandemic has led to the closure of more than 80% of the World Heritage Properties around the world. As at 29 June 2020, 44% of the World Heritage Properties were still closed while 68% had opened after the end of lockdown in their respective countries. In Mauritius, the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site opened its doors on 15 June 2020 introducing specific measures responding to the Covid-19 prevention.

From the UN World Tourism Organisation to the UNESCO and ICOMOS, all organisations appealed for synergies among heritage institutions to support collective efforts in favour of heritage. In this respect, the UNESCO organised an online meeting that brought together over 130 Ministers of Culture on 22nd April 2020 to discuss the impact and propose responses to the pandemic. This experience has shown that strategies at World Heritage Properties should include tools that promote a wider dissemination with the view to include all types of audience.

If the pandemic had a significant impact on the activities at World Heritage Properties, it also provided opportunities. The use of digital tools has significantly increased with the pandemic.

The Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage has developed an Action Plan to promote such initiatives. At the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property, confinement led to the development of a virtual visit of Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and to the launching of a padlet presenting educational materials to cater for a wide audience in Mauritius and in other countries. On 16 July 2020, the padlet was launched on the occasion of the 14th Anniversary of the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage List by Hon. Avinash Teeluck, Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage in the presence of Mr Dhuny, Chairman of the AGTF. The padlet is now accessible to a worldwide audience at the following link: <https://padlet.com/aapravasighat/e9nf95a6e6u8h7sg>

The production of such tools is based on the extensive research on indenture undertaken at the AGTF in the last 17 years. As one of the key institutions for research on Indenture, the AGTF will, in 2021, implement Objective 6 of its strategic plan to further consolidate its status. To this end, research studies will focus on sugar estates. It will also look at early indenture to better understand the status of indentured labourers and how they were able to access higher positions in the society. Research will also focus on memory and intangible cultural heritage with the view to connect the past with the present. The ultimate goal is to identify attributes that will help substantiate the significance of the World Heritage property.

Research on Flat Island will continue to better understand the significance of this unique site used as a quarantine station in the nineteenth century. The AGTF has documented the features of the quarantine station on the islet, and plans to initiate urgent minor, conservation in collaboration with the Forestry Service under the aegis of the Ministry of Agro-Industry. The documentation and restoration would also support the inclusion of the islet in a regional and international trail linking indentured labour sites. The AGTF proposes to include the Trianon Heritage Site, a former sugar estate where indentured labourers worked in the trail. To this end, basic visitor facilities will be developed to allow access to the public.



Conservation work at Trianon Barracks. Source: AGTF

New Challenges in Managing and Revitalizing Heritage Post Covid-19

Natasha Kheddoo-Ramcharitar, Research Assistant

Lockdown pressures due to the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic have not only negatively wedged the world economy but have also profoundly impacted on the heritage and cultural sectors. During this period, World Heritage Sites were closed, traditional practices of local community hindered and craft artists reliant on cultural tourism for their livelihood were greatly affected. These are some of the impacts that have driven the cultural heritage sector to a standstill. As at 29 April 2020, 90% countries had closed or partially closed their World Heritage Sites.

UNESCO took several initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic to support World Heritage Sites around the world and led global social media campaigns such as the one entitled 'Share Culture and Share Our Heritage' launched in April 2020. The aim of this campaign was to promote access to education and cultural heritage during worldwide confinement. UNESCO also launched an online exhibition including heritage properties. Short videos also showed site managers presenting the situation at World Heritage Properties. Children were invited to share their creativity and develop their interest through drawings of World Heritage Properties. UNESCO has envisaged to continue with the campaigns so as to share reflection on possible measures to safeguard World Heritage Properties and promote sustainable tourism. In addition to the campaigns, an online meeting with Culture Ministers across the world was held in April 2020 to exchange information and views on the impact on the cultural sector due to the crisis. Ministers were invited to share the experience that their countries were facing and to identify appropriate measures. Hon. Avinash Teeluck, Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage also participated and shared his views on the current prevailing situation.

Developing countries, such as Mauritius, encountering challenges to revitalize its heritage assets may experience a more intricate situation when the foremost priority as post Covid-19 measure is the reactivation of the country's

economy. The pandemic has paralyzed the economy of every country and Mauritius depending largely on the revenue from the tourism industry, has not been spared. Mauritius depends on foreign visitors to market its cultural and heritage resources. Since the closing of the frontier and lockdown in March 2020, this industry has suffered tremendously with a complete decline in the arrival of tourists. As a result, festivals, cultural events, craft and art markets were annulled or postponed and heritage sites and museums were closed.

Among the most affected sector of heritage are museums where activities ceased since the outbreak of the pandemic. According to UNESCO's report entitled Museums Around the World 90% of museums have closed their doors in May 2020 and 10% of the museums may never reopen. This situation is not only chaotic financially but also socially as museums provide a sense of cohesion among local communities through the presentation and sharing of traditional knowledge, cultural values and collective memory. Museums do not only serve as a place to preserve common heritage but also to educate the present and future generations. The operation of museums in Mauritius has known a downturn since March 2020 due to confinement measures. Private museums relying significantly on visitor's entrance fees are greatly affected. With the lifting of lockdown in June 2020, activities in both public and private museums have resumed but have received a very limited number of visitors. The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) and the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property (AGWHP) have reopened their doors to visitors since mid-June 2020. Only a few visitors a day were recorded and it is expected that the number of visits may be much lower than the number usually recorded during this period of the year. Fortunately, many countries around the world have opened their museums virtually thanks to the digital platforms and were able to share the richness of their collections through online exhibitions. A virtual tour of the Aapravasi

Ghat World Heritage Property operational since 2011 was also shared among the social network community. The virtual tour of the interpretation centre was also launched to provide the experience of visit from home.

Another affected segment is the intangible cultural heritage. Traditional practices involving the safeguarding of living heritage were forcibly disrupted with no activities happening to sustain the continuity in sharing and promoting the know-how among the local community. Owing to confinement restrictions, performers refrained from holding events when they are usually active. With no cultural activities such as rituals and festive events happening, the heritage practitioners are deprived of their distinctiveness in society as they are unable to express and share elements of their intangible cultural heritage with the wider community. This has not only caused a social imbalance but also a financial disparity as many depend on these traditional practices to generate their income. A perfect example in the local context is the pre-wedding practices of *Geet Gawai*, an intangible cultural heritage inscribed on the representative list of UNESCO in 2016. As no wedding ceremonies took place during the lockdown period, the practitioners of *Geet Gawai* were unable to perform on public platforms. Local artists performing the traditional Mauritian *Séga Tipik*, another intangible cultural heritage inscribed on UNESCO's representative list in 2014, are experiencing the same situation. Though lockdown measures have been lifted, these circumstances are not expected to change considering that social gatherings are restricted. The creative industry dealing with art and crafts also forming part of our

cultural heritage, is suffering as actors' revenues depend on the purchase of their products by tourists. One of the most reputed craft markets located at the Central Market of Port Louis highly visited by tourists is struggling for its survival as foreign customers have become very rare. Craftsmen who were regularly displaying their creative products in hotels and touristic places are unable to produce more of their products as the majority of the hotels are closed thus bringing a drastic loss in their revenue.

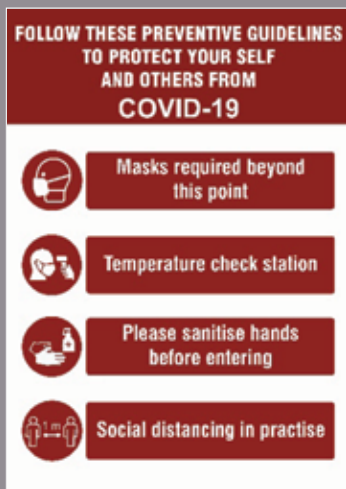
The expected economic recession would also bring further challenges in the conservation of historic structures. Public and private sectors may refrain from investing in built heritage. What is more, private promoters have on several occasions expressed their concern over the high cost of construction materials required for the refurbishment of historic buildings. Following the impact of the pandemic and considering the current financial instability prevailing, it appears that the price of many of these materials would increase. This situation may dissuade private promoters to invest in the restoration of such buildings in the immediate future. As a result, rehabilitation and restoration of buildings may be delayed and this situation may potentially accelerate their demolition and transformation. The impact of Covid-19 on some on-going conservation projects can already be observed. From the heritage conservation point of view, a closed and unused newly restored building is still at risk of deterioration if regular maintenance is not carried out. Consequently, the lack of investment in heritage rehabilitation and restoration may have a significant impact on the medium-term conservation of heritage buildings.

As the whole world is focusing on fighting the pandemic and finding a remedy, the overall impact on the heritage sector is still difficult to evaluate. In order to ensure continuity in the interaction between cultural sites and heritage activities, virtual platforms would be the most effective way to share the significance of heritage with the wider world and raise attention to the need for its conservation. Consultations with the local community may be beneficial to develop a policy providing objectives and framework in the use of digital tools. Despite being a Covid-19 free country, socio-economic activities in Mauritius will continue to suffer while the frontiers are closed and the significant impact on various sectors including heritage seems inevitable.



Ex- Trou Fanfaron Police station in the Buffer Zone 2 of the AGWHP

*Welcoming visitors -
The new Normal*



Rethinking Public Programme in the Era of Covid

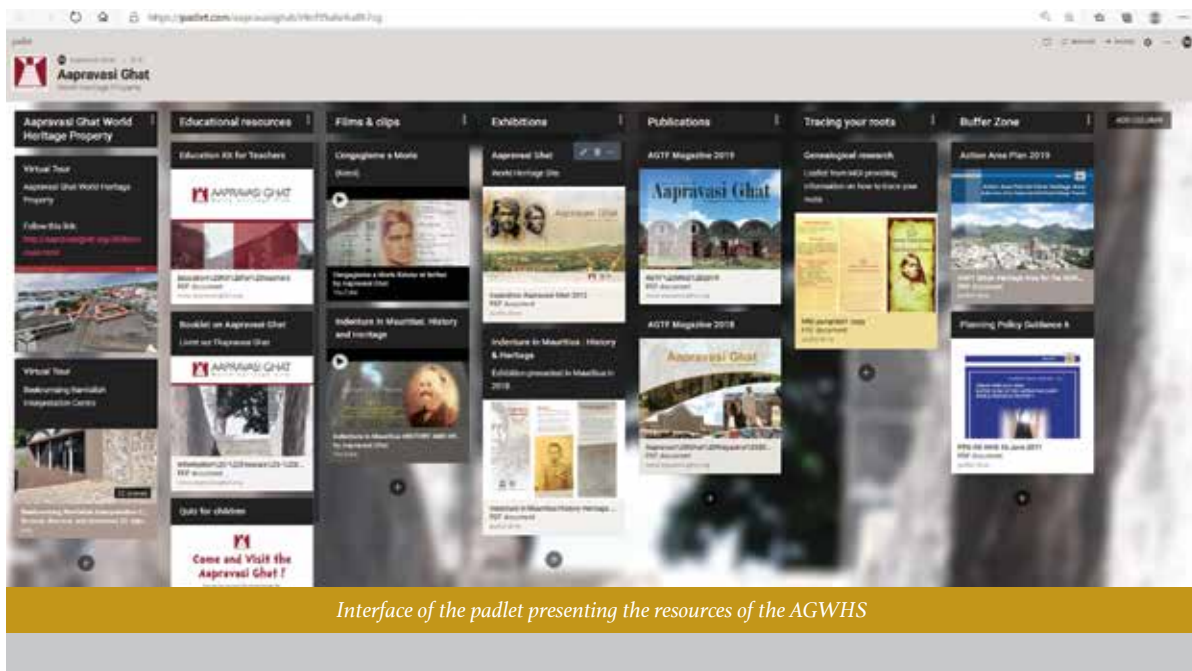
Vikram Mugon, Heritage Interpretation Manager

To fight the propagation of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus, a strict lockdown was imposed in Mauritius between March and June 2020. Along with almost 6 billion people around the world, Mauritians also were confined in their homes. School classes were held via the internet. Leisure and entertainment activities were restricted to activities such as gardening, reading, television or social media exchanges. Family gatherings and dinners took place via digital platforms. Museums and cultural institutions around the world were closed. Many of them might not open again due to the severe financial crisis that the closure entailed. After almost 3 months of closure, the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site reopened its doors to the public on 15 June 2020, providing a glimpse of what the 'new normal' might look like for those returning to cultural venues. If on one hand, the 'new normal' requires the museum and heritage practitioners to be prepared for risks worthy of scripts of science fiction movies, on the other hand resilience seems to be the buzz word.

Screening of temperature at the entrance, welcoming smile of front-of-house staff hidden behind odd and yet business as usual masks, presence of sanitizer and signage reminding visitors constantly of the practice of social distancing, prescribed routes and extra cleaning protocols are among some of the changes that visitors can expect. They can moreover also expect a more pleasant experience of the place with a noticeable decrease in the number of visitors. With our frontiers closed, outbound tourists which make almost 60 percent of our audience are not visiting us. Students too are fewer in numbers as they readapt to their new school calendar and environment.



Comparison of number of visitors per month 2017-2020



Interface of the padlet presenting the resources of the AGWHS

While it is always pleasing to welcome the few visitors that we are receiving, with the new normal the professionals in the cultural sector need to think of new and creative strategies to reach out to their audiences. Lest the risk of seeing significant decreases in the number of visitation, the 'new normal' needs to be able to integrate unprecedented situations such as pandemics to remain within the reach of its public. The risk preparedness plan, traditionally oriented towards natural hazards such as floods or hurricanes or human induced hazards such as burglary or fire, need to be reviewed to integrate scenarios which also impact on one of the fundamentals of the museum, its audience.

Adapting to the circumstances imposed by the pandemic, many museums worldwide resorted to the internet and digital platforms to provide a wide range of resources to showcase their collections and ease the distress that many might have felt during these times of hardships. While the use of technology cannot substitute to the experience that one can feel by visiting cultural places, it can definitely help to create awareness about the latter as well as provide a means of distraction and escapism for people both locally and internationally. Digital technology is increasingly being seen as the marketing and educational tool for museums and the cultural sector.

With more than 67% of the Mauritian population having access to the internet and the social media (Internet World Stats, 2020), the potential of digital platforms to promote and valorize

museums, heritage and the cultural sector cannot be occulted. In line with this trend and in response to the Covid Action Plan of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is endeavouring to increase its visibility on the internet. It is thus possible now to have a virtual tour of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre as well as that of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site.

Virtual visitors can from the comfort of their home appreciate the history and importance of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and that of indenture. By accessing the digital platforms made available in the form of a padlet, teachers may furthermore, avail of a variety of pedagogical resources. It is hoped that through the use of these resources teachers would be able to better prepare the visit of their students, whenever the post covid period starts. This platform which proposes resources for diverse audiences can be accessed via the link <https://padlet.com/aapravasighat/e9nf95a6e6u8h7sg>.

In the same vein, virtual outreach programmes are being designed by museum staff. Using similar platforms that have been used by teachers to conduct online classes during the confinement period, we hope to formulate the same types of programmes to remain in contact of with our audiences: programmes which can not only address the 'website generation' but also appeal to the generation of 'facebookers' and grab the attention of 'hashtagger'.

Covid 19 Sanitary Measures at the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site

Vijayalutchmee Beejadhur Poteah, Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 health crisis in 2020, 95% of the world's museums and more than 80% of UNESCO World Heritage properties were forced to temporarily close their doors to protect their visitors. As lockdowns gradually come to an end in several regions and countries, cultural institutions have had to revise and update their health security protocols to reopen properly.

Following the detection of 3 cases of COVID 19 in Mauritius on 18 March 2020, the Government enforced a strict sanitary curfew in the island including the closure of heritage sites and museums since 20 March 2020. These strict sanitary measures proved to be quite effective and Mauritius has been cited as an example in the fight against the COVID-19. After more than 50 days of no contamination, within the local community, almost all sanitary restrictions were lifted on 15 June 2020.

The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre, closed since the 20th of March 2020, have reopened their gates to the public. Moreover, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has implemented sanitary and social distancing measures to reinforce and ensure a safe and enjoyable visit such as:

1. Temperature screening of visitors at the entrance of the site
2. Compulsory mask wearing by visitors
3. Hand sanitizers available to visitors
4. Guided visits are available upon prior booking only for groups not exceeding five people lest the persons are from the same family.

5. The carrying capacity of each section has been reduced to allow for social distancing

Signage about good practices have been installed in all parts of the interpretation Centre and the World Heritage Site, to remind visitors of the need to maintain caution. Thus, visitors are most welcome to the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre and the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and to discover or rediscover the history of this unique place and that of the thousands of indentured workers who once passed through it.



Sign inviting social distancing at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site

Anniversary of the Inscription of Aapravasi Ghat on Unesco's World Heritage List

On 16th July 2020, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) celebrated the 14th year of inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on Unesco's World Heritage List. To mark this event, the Trust Fund (Board members and staff) organized an event in the presence of the Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage, the Honorable Avinash Teeluck, the High Commissioner of India, Mr Tanmaya Lal and the Mayor of the City Council of Port Louis, His Lordship Mahfooz Moussa Cadarsaib.

The event was marked by several highlights. The first one was the launching of the padlet on Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage site by the Honorable Avinash Teeluck. The padlet which is an online virtual application was created in view of sharing and communicating with the public, and giving them virtual access to the World Heritage Site, the Beekrumsing Ramallah Interpretation Centre and other resources related to indenture. The second highpoint was a symbolic flag raising to highlight the achievements of the Trust Fund throughout the years. And lastly, Site Conservation

workers, who often remain in the background during events, took the front stage to share their working experiences in the field of conservation of heritage.

The simple but intense event ended with the signing of the visitors' book where the distinguished guests wrote:

- *A big day for AGTF. I thank the entire team and wish you all good luck. With the support of the MACH – Honorable Avinash Teeluck, Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage*
- *It is always a privilege and honour to visit this solemn symbol of the unbreakable ties between our peoples and a reminder of a bygone era but also the progress Mauritian people and nation have made since then – Tanmaya Lal, High Commissioner India*
- *A big thank to the AGTF. Great job – His Lordship Mahfooz Cardersaib, Lord Mayor of the City Council of Port Louis.*



Group photo the site conservation team of the AGTF.

A Logo and a Flag to commemorate the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius

Babita D. Bahadoor, Research Assistant



The new logo of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund was unveiled for the first time in 2002 following a logo competition organized by the AGTF. The competition was won by Mr. Krishen Maurymoothoo who designed the logo and who was then the Art Director at Maurice Publicité Ltd. The Aapravasi Ghat was then a National Monument until the enactment of the National Heritage Fund Act in 2003 when it was designated as a National Heritage. In 2006, the Aapravasi Ghat was inscribed on the list of World Heritage Sites under Criteria (vi) by UNESCO.

This logo pays tribute to the thousands of indentured labourers who came to Mauritius from different parts of the Indian Ocean world and beyond, and who contributed to the development of the country. It represents the step of the immigrant whose footprint symbolizes the link between Mauritius and the world, mostly India which has been illustrated in the logo itself; the footprint represents the map of India where the majority of immigrants

originated and the map of Mauritius is nested in the letter 'G' of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund wordings.

This year, in the context of the 14th Anniversary of the Inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat on the World Heritage list, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund has flown its Flag at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site as a symbol of its achievements since 2001 to present time as well as to showcase the importance of the Aapravasi Ghat Immigration Depot which has witnessed the arrival of more than 450,000 of indentured immigrants from different parts of the world in Mauritius. Despite the fact that only ¼ of the Aapravasi Ghat immigration depot remains today, it is the only well-preserved and surviving structure that exists in the entire world which symbolizes the 'Great Experiment' which was initiated for the first time in the British colony of Mauritius in the early 19th century, and served as a model to other British Colonies.



ABOUT THE DESIGNER:

Krishen Maurymoothoo

Mr. Maurymoothoo, aged 47, is now Senior Art Director at FCB

Cread, says that he is proud that the AGTF bears his artistic imprint and tells us more about the creation of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund logo,

« Je suis fier que l'Aapravasi Ghat porte mon empreinte artistique. 18 ans après, je me souviens toujours. Je participais au concours de logo organisé par AGTF en 2002.

L'arrivée des premiers travailleurs engagés est marquée par les marches de l'Aapravasi Ghat qu'ils avaient emprunté pour fouler le sol mauricien. Ils y ont laissé leurs empreintes.

Ainsi, je me suis inspiré des empreintes de pied pour créer le logo. Je devais d'abord reproduire une empreinte de pied.

J'ai alors appliqué de la peinture sur la plante de mon pied et je l'ai pressée sur des feuilles A4. Elles étaient posées sur le carrelage.

Au fur et à mesure que je marchais, la peinture pâlisait. La dernière feuille m'a intriguée. La forme de mon pied ressemblait à la carte de l'Inde.

Et la majorité de nos ancêtres en sont issus. Comme le logo devait aussi représenter Maurice, la carte de l'île est nichée dans le G de l'AGTF.

Ce logo m'a valu le premier prix. »

My work experience as Field Guide

Aarti Pydatalli, Heritage Field Guide

The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) was set up in 2001, in view of conducting research on the history of indenture in Mauritius and elsewhere as well as to protect, preserve and promote the Aapravasi Ghat Heritage Site. Four years later, I had the privilege to join the AGTF's team as a Field Guide. My work consisted, among others, in assisting the Research Assistant in recording interviews and keeping an updated record of the interviews, and also to conduct guided visits of the World Heritage Site. It has been a learning journey from the beginning of my appointment as I did not have any experience in the field of heritage and indenture and knew little about the functioning of this recently founded institution. The then Chairperson of the AGTF, Dr. Vijaya Teelock, Historian and Professor at the University of Mauritius greatly encouraged and guided my other colleagues and me.

As a Field Guide, I was engaged in an "Oral History Oral Tradition" project which was supervised by Vina Balgobin, Senior Lecturer at the University of Mauritius assisted

by Simla Ramlagan, Research Assistant. It consisted in conducting interviews with Mauritians aged 60 years old and above, who were descendants of indentured immigrants. The aim was to collect as much information on their past experiences and memories regarding their life on sugar estates. Since then, I was trained in Oral History and I assisted S. Ramlagan by filming interviewees. It was through this project which lasted for 5 years that I acquired a sound knowledge of the Oral history methodology and I became familiar with camera-recording devices. Moreover, I had the opportunity to interact with many people of different social backgrounds.

This year the Aapravasi Ghat celebrated its 14th year of anniversary of its inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List. I feel really very lucky to have witnessed and contributed in some way or the other, to its nomination on the World Heritage. My 15 years at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund have been a learning curve and I am proud to be part of this dynamic team.



Visit of His Excellency Eddy Boissézon, Vice-President of the Republic of Mauritius at the AGWHS

To mark the International Day for non-violence and to pay tribute to indentured labourers, the Vice-President, His Excellency Eddy Boissézon visited the Beekrusing Ramlallah Interpretation Center and the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. This International Day is a reminder to the principles of non-violence advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

After his visit, His Excellency wrote a beautiful message to mark this day of non-violence. He wrote:

Encore ému de cette visite dans le temps. En ce jour de non-violence, cela démontre qu'avec de la patience et la non-violence on peut bâtir un état. Merci à nos aînés.

Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon, 2 Octobre 2020.

An Action Area Plan for the Heritage District

Dr. Corinne Forest, Head Technical Unit



In December 2019, the Government of Mauritius adopted an Action Area Plan for the Heritage District (Buffer Zone) located in the surroundings of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property. The document was developed by the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and the National Heritage Fund following the recommendation of the joint ICOMOS/UNESCO Advisory Mission to Mauritius in May 2018 to prepare “an integrated vision and master plan for the buffer zone areas”.

With the increasing number of large-scale development projects in the city centre, the document serves as a master plan providing a set of objectives and actions to ensure integrated development in the city centre. The document rests on the principles addressed in the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) recommendation adopted by UNESCO in 2011 that advocates a global approach to development. In the heritage district, the objective is to take into consideration the benefits and the potential negative impacts of the development for the area and adjust the projects by way of Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) to achieve sustainability.

In the last 20 years, many studies have looked at ways cities are developing and have assessed various economic models. One main statement is the growing concentration of commercial activities outside city centres causing their gradual economic desertion. One of the strategies

to sustain commercial activities in cities is to invest and capitalize on the city’s own identity and heritage as capital assets. This principle drives to the enhancement of city centres which offer unique commercial experience as opposed to uniform and standardized commercial malls that generally adopt similar architecture and offer similar services wherever their geographical location may be. In the contemporary world, this principle also responds to the growing interest for cultural tourism. As the World Tourism Organisation reports, 46% of the World’s tourists travel with the intention to discover new cultures and derive unique cultural experiences.

By capitalizing on the heritage of the city, the Action Area Plan advocates a balanced approach between the enhancement of the city’s unique attributes and its economic development. This positioning will be guided by an overarching Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) that will provide a framework for the implementation of actions striving for the sustainable development of the city. This approach is based on a number of studies guiding the implementation of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (“Transforming our World”). The current experience conducted in Port Louis is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) no. 11 for Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Determined to be Free: The De Plevitz Petition & the Resistance of the Indian Immigrants in British Mauritius (1861-1875)¹

*Dr. Satteanund Peerthum, Senior Historian, Ex-Minister & Ambassador
Satyendra Peerthum, Historian*

One of the major historic documents in Mauritius during the Age of Indenture between 1826 and 1910 is the de Plevitz Petition which was drafted and signed in 1871 by Adolphe de Plevitz and thousands of Indian immigrants who were determined to be free by securing their individual rights. In order to understand its significance, it is crucial to understand the historical context and period during which it was drafted and submitted to Governor Sir Hamilton Gordon by de Plevitz almost one and a half century ago.

The mass arrest and resistance of the Indian immigrants

Between January 1861 and December 1871, around 206,304 immigrants were arrested, some repeatedly, for vagrancy, illegal absence, and desertion with most spending 1 to 3 months in prison sometimes with hard labour and others spending almost a year or more behind bars as repeat offenders and for petty crimes. During this period, tens of thousands were imprisoned at the Vagrant Depot and in the island's other small depots as vagrants and deserters.²

During the same period, the planters, employers, and estate managers filed an estimated 80,380 complaints against their indentured workers for various so-called offences such as desertion, illegal absence, insolence, refusal to work, feigning illness, and other acts of resistance. For their part, between 1861 and 1871, the indentured and ex-indentured workers counter-attacked by filing 42,660 complaints against their employers for

non-payment of wages, mistreatment, and for not fulfilling the conditions of their contract like the provision of food, clothing, and proper shelter.³

Eventually, several years of extreme oppression of the Indian immigrants led, between January and June 1871, to the signing of a historic petition by 9,401 Indian immigrants, mostly Old Immigrants and some New Immigrants and even some Indian merchants and traders and Indo-Mauritians. This famous petition was drafted by Adolphe de Plevitz, the manager of Nouvelle Découverte Estate. De Plevitz was of French and German origins, and a vocal defender of the indentured workers.

*Adolphe de Plevitz, 1868⁴. (MNA/
Photo and Lithograph Collection)*



The Old Indian Immigrants who signed the Petition

Around 65% or 6,110 signatories were Old Indian Immigrants who had reached Mauritian shores between 1826 and 1852. In other words, the majority of these Old Indian Immigrants had been living in Mauritius for 45 to 19 years and were still being harassed by the colonial police and administrators and being treated as aliens or the other and not as residents. Furthermore, over 35% among the petitioners knew how to sign their names in their native Indian languages, thus many

¹ Research for this article was undertaken at the MGI Indian Immigration Archives, the Mauritius National Archives, and the National Library of Mauritius in 2019.

² MNA/RA series, Reports and Letters of the Prison Committee for 1861 to 1871; Peerthum, *They came to Mauritian Shores: The life stories and History of the indentured labourers in Mauritius (1826-1937)*, pp. 173-175

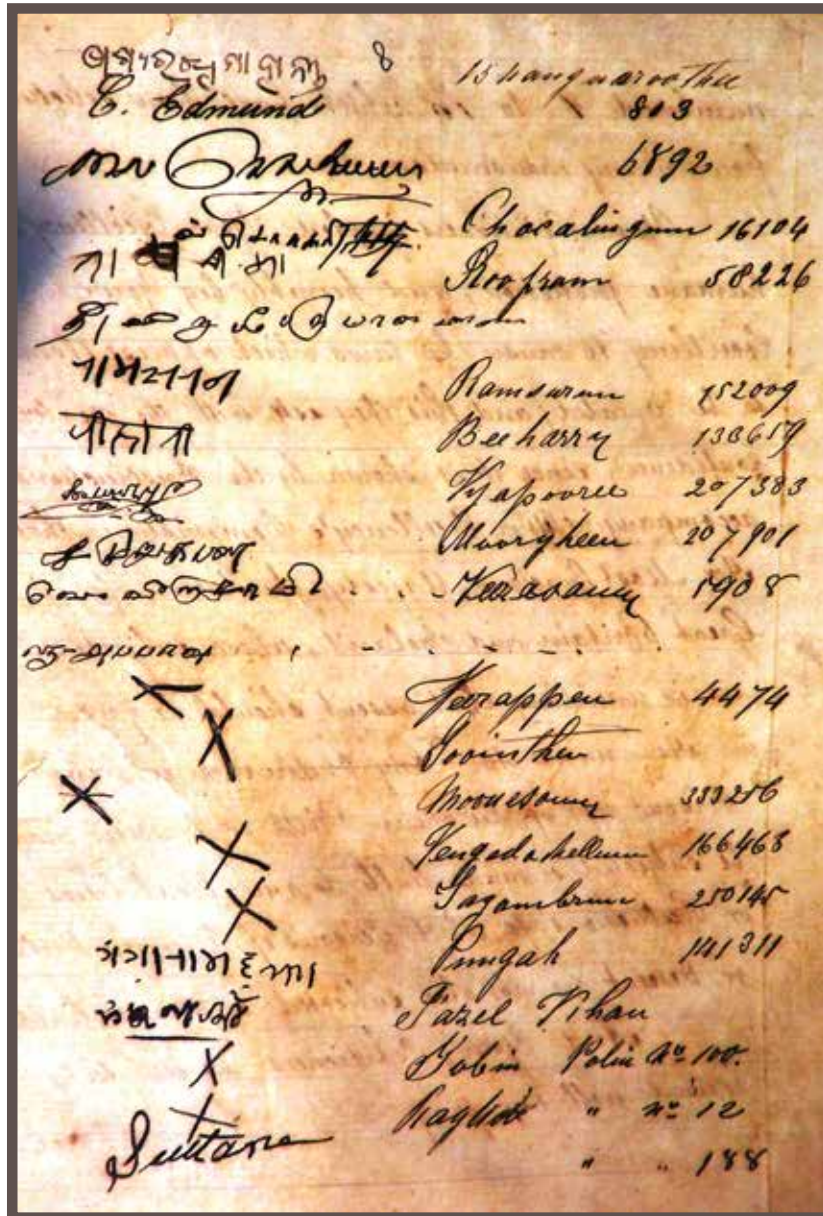
³ MNA/B series, Annual Reports of the Protector of Immigrants for 1861 to 1871; Dr. Satteanund Peerthum & Satyendra Peerthum, *Incorrigible, Defiant and Determined: A study of vagrancy, worker agency, resistance and the experiences of the vagrants in colonial Mauritius (1829-1890)* in M. Hassankhan and B. Lal (Eds), *Indentured Labour and Worker Resistance in the Colonial Plantation World* (New Delhi, India, 2014), p.80.

⁴ MNA/RA 2095, The Adolphe de Plevitz petition with covering letter to Governor Sir Hamilton Gordon, 27th June 1871.

among them knew to read and write to a certain extent.⁵

The petition contains several thousand immigrants' names and numbers which make it possible to track their date of arrival, bio-data and work history. An

estimated 1,911 immigrants who signed or placed their X mark on this historic document were also among the selected 16,849 Indian immigrants who arrived in Mauritius between 1826 and 1852. This figure represents more than 20.3%, or more than one



The names, numbers and signatures of some of the Indian Immigrants who signed the de Plevitz Petition in June 1871. (MNA/RA Series, Secretariat Records) 6

5 Estimated from MNA/RA 2095, The Adolphe de Plevitz Petition with covering letter to Governor Sir Hamilton Gordon, 27th June 1871; Peerthum, *They came to Mauritian Shores: The life stories and History of the indentured labourers in Mauritius (1826-1937)*, pp. 166-167.
 6 MNA/RA 2095, The Adolphe de Plevitz Petition with covering letter to Governor Sir Hamilton Gordon, 27th June 1871.
 7 Ibid.
 8 Estimated from MCIIIA/PF 12,75,8,15,2 and 4, Labour contracts and PE1,156,157,26,28 and 161B; Ships arrivals and distribution list for 1826 to 1871; MNA/PB 1, Letters, reports, and memos sent by the Protector of Immigrants to the Colonial Secretary for 1843 to 1844 to PB 17, Letters, reports and memos sent by the Protector of Immigrants to the Colonial Secretary for 1871 to 1875; Immigrants Bio-Data, MGI Indian Immigration Archives, Immigrants Database (MCIIIAID), The Adolphe de Plevitz Petition with covering letter to Governor Sir Hamilton Gordon, 27th June 1871; Peerthum, *They came to Mauritian Shores: The life stories and History of the indentured labourers in Mauritius (1826-1937)*, pp. 166-167.

fifth, of all the petitioners and around 11.3%, or more than one tenth, of all the aforementioned selected immigrants.

According to the PE, PF and PB series, and the MGI Indian Immigration Archives Immigrants Database, the majority of the 1,911 Old Immigrants who affixed their names on the de Plevitz Petition had lived and worked for 20 to 40 years in Mauritius. They signed their names and therefore, they were partially literate.⁸

Among the above-mentioned 1,911 Indian Old Immigrants, there were skilled and semi-skilled-artisans, servants, domestics, coachmen, heads of workshops, sirdars, head men, head domestics, head servants, job contractors, labour overseers, shopkeepers, hawkers, peddlers, merchants, traders, small business owners, land proprietors, metayers, cultivators, and gardeners. Therefore, many among them had moved off the sugar estates since many years; they were no longer depended on estate labour, and had achieved like Chocalingum and Roopram some degree of social and economic mobility. Definitely, they were some of the elite of the Indian immigrant community in Mauritius.⁹



Immigrant Chocalingum photographed in 1865 at the age of 45 at the Immigration Depot. He was required by the Stipendiary Magistrate of Flacq to obtain a new Old Immigrant ticket with a picture which cost him almost one pound sterling. (MGIIIA/PG & PE Series)¹⁰

The Case-Study of Immigrant Chocalingum

It should however be mentioned briefly that one of the major objectives for the enactment of the draconian Ordinance No.31 of 1867 was to control and force some of the Indian Old Immigrants who had left estate labour, back onto the plantations as contract workers for the benefit of the planters and their previous employers. In the long run, this much loathed and infamous law had very limited success, as most of those Old Indian Immigrants never returned to the sugar estates and to estate labour because they had already moved beyond indenture.

Immigrant Chocalingum arrived in Mauritius in 1835 from Madras at the age of 15. He was a labourer from the Madurai District located in present-day Tamil Nadu. Chocalingum worked as a cane cutter on Forbach Sugar Estate for the Staub family. In 1840, he left Forbach and went to labour on different plantations in the districts of Rivière du Rempart, Pamplémousses, and Flacq.¹¹

By 1858, at the age of 35, Chocalingum was a *sirdar* on Grande Retraite Sugar Estate and five years later, he became a job contractor for Constance Sugar Estate in Central Flacq. In 1865, he had to obtain a new Old Immigrant ticket and was also photographed after being arrested as a vagrant and imprisoned at the Vagrant Depot because he did not have his identification papers on his person.¹²

However, in 1866, 1868, and 1870, Chocalingum was arrested as a vagrant on three occasions despite the fact that he had his identification papers.¹³ In May 1871, he travelled from Constance to Nouvelle Découverte, where he signed the petition in the Tamil script, as he knew to read and write. It was as a clear sign of his protest against the treatment that he and his fellow Indian immigrants endured at the hands of the colonial police and administrators.¹⁴

9 Ibid.

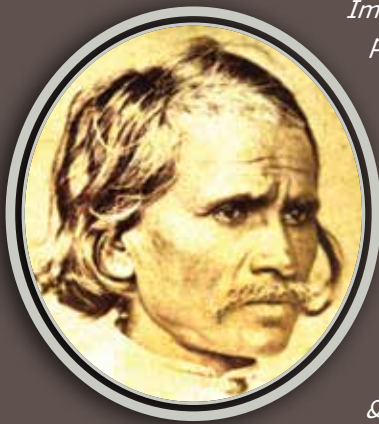
10 MGIIIA/PG2, Immigrant Photo Register for 1865-1866; MGIIIA/PO10 Vol B, Deserters and Vagrants Registers for 1858 to 1879.

11 MGIIIA/PE 1.

12 MGIIIA/PG2; PF 15, Indenture Contract Registers for 1850 to 1875.

13 MGIIIA/PO10 Vol B, Deserters and Vagrants Registers for 1858 to 1879.

14 MNA/RA 2095, The Adolphe de Plevitz Petition, 27th June 1871.



Immigrant Roopram photographed in 1868 at the age of 60 at the Immigration Depot. He was required by the Stipendiary Magistrate of Moka to obtain a new old immigrant ticket with a picture which cost him almost one pound sterling.¹⁹ (MGIIIA/PG & PE Series)

The Case-Study of Immigrant Roopram

Immigrant Roopram reached Port Louis in 1843 at the age of 35 from Calcutta. He was a labourer from Bhagalpur district in eastern Bihar. He went to work as a cane cutter on Beau Plan Sugar Estate in the Pamplemousses District. In 1847, after serving a three-year contract, he went to work on Trianon Sugar Estate in the Plaines Wilhems District.¹⁵ By 1865, Roopram was a labour overseer on Bagatelle Sugar Estate.¹⁶ In 1868, 1869, and 1870, he was arrested on three occasions as a deserter because he did not have his old immigrant ticket on his person and was incarcerated at the Port Louis Prisons.¹⁷

In June 1871, like thousands of other Old Indian Immigrants and like Chocalingum, Roopram travelled from Bagatelle to Nouvelle Découverte and went to sign de Plevitz's petition in the Hindi script, since he knew to read and write. It was done as a sign of individual resistance and protest against his repeated arrests and imprisonment and for being treated like a common criminal.¹⁸

"The unbridled harassment" of the Indian Immigrants

There are hundreds of Old Immigrants, just like Chocalingum and Roopram, who, by the early 1870s, had lived and worked in the colony for almost 30 to 40 years. They had adopted this island as their new home and had achieved some measure of social and economic mobility, but on several occasions, they were harassed, arrested and imprisoned and treated like criminals or as vagrants and deserters because they did not have their papers on their person.

This type of treatment towards the Indian immigrants is what the Royal Commissioners Frere and Williamson, in their report of 1875, called "*the unbridled harassment of the Indian Immigrants*". They unequivocally condemned these acts of injustice by the colonial police and administrators towards that particular segment of the colonial population.²⁰

It was the de Plevitz Petition and its 9,401 signatures and the mass arrests and complaints of the tens of thousands of Indian immigrants, during the 1860s and early 1870s, which eventually led to the "*appointment of a Royal Commission to Inquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in Mauritius*".²¹ However, despite the recommendations of the Royal Commission of the 1870s, it would not be until the early 1900s and 1920s that measures were taken to redress the situation especially with the enactment of the labour law of 1922.

It was this particular colonial ordinance which took the penal clause out of the indenture contract and, along with other laws and social measures, dramatically improved the living and working conditions of the labourers as they were able to secure their freedom and rights. At the same time, during this period, there were thousands of Indian immigrants and their children who emerged as an important and large landowning class in Mauritian colonial society.²²

15 MGIIIA/PE 5, ship arrival register for 1843.

16 MGIIIA/PF 8, Indenture contract registers, 1865 to 1873.

17 MGIIIA/PO10 Vol B, Deserters and Vagrants Registers for 1858 to 1879.

18 MNA/RA 2095, The Adolphe de Plevitz Petition, 27th June 1871.

19 MGIIIA/PG2, Immigrant Photo Register for 1867-1869; MGIIIA/PO10 Vol B, Deserters and Vagrants Registers for 1858 to 1879.

20 W.E. Frere & V. A. Williamson, Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Treatment of Immigrants in Mauritius (W.Clowes & Sons, London, 1875), paragraph 704.

21 Ibid.

22 Deerpalsingh, *An overview of Vagrancy laws, its effects and case-studies, 1860-1911*, pp. 79-83; Kisoonsingh Hazareesingh, *History of Indians in Mauritius*, 1st Edition (Port Louis, 1950), pp. 101-105/122-124.

The Indian Penal Settlement in Mauritius, 1815-53

*Dr. Clare Anderson, Associate Professor,
University of Leicester & International Scholar of Convict Labour*

After the British took control of Mauritius in 1810, Governor R.T. Farquhar was faced with a serious problem. In 1807, the slave trade had been abolished across the British Empire, and the island needed labour to stimulate the continuing expansion of sugar cane cultivation. Thus, Farquhar contacted the Bengal Presidency and requested a supply of convicts. The first shipments arrived the same year, and subsequently convicts were also sent from Bombay.

The convicts were sentenced to 'penal transportation beyond seas' for serious offences. They were serving either seven or fourteen years, or life sentences. Bengal convicts were most likely to have been sentenced for highway or gang robbery. Most of those from Bombay had been convicted for murder. Some were even sent as pirates; others as 'thugs'. That the convicts were a motley crew of murderers, gang robbers and thieves reflected the fact that transportation was only awarded as a punishment for the most serious crimes. Mauritius was grateful for their labour, however, and there were few complaints.

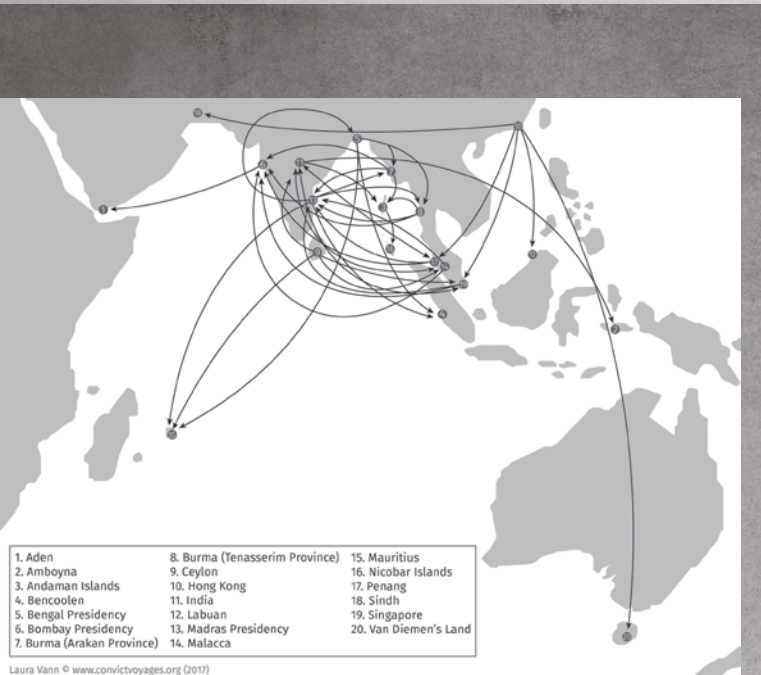
The British authorities believed that transportation across the *kala pani* (black waters) would result in loss of caste. Therefore, it was a useful punishment because Indians feared it even more than death. Invariably, the issue was rather more complex than the British thought. Nevertheless, the notion of the *kala pani* has remained remarkably enduring. It was later used to describe the experiences of the half million indentured immigrants sent to the island after 1834.

Governor Farquhar wanted young, fit, and skilled convicts, who could be employed as masons, carpenters and smiths on public works. He also had a preference for life convicts, who would be more likely to settle permanently on the island.

As labour shortages became more pronounced, their desire for convict labour meant that they also accepted convicts sentenced for a term of seven or fourteen years. These men were free to return to India once their time had expired.

The convicts were lodged in the old civil hospital at Grand River NW. This had been little used since it had confined prisoner-of-war Matthew Flinders during the Napoleonic Wars. The convicts were then transferred to the Camp des Cipayes – an old military post across the road – which eventually became the headquarters of the penal settlement. When Port Louis was partly destroyed in the great fire of 1816, convicts were set to clearing and rebuilding the city. One of their most important achievements was to prepare the ground for the new bazaar. In 1818, the convicts were further divided into nine district parties. They were sent out to public works projects all over the island – clearing land, quarrying, stone breaking, and building and repairing roads and bridges.

During the 1830s, convicts worked on the construction of the Citadel at Fort Adelaide. There was also a convict working party in Port Louis itself, where convicts were housed in barracks at Trou Fanfaron. As convicts aged, dozens of them also found less physically strenuous employment as watchmen over government property, servants and post office couriers. Their local knowledge and acquisition of Kreol made them far more useful than newly imported labourers from India, as administrators at the time recognized. For a brief period of time some convicts were allocated to private individuals. This might be seen as part of a more general attempt on the part of Governor Farquhar to appease slaveowners in the years following the abolition of the slave trade. Indeed, by May 1817 over a quarter of the convicts were working for the owners of sugar and fruit plantations.



British Indian Empire. Source: C. Anderson

Convicts worked from daybreak to three or four pm, and noon on Saturdays. Sundays was a day off. Rations – rice, *dhal*, ghee, salt, salt fish and firewood – were supplied from Port Louis every ten days. Each convict also got a new piece of cloth to wear as a *dhoti* every year. We know that at least some of them wore their own clothes – including military jackets brought with them from India – and is perhaps for that reason that they were commonly referred to as *sipahis* (soldiers).

The number of convicts shipped to the island was small in comparison to indentured labourers, less than 1,500 convicts in total. However, their demographic and economic impact should not be underestimated. The first census of 1826 recorded a population of 86,000. Employed in work gangs across the island, convicts were from the outset a highly visible community. It has even been suggested that the prior existence of the Indian penal settlement in Mauritius influenced the later decision to import indentured Indians to work on the island's plantations. The Commission of Enquiry, which published its report on labour conditions amongst indentured labourers in 1875, noted that the fact that the island previously had received Indian convicts made the Indian indentured labourer 'not the entire stranger he was in the West Indies and Demerara'.

Many visitors to Mauritius wrote about the convicts, generally viewing them in a sympathetic light. Charles Darwin stopped off in Mauritius during his famous voyage on the *Beagle*. He wrote: 'Before seeing these people I had no idea that the inhabitants of India were such noble looking men ... it is impossible to view them with the same eyes



Indian Convict camp, 1850. Source: British Library



Indian Convict Camp, 1859. Source: British Library

as our wretched convicts in New South Wales [i.e. Australia]. Governor Lowry Cole's wife likened a group of convicts to a scene in *The Arabian Nights*. Observers generally agreed that the convicts were orderly and well behaved.

Convicts living in the districts had a remarkable degree of freedom that surprised people at the time, but this was necessary for the accomplishment of public works. They were a valuable labour force, vital for the development of Mauritian infrastructure. Indeed, when transportation to Mauritius was abolished in 1837, the inhabitants made continued complaints about the worsening condition of the roads. The penal settlement remained opened until 1853, by which time there were just a few surviving convicts. The British took the decision to release them all, but prohibited them from returning to India. After the liberation of the convicts in 1853, right into the 1860s there were a great many calls for the reintroduction of convict transportation.

Despite the praise of contemporaries such as Darwin, Indian convicts were not passive in their penal labour. They refused to work, got into fights with each other – especially their *commandeurs* who were also convicts – and insulted or sometimes even attacked their British soldier overseers. They distilled and drank liquor, smoked marijuana, danced and sang. Neither were they slow to complain if they felt they were being ill-treated, routinely petitioning government for improved conditions.

Not infrequently, convicts escaped altogether, and sometimes evaded capture for years on end. Indeed, about five per cent of the convicts were unaccounted for at any one time, a figure that is similar to that of indentured immigrants later in the 19th century. Bombay convicts found it particularly easy to flee, because they did not have the penal tattoos (*godna*) which were inscribed on the foreheads of those from Bengal. A few convicts were able to pass themselves off as indentured immigrants, and held forged immigrant tickets. Others returned to India. In one case, a convict was discovered hiding in the Bombay Presidency an amazing twenty-five years after he had left Mauritius.

Employed on public works across the island, they had plenty of opportunities to integrate into the social and economic fabric of Mauritian life. Convicts made friends with the enslaved, the

formerly enslaved, and other free communities. They struck up relationships with women on the island, married them, had children, and learned how to speak Kreol. Even those sentenced to a term of years decided to stay following their release, remaining with their new Mauritian families and setting themselves up as tradesmen. Some became carpenters, others worked at their trade as jewellers. A few were even able to buy land. One man – Lathan – even became a medical practitioner, and several Mauritians vouched for the effectiveness of his treatments. The police were very suspicious of ex-convicts, and made frequent claims about their bad characters. Yet there is no real evidence that these time-expired men were more commonly in trouble with the police than others.

One touching petition was presented to the governor by ex-convict Hurry Bappoo in 1858. After he had been freed, he wrote, he had lived with an indentured labourer called Succool and they had a child. 'Honoured Sir', he wrote, 'it appears very odd indeed that I am a prisoner; and I have got a Girl about 5 yrs and four months old; her name is Luckchemee, as I am condemned until death to remain here, I wish to send the said Girl Luckchemee, to Bombay near my family, where she would be better off than here. The Protector of Immigrants desired me to pay £2-10- to take her to Bombay. Therefore Honoured Sir, I prostrate myself at your clemency to throw an Eye of Sympathy on the poor child and to remit the passage money, and to send the Girl to her parents.' Succool was entitled to a free passage, but her daughter was not. The government agreed to waive the cost of her passage.

After the last convicts were set free with the dissolution of the penal settlement in 1853, they merged into the general population. A number invariably drifted to Camp Malabar in Port Louis, where the Indian community on the island was concentrated. Others moved to Camp Benoit, just up the hill from the Grand River site. Survivors continued to petition government for permission to return to India. This included a group of eighty Bombay convicts in 1855. A concern of these and other men was proper conduct of funeral rites by their families. Of those who did return to India, with property and families gone, some signed contracts of indentured to return to Mauritius or go to places like British Guiana or Trinidad, as indentured labourers.

Interview with Professor Clare Anderson of the University of Leicester and International Scholar of Convict Labour

Satyendra Peerthum, Historian

Q1. Professor Clare Anderson, you are a well-known international scholar of the modern colonial history of the Indian Ocean World who has written extensively on the convicts and unfree labour. Please provide us with an overview of your publications and research works over the past two decades?

I completed my PhD at the University of Edinburgh in 1994, under the supervision of the well-known scholar of colonial Australia, Dr Ian Duffield. Dr Duffield had found archives in Australia that suggested the British colony of Mauritius shipped one hundred or so convicts to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (now, Tasmania) during the first half of the 19th century. Having studied the Australian penal colonies as an undergraduate student, with a studentship from the Arts Research Board, I set out to research this hitherto unwritten history. However, during my first visit to The National Archives in London (which used to be called the Public Record Office) I found an intriguing reference, from the 1820s, noting the existence of an Indian penal settlement on the island. I did some more reading, and could find almost no references to this penal settlement in the literature. And so, I decided that this would be an interesting research topic. I found a lot of material in The National Archives, and the India Office collections of the British Library. Between 1995 and 1996, I spent a year working in The National Archives of Mauritius, funded by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. I went through all the departmental archives, including of the Court of Assizes, and found a wealth of material. This was the basis of my PhD, which was later published as *Convicts In The Indian Ocean: transportation from South Asia to Mauritius, 1815-53* (Macmillan, 2000).

When I finished my PhD in 1997, I was appointed to a lectureship at the University of Leicester. Going back to the fantastic India Office collections, I received British Academy and Economic Research Council financial support to work on other South Asian penal flows in the Indian Ocean. I then researched the Straits Settlements and Burma, from the late 18th century to the early 1860s. More focused work (in collaboration with Professor Vishvajit Pandya and Dr Madhumita Mazumdar) on the Andaman Islands, Britain's largest Indian penal colony, 1858-1939, followed. My most important works here were *Legible Bodies: race, criminality and colonialism in South Asia* (Berg, 2004), *The Indian Uprising of 1857-8: prisons, prisoners and rebellion* (Anthem, 2007), and with Vishvajit and Madhumita, *New Histories of the Andaman Islands: landscape, place and identity in the Bay of Bengal* (Cambridge, 2016). The first of these books traced how the British classified and managed convicts; the second traced the impact of the Great Revolt of 1857-8 on Indian penal practices; and the third took an interdisciplinary perspective on social and cultural life in the Andamans, among convicts as well as indigenous peoples and other migrants.

During this period, I discovered by chance some wonderful material in the India Office archives, on how prospective indentured labourers in northern India viewed migration. I found that they compared it not to enslavement, but to penal transportation. This formed the basis of a reinterpretation of the character of indentured labour, in the 2009 article, which appeared in *Slavery and Abolition: 'Convicts and Coolies: reconceptualizing indentured labour in the nineteenth century'*. At this time, I was Caird Fellow at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Ten years later, 'Convicts and Coolies' remains a highly cited piece in the journal.

My third book, *Subaltern Lives: biographies of*

colonialism in the Indian Ocean world, 1790-1920 (Cambridge, 2012), marked an important point of consolidation in my work. An extended period of writing was enabled through the award of the Sackler- Caird Fellowship at the National Maritime Museum. In the book, I presented the life histories of several convicts as a means of exploring issues of colonial governance, unfree labour, and how ordinary people experienced the various dislocations of the British Empire. The book contains a great deal of material on Mauritius. I used a Bengali convict named in the archives as Dullah, as a springboard for this, because he was an ordinary man who left several traces in the archives, including (unusually) reported speech. I also returned to the theme of convict transportation from Mauritius to the Australian colonies, in the chapter 'George Morgan'. This built on some of the work that I had earlier edited as a special issue of the *Journal of Social History: 'Marginal Centres: subaltern biographies of the Indian Ocean world'* (2011).

Most recently, I have used my work on the Indian Ocean as the basis of a more global approach to the history of convict transportation and penal colonies. Funded by the European Research Council, the first stage of this was to write South Asian convict flows into a larger history of penal transportation in the British Empire. The history of British and Irish convicts in the Australian colonies is well known; the history of the Indian convicts who circulated around the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal is not. This appeared as the open-access article 'Transnational Histories of Penal Transportation: punishment, labour and governance in the British Imperial World, 1787-1939', in a 2017 issue of *Australian Historical Studies* (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1031461X.2016.1203962>). There was clearly an appetite for this change of perspective, because it is the 3rd most read article ever published in the journal, and currently the top cited!

The second stage of this work was to consider convict transportation and penal colonies more globally. During the European Research Council funded project, I directed a team of researchers, working on every populated continent of the world. From this work, I edited a volume of essays, which is open-access: *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies* (Bloomsbury, 2018) (<https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/a-global-history-of-convicts-and-penal-colonies/>) With my postdoctoral colleague Dr Christian G. De Vito, I also co-edited a special issue of the *International*

Review of Social History (2018). My as-yet untitled monograph, stemming from this project, will be published by Cambridge University Press in early 2021.

Q2. You were last in Mauritius almost 16 years and more than 25 years ago, what are some of the major changes that you have observed during your brief stay on the island? What do you think of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and its Interpretation Centre?

As I mentioned earlier, I first visited Mauritius in 1995, spending a year working in the National Archives at Coromandel, and to a lesser extent the Carnegie Library in Curepipe. At this time, I also had the chance to meet some really interesting people who were engaged in historical research on the island. They included Vijaya Teelock, Marina Carter, Phillipe la Hausse de la Louvière and Raymond d'Unienville. After completing my PhD thesis, I returned to Mauritius for six months, in 2004. During this period, I again worked at the National Archives. I collected a wealth of material on the island's prisons, which I later published in the journal *Cultural and Social History* (2008). At this time, I also met Satyendra Peerthun, and became involved in his work on the history of the Vagrant Depot. This was formerly the barracks of the Indian convicts, and it was really fascinating to see how the site had developed after the penal settlement in the island closed in 1853. There are certainly some interesting continuities in the use of the site for penal confinement and the management of labour.

In September 2019, I participated in 'History Week' and a conference on slavery and museums, at the University of Mauritius. It is amazing to see how history is flourishing in the country today. I also had the chance to visit Aapravasi Ghat for the first time, guided by Satyendra Peerthun. I greatly appreciated the restoration of the site, the focus and content of the museum, including extensive multi-media for those seeking more detailed information. I especially liked the focus on *indenture*, rather than *Indian indenture*, which means that the museum can reach out and (hopefully) satisfy a diverse audience. It is clear that there is an appreciation of the many interconnections between the island's various communities, historically speaking. This is great,

because sometimes we assume today that people with different heritage lived separately from each other. This was far from the case. Going back to my PhD research on the Indian penal settlement, for example, we know that convicts had different kinds of relationships with non-convicts. They married, had children, traded, socialized and worshipped with enslaved, formerly enslaved and apprenticed peoples (whether of African and/ or Indian origin) and indentured migrants, Indian, African and Chinese. More than that, different kinds of ethnic and labour categories overlapped with each other. Indeed, in a handful of cases Indian convicts in Mauritius were reconvicted, and sent to Van Diemen's Land where they joined convicts from Britain, Ireland and other colonies.

During my 2019 visit, I was very glad to hear that UNESCO had awarded the site World Heritage Status, and having visited it I can see why. I know that plans are now in process, to open a slavery museum. Having had the opportunity to visit the International Slavery Museum in the UK and the Memorial ACTe in Guadeloupe, over the past few years, I will be very interested to see how this develops. More than that, I hope that I will have the opportunity to visit such a museum in Mauritius at some point in the new future!

Q3. What are your current and future publications and projects?

I am currently undertaking research in British Guiana, a former colony in northern South America. I became interested in this British colony when I was working on my global history of convicts and penal colonies project. This was because I discovered that the British established a very isolated penal settlement in the interior of the colony, at a place called Mazaruni, but for locally convicted, not overseas convicts. I had the good fortune to meet Dr Mellissa Ifill, who is based at the University of Guyana and also serves as Chair of the Guyana Prison Service Sentence Management Board, at a conference at the University of Leicester, which is where I am based. In 2017, I visited what is now the independent nation of Guyana, and having spent time in the Walter Rodney Archives and visiting Mazaruni (which is still a prison) Mellissa and I conceptualized a project on the history of Guyana's jails. With our researchers Estherine Adams (University of Guyana) and Dr Kellie Moss (University of Leicester), we produced a set of materials on the history of the nation's jails

for the Guyana Prison Service, and hope to publish a co-authored reflection on the project next year.

I am now directing a large, interdisciplinary research team, including Mellissa, Estherine and Kellie, which is exploring the legacies of British imperial governance, population management and incarceration in Guyana's prisons today. We are focusing in particular on inmates' and guards' experiences of mental health and substance abuse. We are trying to make connections between the past and the present by carrying out research on historical archives as well as interviewing inmates and prisons personnel. It has been very interesting to work in a more policy-oriented area, and to interact with the Guyana Prison Service. It is really amazing that so much colonial-era infrastructure is still in use: not just old prison buildings, but things such as the prison service hierarchy, and even rules and regulations.



A South African Life-Story: Amir Sing: from Indentured Labourer to Flower Farmer, Loving Father, Grandfather and Icon

*Dr. Vicki Bismilla, Vice-President Academic and Chief Learning Officer,
Centennial College, Toronto, Canada (retired)*

My grandfather Amir Sing, (my Aja) was born in Muzarffarnagar in 1861. He was recruited by the British Raj as an indentured labourer and arrived in Durban on the *John Davie I* on 30 June 1883. He spoke reverently to his family about the Aapravasi Ghat which he glimpsed briefly when the *John Davie* docked in Mauritius, likely for a mail stop. Even at that time, though just a small harbour, the unnamed *ghat* was to remain in the minds and hearts of indentured labourers as an inspiration.

Aja first worked for the Acutt Sugar Estate in Inanda (today Phoenix) on the north coast of Natal, earning ten shillings a month as a *girmitiya*. He married Bhogaruthy, the locally-born daughter of an earlier indentured labourer and subsequent landowner. He was transferred to the Effingham Sugar Estate (later the Natal Sugar Estate) which was located on Mill Road in Avoca. He and his

young bride moved to indenture barracks in Avoca. It was here that he was promoted to *Sirdar*. The recruiter in India had promised labourers that they would be given land at the end of their five-year contract; however, as Aja and others painfully discovered this was not the case.

Aja worked here until 1893, carefully saving from his meagre wages to buy land. He acquired swaths of land on the rolling hills between Avoca Road and Bailey Road spanning over a narrow footpath, now Bhamo Avenue. He tilled the fallow land and was soon growing lush crops of blue agapanthus, redhot pokers and red cluster roses. He supplied flower stalls at the Durban Central Railway Station as well as florists in the city. Aja also delivered flowers by ox cart to white *memsahibs* in Red Hill. He was key in the transformation of Avoca into a *poolwagaoh* (flower village). Aja and our grandmother Bhogaruthy had nine children. The three oldest and three youngest were daughters and, as was customary at the time, the daughters were married as teenagers. My father Dalip Sing and his younger brother Ranjit Sing helped with the flower farming. Their younger brother Debi Sing became a teacher and joined the Natal Indian Congress and South African Indian Congress where he served as secretary, and in the years after Aja's death, was repeatedly imprisoned for his anti-apartheid activism. He rubbed shoulders with and worked alongside great South African political icons like Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Yusuf Dadoo, and Monty Naicker.

Amir Sing's first home, a wood and tin structure was built on his land under a large fig tree in a valley close to Avoca Road. He and our grandmother raised their children here. My father Dalip Sing was born there in 1900. He worked alongside his father from a very early age. It was from this house that

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS	
COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT	
Serial Number	: 15
Colonial Number	: 29277 29277
Date of Arrival	: 30.6.1883
Name of Ship	: JOHN DAVIE I
Place of Registration	: ---
Date of Registration	: ---
Number in Register	: ---
Name	: AMIR SING
Father's Name	: BURJA SING
Age	: 22 YRS
Sex	: MALE
Caste	: KAJFOOT
District	: MUZAFFARNAGAR
Thanna/Taluq	: MOZAFURHOGUR
Village	: KHOSALEE
Height	: 5'10"
Bodily Marks	: FACE POCK MARKED
Name of Next-of-Kin	: BROTHER GOLAB
Relations Accompanied	: ---
Small Pox/Vaccinated	: VACCINATED
Remarks	: ---
	: DIED 21-11-1933
	: Born 1861

Aja's indentured document



Aja's house at Avoca Road, Durban

Amir Sing witnessed the massive, often violent strikes by Indian workers in 1913 on the Natal Sugar Estate where he previously worked. The strikes grew out of Mohandas K. Gandhi's work on behalf of Indians in South Africa, although Gandhi had repeatedly pleaded for non-violent means of protest. When my father was thirteen he joined Gandhi's *Sathyagraha* walk from Phoenix along the Umgeni River but work prevented him from devoting more time to activism; that baton was later picked up by his younger brother Debi Sing.

My father Dalip Sing was promised in marriage to my mother Jaso when she was an eight-year-old child. They married seven years later when she was fifteen. Her story is one that echoes that of many other children at the time. Her mother, Bachni, was a very young widow in a small village near Meerut in India. As a widow she was severely abused by her mother-in-law and when her daughter Jaso was three and half, Bachni escaped with the help of women friends who whisked mother and child away by ox-cart to the last indenture ship leaving for Durban from Calcutta in 1911. The women, also indentured, convinced a depot nurse to admit Bachni as an indentured domestic. She arrived in Durban in June 1911 and served as a domestic servant in a home in Red Hill. She married the gardener Maharaj and this is where Amir was delivering flowers when he met Maharaj and his young family. The two families became friends, leading to my father's marriage to Jaso in 1922. Their first child, a daughter Soorsuthy, my oldest sister, was born in March 1923, the same year as Amir's youngest child Anjani was born. I have been fortunate to have had my oldest sister Soorsuthy

as a valuable resource of oral family history. She died in 2016 aged ninety-three.

Our grandfather Amir Sing lived in the small house under the fig tree for many years raising his oldest children there. By 1919, he and Bhogaruthy had saved enough money to build a larger house facing Avoca Road. It was there that many of his grandchildren, including me, were born. That house stood for eighty years and my siblings and I have fond memories of this large, comfortable wood and iron house with a huge botanical-like garden created by my grandmother and later by my mother Jaso.

Amir Sing was a devoted Hindu. When he lived under the fig tree he prayed near the stream that flowed through his land under a huge umdoni tree which I remember playing under, in later years. There was a small temple at the foot of Avoca Road near the Umhlangane River and prayers were conducted there in the first twenty years of the century as more and more indentured families settled in Avoca. Once his larger house was built, Amir Singh turned his attention to building a sturdier temple for the community. In 1920, together with his friends Jhugga, Bhogal, Ragubeer and others, they fund-raised and built a modest temple which has grown over the decades and today, it proudly stands as the beautiful Shree Luxmi Narayan Temple.

Once my father Dalip Sing, took over the cultivation of the flower farm and the business, Amir Sing spent his later years on long walks. He would visit with friends at the temple but much of his time was spent walking the rolling hills of his flower farm and sitting on the banks of the Umhlangane River. My sister Soorsuthy vividly remembers Aja and the pristine *pugris* that he wore. She remembers too that he suffered severe, piercing headaches that were blinding and debilitating. She was ten when Aja passed away, on 27 November 1933 at the age of seventy-two. He was found at the edge of his beloved river. His death certificate reads, "The deceased was found dead in a river at Avoca." My sister, Soorsuthy, remembers that this strong, charitable, dignified man suffered his last blinding headache at the edge of the Umhlangane River and drowned. He was buried near the border of his cherished flower farm under his pear trees. My interview with Soorsuthy formed the basis of my book tracing my grandfather's life, titled, *Indentured! A Labourer's Journey*.

My grandfather's determination and work ethic lived on among his descendants. His nine children, now deceased, followed fields of work as farmers and businesswomen and in Debi Sing's case a teacher and human rights activist. In keeping with Amir Sing's charitable nature, my father Dalip Sing donated a piece of his land on which stands Avoca Secondary School. And, like the descendants of the nearly two million indentured Indians around the world, Aja's grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren are making his legacy proud. Among his descendants are doctors, lawyers, legal assistants, engineers, computer experts, professors, teachers, business folk, consultants and by God's will he is blessed with beautiful great-great-great grandchildren. Several of his grandchildren and great grandchildren migrated overseas to Canada, Australia and New Zealand where they and their children are hard-working, respected professionals.

In my case, I met my husband Yusuf Bismilla at university on Durban's Salisbury Island. We married in 1970 and immigrated to Canada where we both served as public school teachers. I went on to serve as Principal and Superintendent of Schools in two large school boards; then was

headhunted to be Vice-President Academic and Chief Learning Officer of Centennial College in Toronto. Our daughter Zia is a senior pediatrician at Toronto's Sick Children's Hospital, one of the largest children's hospitals in Canada and Professor at the University of Toronto's Medical School. Our son, Zeyd followed in my footsteps and after I retired from Centennial he was hired as Professor of Liberal Arts (see family pic).

We, Amir Sing's descendants owe him so much. He suffered the harsh slave-like conditions in the bottom hold of the indenture ship; the whips of cruel overseers on the sugar plantation; the dishonesty of the British Raj's promises, and the bleeding wounds of hard physical labour in order to give his family and us, his descendants, fulfilling lives. His incredible journey paved the way for our journeys. Thank you Aja.

Sources:

Bismilla, V. (2016). *Indentured! A Labourer's Journey*, Toronto, Canada: Tamara Tree Books.

Sing, C. (1983). "Life of an Indian immigrant, Amir Sing". Essay submitted in completion of Bachelor of Arts degree, University of South Africa.

Singh, Soorsuthy. Oral history as narrated to Vicki Bismilla, October 2015.



Family picture.

Standing: Vicki; Yusuf, Zeyd, and Jessica (Zeyd's wife); seated: Stephen (Zia's husband); Aidan 10, Ella 8, and Liam 2 (Zia's children); Zia.

Nosy Be as a hub for African indentured labour in the South West Indian Ocean

Jehanne-Emmanuelle Monnier, Université de La Réunion

As a traditional place of slave market, Nosy Be plays a significant role in the process of hiring and distributing African workers among the surrounding islands from the 1850s to the 1880s. Some African labourers are also expected to be employed on the local sugar cane estates of this tiny French island located off the Northwestern coast of Madagascar.

Nosy Be : the linchpin of the African indentured system

Between the abolition of slavery in 1848 and the signing of the Franco-British Treaty on Indian indenture migration in 1860, the French colonies rely mainly on African labourers. Whether they are shipped from Mozambique, Zanzibar, the Comoro Islands or Madagascar, the indentured labourers are mainly Africans of Mozambican origin (Makua in particular). The main destination is Réunion Island, which at the time is enjoying a tremendous boom in the sugar economy.

In order to avoid accusations of slave-trading and slavery, Reunionese recruiters prefer to bring in workers from Nosy Be which, as a French colony itself, offers aspect of legality, rather than directly from Africa where slavery is still widely practised. Moreover, due to its ideal geographical location at the very heart of the African labour pool, Nosy Be naturally becomes a real hub for the recruitment of indentured African workers.

The stopover in Nosy Be on the road to Réunion Island and other sugar islands is driven by the need to regularise the situation of these Africans. Indeed, the law only allows the hiring of free workers. But as free men are reluctant to become someone else's employees and go abroad to cultivate someone else's land while they themselves have slaves working their land, recruiters often have no choice but to buy slaves and turn them into indentured labourers. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of recruitments of « free labourers » in the 1850s takes place in the most notorious slave markets, such as Kiloa and Lindi ruled by the Sultan of Zanzibar, Ibo and Angoxa on the

Mozambican coast, and the Bay of Baly in Western Madagascar.

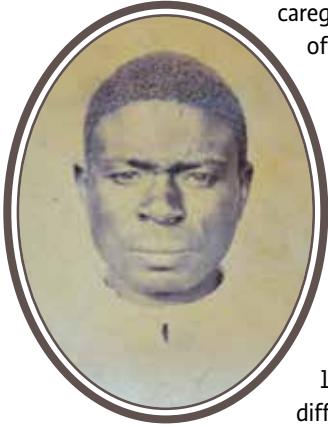
Theoretically, by stepping on a French vessel, slaves become free individuals. However, this does not mean that they are willing to go and work in sugar estates in Réunion Island. But the slaves' consent and free will seems secondary since only the appearances of legality matter.



In this context, a stopover on a French territory such as Nosy Be makes it possible to split the recruitment process in two. The first step is to bring to Nosy Be slaves who have just been bought and then freed, often naked, hungry and without identity. Once in Nosy Be, these former slaves are made more presentable to escape seizure in the event of control by the British navy in charge of suppressing the slave trade. They are also issued a contract of employment specifying their name, age and place of origin certified by the French authorities which, even if it is fictional information, thereby gives them an individual identity. The greatest advantage of stopping over in Nosy Be is that these Africans can officially enter Réunion Island as having been recruited in Nosy Be instead of Africa, even if they only stayed a few days on the Franco-Malagasy island. This brief stay appears to be the ultimate guarantee of the freedom of the African indentured labourers.

The Nosy Be immigrants' depot

The recruitment of African workers reaches such a scale in the 1850s that it becomes a kind of local industry in Nosy Be. Therefore, Arnault Mézence, a local settler, offers to open a migrant depot in 1857 on the small island of Nosy Komba, off Nosy Be. The authorities are very supportive of this project because they think it would help to moralise recruitment. Thus, the depot that can accommodate up to a thousand migrants at a time opens in 1857. The owner advertises it as a well-ventilated building with all commodities and an on-site hospital staffed by well-trained



caregivers. A back and forth movement of boats from Mozambique, the Comoros and the Malagasy coast, makes the place busy. The migrants are then shipped to the Mascarene Islands (Réunion and Mauritius).

However, when the French Navy Lieutenant Fleuriot-de-Langle visits the depot in February 1859, he pictures the place in very different words than the owner did.

According to Fleuriot-de-Langle, the depot is only a vast hangar where migrants sleep rough on the ground and are not protected from wind and rain. The infirmary is nothing more than a place where the sick are crammed together, without care. Fleuriot-de-Langle estimates the mortality rate at 22%, in addition to the one on board ships. Mézence acknowledges that he has difficulty fighting epidemics. The depot proved to be the gateway for smallpox in Nosy Be in 1858.

The owner is required to make improvements to the depot, otherwise it may be closed. However, the Governor of Réunion Island still considers the depot as a key element in the African recruitment system and does not wish it to disappear. But when Fleuriot-de-Langle returns for a control inspection six months later, the situation has not changed much. Therefore, the depot is definitively closed at the end of 1859. However, the decision to close the Mézence's migrant depot in Nosy-Be mainly comes from the recent complete ban by the French emperor Napoléon III of the recruitment of Africans for Réunion Island. The depot has no longer any reason to be.

African indentured labourers working in Nosy Be

Although African indentured labour is forbidden in Réunion Island from late 1859, it continues in Nosy Be because the law has never taken the tiny island into account. Sugar cane planters and the local administration therefore assume African indentured labour is not banned for Nosy Be. Moreover, since the Franco-British Treaty on Indian indenture migration in 1860 does not include Nosy Be, the local sugar cane planters can only rely on African labour, because they are not allowed to recruit in India.

Life is very difficult on Nosy Be estates for African workers. The latter usually work long hours and sometimes even at night. In spite of long working days, African indentured labourers are generally not sufficiently nourished and have to take advantage of their free time to cultivate a vegetable

patch. They are lucky if they can generate a surplus that they can sell in the market. Besides, their wages are much lower than in Réunion Island, and paid very irregularly.

African workers are often beaten and imprisoned arbitrarily by the planters. Because the official Protector of Indentured Labourers in Nosy Be is either overwhelmed with work or corrupt, there is almost no control over what happens in the estates. Violence is also widespread among the workers themselves, particularly due to alcoholism. It is not uncommon for a rivalry between labourers from two plantations to turn into bloody punitive expeditions at nightfall. The few women are the first victims of night excesses in workers camps. Fighting, excessive alcohol, malnutrition, unhealthy living conditions, strenuous work and epidemic diseases lead many African labourers to premature death.

The employment contracts of Africans in Nosy Be last ten years while those of Indians in Réunion Island last only five years. And yet they are never repatriated to Africa after ten years. How could they be, since they are bought young at slave markets and no one knows exactly where they actually come from? Most African workers who survive the ten-year working period in Nosy Be end up vagrants. Then they are particularly vulnerable to hunger, disease or abduction by Malagasy people who sell them as slaves. The end of their contract does not mean that Africans have finally won their freedom.

Conclusion

In view of this very deteriorated situation, the French authorities themselves end up recognising that African indenture in Nosy Be is nothing but disguised slavery and slave trade. The more time passes, the more the Nosy Be planters are disowned by French public opinion, which considers them as backward slave owners. Besides, recruitment is increasingly carried out by native Nosy Be Muslims in the 1870s, which makes it easier for local authorities to dissociate themselves from the whole system and denounce the native as slave traders.

From the 1870s onwards, the French navy engages in an open war against the slave traders around Nosy Be, whether French or foreign. At the same time, at the beginning of the 1880s, planters facing the collapse of sugar prices gradually abandon sugar cane cultivation for vanilla and give up recruiting African workers. At last, it is the drying up of the demand for African indentured labour that will make it possible to put an end to trafficking in Nosy Be.

Sources: Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Service Historique de la Défense, Archives Départementales de La Réunion.

The Emergence and Creolisation of the Indentured Mozambican Community in Mauritius during the Age of Indenture: A Demographic Profiling of the Liberated Africans (1846-1931)¹

Satyendra Peerthum, Historian

The Arrival of the Mozambican Liberated Africans

With their arrival between January 1856 and October 1869, the Mozambican Liberated Africans formed an important component in the already heterogeneous local indentured labour population. For more than half a century, they played a key role in rescuing the small and diminishing Mozambican community, who were mainly ex-slaves and ex-apprentices from oblivion and this fact is clearly indicated by the colony's leading colonial administrators.

Between February 1856 and June 1861, the registration of 1,702 Liberated Africans, 1,412 males and 290 females, at the Immigration Depot and their allocation in Port Louis, the eight rural districts and the outer islands did not go unnoticed. In June 1862, as a member of the Council of Government Committee for the Census of the Colony of Mauritius, Protector Beyts while sending his observations on the newly published Mauritius Census for 1861, observed :

“During the course of the past six years, the arrival and distribution of hundreds of captive Africans in the colony has contributed a great deal in the increase in the number of Mozambicans residing in the colony and can be seen in the recently completed colonial census.”²

The Emergence of a Local Liberated African Community

Several weeks later, the British Governor also echoed the Protector's observations and he took note of this recent demographic development in his dispatch to the Census Commissioners:

“The small Mozambican community had grown significantly over the past few years with the settlement of the recaptive Africans and are gradually forming part of the lower classes in Port Louis and the island's rural districts.”³

In 1846, there were an estimated 278 Mozambicans who were classified as general population and were not ex-apprentices.⁴ Barely six years later, this number increased to 400 Mozambicans, 332 males and 68 females, residing in Mauritius and its dependencies who were not ex-apprentices and classified as general population and there were 84 individuals, 77 males and 7 females, from other parts of Africa. At the same time, there were 4,290 Mozambican ex-apprentices who had already reached their fifties and sixties.⁵

¹ Research for this article was undertaken at the MGI Archives, the Mauritius National Archives, and the National Library in 2019.

² MG111A/PL 58, The Protector of Immigrants to the Governor through the Colonial Secretary, 22nd June 1862.

³ MNA/RA 1635, The Governor to the Commissioners of the Census Committee, 30th August 1862.

⁴ *Report of the Committee appointed to conduct and complete the Census of the Colony (1846), British Parliamentary Papers (1849), XXXVII (280-II), Appendix No.6.*

89.—In September last, the above-mentioned, Slave-Ship, which had been captured on the East Coast of Africa by H. M. S. *Brisk*, introduced 730 Africans (638 males and 92 females).

90.—They were received at the Immigration Depot where they were allowed to enjoy all the benefits extended to Immigrants on their arrival.

91.—The Collector of Customs, who was placed in charge of them in pursuance of the Colonial Regulations, was authorised to distribute them as laborers and apprentices on the most profitable conditions possible. They were disposed of as follows:

	Males.	Females.	Total.
As Ordinary Laborers...	200	..	200
" Domestic Servants...	60	62	122
" Apprentices	181	2	183

In September 1860, around 730 Liberated Africans were landed at the Immigration Depot where they were treated the same way as the Indian indentured labourers. Source: MNA/B Series, Annual Report of the Protector of Immigrants for 1860.

In 1861, there were an estimated 2,367 Mozambicans, 1,909 males and 458 females or 80% males and 20% females, living and working on the island and its dependencies. Within less than a decade, this represented an astounding six fold increase of one specific segment of the colony's labouring population.⁵ The sex ratio of the island's Mozambicans was 1 to 4 and was similar to the sex ratio of the recently landed Mozambicans. The arrival and settlement of around 1,704 Liberated African men and women made a massive contribution to this demographic phenomenon as noted by the British Governor and the Protector of Immigrants.⁷

By 1861, the ex-apprentices who were Mozambicans were quickly disappearing and it was the Mozambican Liberated Africans who were rapidly increasing and formed a majority within the island's small Mozambican communities. Furthermore, just like the majority of the Mozambicans, the Liberated Africans lived in the newly emerging towns, villages, and hamlets and on the sugar estates, remote areas of the central plateau and on the coast.

Their Geographic Distribution and Demographic Composition

The rural districts that possessed important number of Mozambicans were Pamplémousses,

Plaines Wilhems, Moka, Flacq, Savanne, and Grand Port. They contained more than three quarters of the rural Mozambicans. A significant minority lived in the town and district of Port Louis.⁸ It was in Port Louis, Pamplémousses, Plains Wilhems, Savanne, Moka, Flacq, and Grand Port where important Mozambican micro-communities gradually emerged during the 1860s and after, This was particularly the case in the estate camps and in housing accommodations in Port Louis where more than ten Liberated Africans communities were concentrated and worked and lived together for many years.⁹

Between June 1862 and October 1869, the registration of an additional 663 Liberated Africans as indentured workers at the Immigration Depot only served to expand and strengthen this vibrant and small community on the island.¹⁰ In 1871, there were an estimated 3,103 Mozambicans, 2,482 males and 621 females. Just like in the early 1860s, most of them were settled mostly in the rural areas and a significant minority in the town and district of Port Louis.¹¹

While commenting on the arrival of the last Liberated Africans in August and October 1869, Marina Carter and James Ng observed:

*"This was the last gasp of an African immigration, which, along with Malagasy, Comorian, and Chinese workers, had provided a small but significant addition to Indian indentured labour, adding further dimension to the rainbow society".*¹²

The Mauritius Census of 1871 came less than two years after the arrival of the last Liberated Africans in the colony and by then, what were some of the key demographic figures concerning the colony's Liberated African population. Between 1856 and 1869, 1,858 Liberated African males and 507 females, were registered as indentured workers at the Immigration Depot. The Liberated African males represented around 78.5% and the Liberated African females represented around 21.5%.

5 MNA/Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Take a Census of the Island of Mauritius and Its Dependencies, November 1851, Appendix No.6.

6 MNA/Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Take a Census of the Island of Mauritius and Its Dependencies, November April 1861. Appendix No.5.

7 MCI/IA/PE 160, Register for Liberated Africans, Malagasies and Indentured Labourers, PE 161, Register for Liberated Africans for 1860 to 1861; MCI/IA/PL 58, The Protector of Immigrants to the Governor through the Colonial Secretary, 22nd June 1862; MNA/RA 1635, The Governor to the Commissioners of the Census Committee, 30th August 1862.

8 MNA/Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Take a Census of the Island of Mauritius and Its Dependencies, November April 1861. Appendix No.6.

9 MCI/IA/PE 160, Register for Liberated Africans, Malagasies and Indentured Labourers, PE 161, Register for Liberated Africans for 1860 to 1861, PF 156 and PF 157, Reindentured engagements for 1861 to 1875; PF 7, Register of Engagements for Liberated Africans for 1865 to 1869; PF 8 to PF 8 to PF 46-Register of Engagements from 1869 to 1886.



Three Mozambican Liberated Africans who were brought to Port Louis on the ship *La Persévérance* in October 1869 at the Immigration Depot. They were among the last Liberated Africans to be brought to Mauritian shores. Source: Mauritius Museums Council.

An estimated 733 Liberated African children ranging from 2 months old to 14 years old were registered at the Immigration Depot and an estimated 513 among them were sent to the Orphans Asylum in the village of Pamplemousses. The Liberated African children consisted a relatively young population and 30% or 220 children were sent to work in public departments and for private employers. Those under the care of the Orphan Asylum Department were taught to read, write, and do basic maths and were apprenticed to learn a skilled trade. After spending five years there and depending on their age, they were apprenticed to an employer under an indenture contract of 5 years or more.³³

A careful analysis of the Mauritian archival sources and figures hints at the emergence of a Liberated African population which was essentially of Mozambican origin unlike, during the slavery era,

when the majority among them were Malagasies. During the 1860s and after, the Mozambican Liberated Africans or Indentured and ex-Indentured Africans became an integral part of the Mauritian labouring classes, specifically the Afro-Mauritians who were the descendants of slaves and apprentices. As a result, during the indenture era, this demographic process concerning the Mauritian Liberated Africans should be viewed as part of the African and Mozambican settlement and diaspora in the Indian Ocean World.

An Ageing Mozambican Liberated African Community

More than a generation later, in 1901, the census showed that there were only 643 persons on the island who were listed as Africans, implying Mozambicans. The Chief Census Commissioner, given his experience with census taking, disagreed with this data and argued that:

*“I estimate that there are probably between 2,000 to 3,000 persons who, by racial class should be included under the heading of Africans [Mozambicans]...”*³⁴

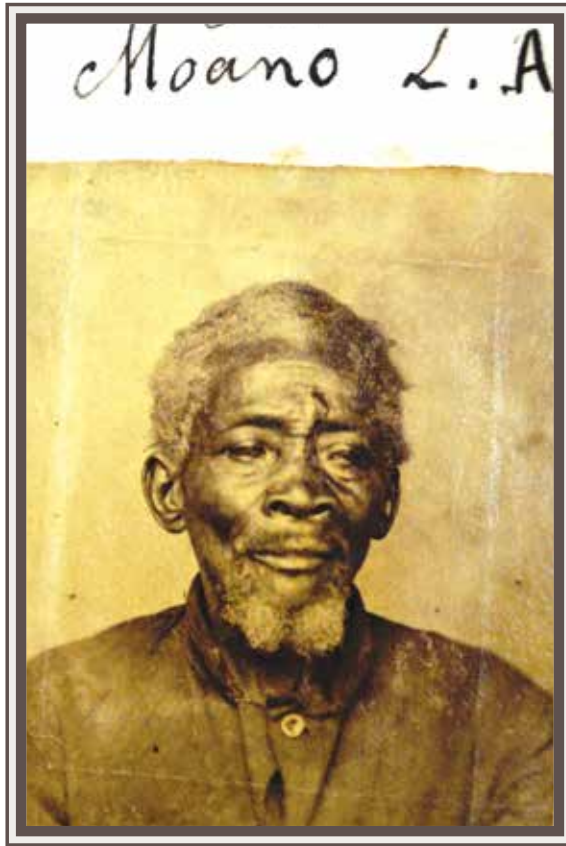
During the course of the same year, on two different occasions, the Protector of Immigrants reported that there were hundreds of Liberated Africans who had arrived between the mid-1850s and late 1860s, who were still alive and many among them had reached an advanced age. There were many among them who were still working and had achieved some measure of social and economic mobility in their lives. Between July and December 1901, around 128 Liberated Africans in their fifties, sixties, and seventies came in several large groups to meet with the Protector with requests for pensions, financial allowance, rations, and poor relief from the Immigration Department.

10 MGIIIA/ PF 7, Engagement Register for Liberated Africans for 1865 to 1869.

11 MNA/Census of Mauritius and Its Dependencies Taken on 11th April 1871, Appendix No.5 and 6.

12 Carter and Ng, *Forging the Rainbow: Labour Immigrants in British Mauritius*, p.25.

13 Calculated from MGIIIA/PE 160, Register for Liberated Africans, Malagasies and indentured labourers; PE 161, Register for Liberated Africans for 1860 to 1861; PF 7, Engagement Register for Liberated Africans for 1865 to 1869; PF 156 and PF 157, Reindentured Engagements for 1861 to 1875; PF 7, Register of Engagements for Liberated Africans for 1865 to 1869; PE 161B, Register for Engaged Infants and Children; Carter & al., *The Last Slaves: Liberated Africans in 19th Century Mauritius*, pp.36-52.



One of these elderly Liberated Africans was Maono.¹⁵ He was a Maravi Mozambican who arrived in Mauritius at the age of 18 on the ship the *Dryad* in October 1869. He was engaged for 5 years to Mr. Gonard in Black River as a labourer and did not learn any skilled or semi-skilled trade.¹⁶ In 1901, at the age of 50, Maono was not married and did not have any children and lived by himself in abject poverty in the village of Bambous. This was the main reason why he tried to obtain a pension and rations from the Immigration Depot.¹⁷

The Creolisation of the Mozambican Liberated Africans

In December 1901, Governor Sir Charles Bruce instructed the Protector of Immigrants that the

Liberated Africans should not be provided with any help. The Protector ordered his staff that the new policy of the Immigration Department was clear that the elderly Liberated Africans were no longer their responsibility and will be provided with no assistance.¹⁸ A detailed survey of the MGI Archives ship arrivals, engagements, non-marriage certificates, and photo registers, the letters from the Immigration Department, and the marriage, birth, and death registers at the Mauritius National Archives show, to a certain extent, that even by the early 20th century, there was a large number of Liberated Africans who lived to an advanced age, they got married and had several children and grandchildren, just like many of the former Indian indentured immigrants.

One of the major reasons for the creolisation of the small Liberated African population by the early 20th century and after was due to the vast majority of the Liberated Africans who were males and only a small minority who were females, for example, there were three times fewer adult Liberated African females than males. As a result, between the 1870s and the early 1900s, many of the Liberated African men and even some of the Liberated African women got married and others lived as intimate unmarried partners in the same household with Creole Mauritians who were of Afro-Malagasy descent and with a handful of ex-Indian indentured workers.

This led to the physical and biological incorporation of the Liberated Africans and their children into the island's creole community in a process that might be termed as demographic dilution.¹⁹ Therefore, during the course of the first half of the 20th century and after, the elderly Liberated Africans and their descendants have gradually been absorbed in the Mauritian population in a slow and complex social process called demographic dilution of a particular small ethnic group.²⁰

14 MNA/Census of Mauritius and Its Dependencies Taken on 1st April 1901, p.vi/5-6; Rene Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Empire*, Volume 2: Part IV: Mauritius and the Seychelles, pp.802-803.

15 MNA/PB 39, Protector of Immigrants to the Governor through the Colonial Secretary, 30th July 1901; Protector of Immigrants to the Governor through the Colonial Secretary, 10th December 1901; PF 70 to 79, Register of Engagements from 1903 to 1914; PG 53, Immigrant Photo Register for 1903 to 1914; Carter & al., *The Last Slaves: Liberated Africans in 19th Century Mauritius*, pp.76-78.

16 MGI/IA/PF 7, Register for Liberated Africans for 1865 to 1869.

17 MNA/PB 39, Protector of Immigrants to the Governor through the Colonial Secretary, 10th December 1901.

18 MNA/PB 40, Protector of Immigrants to the Governor through the Colonial Secretary, 22nd December 1901; Carter & al., *The Last Slaves: Liberated Africans in 19th Century Mauritius*, pp.78.

19 MGI/IA/PE 160, Register for Liberated Africans, Malagasies and Indentured Labourers; PE 161, Register for Liberated Africans for 1860 to 1861; PF 7, Engagement Register for the Liberated Africans for 1865 to 1869; PG 51, Immigrant Photo Register for 1901 to 1905; PF 70 to 79, Register of Engagements from 1903 to 1914; PG 53, Immigrant Photo Register for 1903 to 1914; PD 366 to PD 409, Certificates of Non-Marriage for 1864 to 1888; MNA, PB 39 to PB 54, Letters sent by the Protector of Immigrants to the Governor for the period between 1899 to 1911; KL 18 Series, KL 27 Series, KL 39 Series, and KL 49 Series, Marriage Registers for 1871 to 1910; KL 44A to KL 49B, Death Registers for the Colony of Mauritius for 1901 to 1910; See Carter, Govinden, and Peerthum, 2003, *The Last Slaves: Liberated Africans in 19th Century Mauritius*, pp.77-78.

20 See NLM & MNA, *Colony of Mauritius: The Mauritius Census for 1901, 1911, 1921, and 1931*.

Indian Indenture Era: Doctors and Diseases

Raj Boodhoo

This short article is mainly about government policy regarding the health of Indian labourers and the contribution of doctors in providing medical care to this group (as well as to other groups of the island population). It is about medical officers performing their duty in difficult circumstances, when successive waves of epidemics swept Mauritius, at a time when causes of diseases were yet unknown and their treatment uncertain. It is about doctors who often risked their lives while performing their duty *'to the best of their ability and judgement'* (Hippocratic Oath). It also refers to doctors who tried to improve the lives of others, especially the poor living in Port Louis; they volunteered to offer their services during violent epidemics, when medical care was urgently needed and doctors were scarce. Documents reveal not one or two, but many unsung heroes. At the same time, it refers to other doctors who did not always keep their Hippocratic promise and, while working in public services, indulged in a lucrative private practice in the capital where their well-to-do clients lived.

In the 1830s, when the mass transfer of Indian indentured labourers to Mauritius started as a private initiative, mortality rate during the voyage and at the destination was very high. Planters complained that many of the recruits who landed were unfit for field labour.[1] It was then observed that there was practically little or no medical examination of recruits before embarkation at the Indian ports. Emigrant ships did not employ any doctor on board to provide medical care. When the high rate of mortality was reported, the British Indian authorities suspended recruitment until the first regulations on recruitment and medical examination were passed and a surgeon on each immigrant ship, assisted by an Indian doctor/interpreter, were appointed, both drawing salaries from the Mauritian government. At the Indian ports, potential workers were closely examined and vaccinated against smallpox before embarkation, and again more medical inspection was performed on board before departure, to ensure that no Indian unfit for work left the port. However, in spite of these measures, Indians affected by

infectious diseases continued to land in Mauritius because of inefficient forms of diagnosis.

During the early years, indeed, definitely not the most efficient ship surgeons were available in India to accompany Indian migrants, men, women and children. Those employed by the shipping companies were mainly discharged or retired medical officers of the Indian Medical Service. There were reports of negligence, and also alleged cases of misbehaviour and abuse against women migrants which usually caused an uproar among the men.[2] It happened sometimes that such doctors were penalized on arrival in Mauritius. Later in the century, the colonial office tried to recruit young and efficient surgeons, fresh from medical schools, offering them better salaries and permanent jobs. The Mauritian government also paid a gratuity, of one rupee to the ship surgeon and twenty-five cents to the Indian assistant for every Indian landed alive.

Two main public health strategies adopted in Mauritius were: quarantine imposed on infected ships and vaccination campaign against smallpox. Quarantine laws, existing since the French period, became more stringent when mass immigration of labourers started. By the mid-19th century, quarantine stations were established at Flat Island and at Pointe aux Canonnières on the mainland, and also a smaller one at Ile aux Bénitiers in the south west.[3]. As trading activities of the sugar colony developed and maritime traffic increased, threats of imported diseases breaking out in the port capital became permanent. From Port Louis, ill-equipped to keep diseases at bay, cholera, malaria and plague spread to the hinterland districts. As for leprosy, held to be highly contagious, lepers were sent to far off outer islands such Agaléga and Ile Curieuse in the Seychelles, while many Indian lepers were sent back to their home country. In 1857, the 'Sisters of Charity, a catholic charitable institution created by Mother Augustine (born L'Enferna de La Resle) set up a leper asylum at Roche Bois. The asylum named St Lazare was subsidized by government through the Poor Law Commission at the rate of one pound per patient. As no government medical

officers were available, a few doctors in the public service such as Regnaud and Poupinel de Valencé treated the lepers voluntarily. Leper colonies in the outer islands were subsequently closed. More lepers were isolated at the Barkly Asylum. It was only in 1924, following the recommendations of Dr Andrew Balfour, that the government set up a leper hospital on the premises of the Powder Mills in Pamplemousses district and a government medical officer, Dr J. H. André, examined the inmates weekly. The latter was sent to Robben Island leper colony in South Africa, for further training in the treatment of leprosy.

The colonial government needed more and more doctors and nurses to provide medical care to a growing population. During the early 19th century, there were few doctors; some of them were British military doctors who moved with their regiments to different parts of the Empire. About a dozen doctors of French origin had also decided to stay in Mauritius after it became British. For the head of the health department and that of the Civil Hospital, British doctors were recruited from other parts of the empire. There were only sixty-two doctors in 1850, according to Paturau.[4] In the early years, the government faced difficulties to recruit doctors for the quarantine stations. In January 1856, when over 600 Indians were isolated at Flat and Gabriel islands and as no public service doctor was available, Dr Finimore, a military assistant-surgeon accepted to be in charge of the quarantine station. A violent cyclone hit the quarantine islands where there were no proper buildings to accommodate so many people, two hundred and eighty-six of them died. Unable to fill the post of superintendent surgeon at Flat Island, Governor Higginson requested the Secretary of State, Labouchere, to recruit in England, stating this *'service being unpopular'* in Mauritius.[5]. Probably the main reason for doctors refusing to work at the quarantine stations was that they were far from their private practice in Port Louis. (Doctors in public service were allowed private practice). It had practically little to do with risks of catching smallpox or other infectious diseases. R. Quenette, the biographer of Dr O. Beaugeard clearly explains the conflict existing among medical officers in the health department, and the competition to have a government appointment in Port Louis, instead of one in the country districts.[5]

In 1857, the Colonial Office appointed Dr Philip Ayres, lecturer in materia medica at St George School of Medicine in London as Surgeon Superintendent of Flat Island quarantine station.[6]

However, after Ayres who passed away in 1861, all the doctors posted at the quarantine stations were of Mauritian origin. Apart from treating patients with infectious diseases, they supervised their vaccination. After the 1860s, the number of ships arriving with smallpox cases on board was on the decline. There was only one last serious outbreak in 1892. Moreover, the number of vaccinated people in the island continued to increase, but there were still many who avoided vaccination, especially among the general population. As other infectious diseases such as measles and plague broke out by the end of the nineteenth century, stringent quarantine regulations were maintained. Although shipowners often protested because quarantine caused delays, no vessel could enter the harbour without the authorization of the Health Officer and Harbour Master who had to confirm that the vessel was free from disease.[6] Otherwise, it was directed to a quarantine station where the passengers were isolated. Vessels had to wait for several days before the cargo was disinfected and delivered to traders. Ship surgeons were penalized if it was found that they hid information from port authorities on infectious diseases on board or on infected ports they had visited during the voyage.

On the other hand, most British government officers were sceptical about the effectiveness of the quarantine system, very expensive and inhumane. When Dr F. J. Mouat of the Indian Medical Service visited Mauritius in 1851, he condemned the deplorable sanitary conditions in Port Louis, where canals crossing the town were open sewers which were more dangerous to health than the *'coolie'* ships.[7] In 1857, Dr Mouat, in a report commissioned by the Indian government on mortality on board emigrant ships, stated that the use of contaminated water from the Hoogly River could be the main cause of disease and death of Indian migrants going overseas.

Once Indian labourers arrived on the mainland of Mauritius, they stayed for about 48 hours at the Immigration Depot at Port Louis before their transfer to the sugar estates. Those who were sick during their stay at the Immigration Depot were sent to the Civil Hospital, their treatment expenses borne by planters who had recruited them. A medical doctor was appointed at the Depot when the Civil Hospital could no longer admit increasing number of sick Indians. From the early stage of Indian immigration, the government had to seriously consider the provision of medical treatment on the estates. In 1844, Ordinance 40 required planters to set up hospitals and appoint

doctors to examine sick Indian labourers. Few estates had resident doctors. The plantation doctor usually moved from one estate to another in a particular district, and examined patients at least once weekly. It was often difficult for them to reach remote estates regularly. There is evidence that one doctor refused to consult plague victims on an estate.[8] Reports give evidence that estate hospitals were rudimentary and ill-kept. Isolation huts were built when there were outbreaks of infectious disease. For a long time, Indians shunned the hospitals for various reasons, including cultural beliefs. They did not want to sleep in beddings having been used by others earlier or eat food provided at the hospital. In 1860, Protector of Immigrants Beyts reported that on many estates, unused hospitals remained closed. Some Indians had recourse to quacks and sorcerers, which was not tolerated by the authorities.

Attempts made by the government in the mid-19th century to build district hospitals failed. Apart from the Civil Hospital in Port Louis, there were a few dispensaries in large villages such as Mahebourg. An essential institution, the Barkly Asylum was founded in 1867 to provide health services to in and out poor patients. It is only by the end of the century that a public hospital was set up in each district (except Black River), and the Civil Hospital was transferred to the Royal College building. However, it has to be noted that throughout the nineteenth century, the colonial government concentrated its efforts in smallpox vaccination campaigns throughout the island. As for efforts to combat malaria, there was no progress until Dr Ronald Ross in 1897 discovered how Anopheles vectors spread the infection. On his visit to Mauritius in 1908, he recommended drainage works to eliminate breeding grounds of mosquitoes and the provision of quinine to the sick.

The indenture period was marked by several epidemic outbreaks: smallpox in the 1840s and 1850s, cholera in the 1850s and 1860s, and malaria from 1866 becoming endemic for more than a century. Medical services were always inadequate during epidemics, some doctors always volunteered to offer free medical treatment to the poor. There are several cases of doctors who died on duty during the epidemics. While the violent cholera was raging in the capital in 1854, the new municipal council of Port Louis organized a support service for the poor. Dr C.E. Brown Sequard who was on a private trip to the island formed part of the cholera

committee appointed by the government, and voluntarily treated cholera patients at *L'infirmier Ste Marie* together with a military surgeon Dr E.N. Macpherson and the catholic missionary Reverend Laval, who was also a medical practitioner. Dr D.M. Dauban, municipal councilor, actively involved in treating cholera patients, died of cholera. Reverend Laval persevered in visiting the sick and the dying during the cholera-ridden years, despite his own failing health. It is reported that he died of exertion in 1864. Two quarantine medical superintendents died on duty. Dr Horace Beaugeard died in 1883 at Gabriel Island while attending smallpox patients who had arrived from the Seychelles. Dr Idrice Coumany also succumbed while he was in charge of Pointe aux Canonnières quarantine station in 1889.

In spite of their differences or conflicting perceptions in the causation of infections, several doctors in Mauritius were going to rise above the lot while dealing with diseases and the diseased. They were not only involved in voluntary work, they also carried out research and published treatises on epidemics. Dr J. Mailloux was in Europe when his family members died during the cholera epidemic of 1856. After considerable research in Europe, he published an excellent monograph on that pandemic. After working for some time in Madagascar where he was the personal doctor of King Radama II, he returned to Port Louis and devoted his practice to the poor. He was popularly known as the *'médecin des pauvres'*. Inspired by the discoveries of Dr Alphonse Laveran and Dr Ronald Ross who made the link between mosquitoes and malaria, local scientists D. Emmerez de Charmoy and A. Daruty de Grand Pré published an extensive treatise on local anopheles.[9] When news came that plague had broken out in Bombay in 1896, the government sent Dr H. Lorans to India to study the disease and advise on preventive measures in Mauritius. Dr A. Lafont, French Military doctor, came from Réunion to be in charge of the first laboratory of bacteriology at Réduit in 1908, where he was able to produce vaccine against smallpox. Dr D.E. Anderson wrote a thesis on epidemics in Mauritius in 1918, and contributed articles in 'The Lancet'. Doctors were actively involved in the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences, and they also formed the *Société Médicale de L'île Maurice* and launched a journal to publish their research findings.

Scientists in the mid-19th century firmly believed that miasma (emanations from rotting vegetation etc) caused various diseases and that smallpox and cholera were contagious, and those affected had to

be isolated. Belief in miasma was reinforced when the violent malaria epidemic broke out in 1867. One of the reasons put forward was emanations caused by digging the soil. When the government decided to provide underground sewerage in the capital, there was strong opposition from legislative councilors, including doctors. The project was shelved for twenty years. In the meantime, in Europe, the miasma theory was being questioned. During the last quarter of 19th century, the science of microbiology developed and the 'germ theory' of disease came to the fore, that disease is caused by the invasion of micro-organisms. Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, Ronald Ross and others made discoveries that put an end to age-old concepts based on miasma. The crowning achievement was the development of vaccines. By the last quarter of the 19th century, the number of Mauritian doctors increased, there were 71 in 1890.[10] They were from the white and coloured population. All of them having studied in European medical schools brought to Mauritius new scientific ideas, especially the need to set up a central laboratory.

However, in the public service, many doctors carried out private practice. This remained a matter of contention throughout the period and a major stumbling block in the effective administration of public health. In 1874, Julyan Penrose in a report on the Civil Establishment denounced private practice as carried out by government medical officers.[11] Again in 1886, a report on civil establishments pointed out that the duty of the health officer at the Immigration Depot, was to visit immigrant ships and to consult sick Indians, he had little time for either. Medical circles showed much resistance. Those working in medical institutions in Port Louis resented their appointment in rural areas. The biography of Dr O. Beaugeard explains the antagonism in medical circles over the question of public service and private practice.

Long before the end of the nineteenth century, there was a movement of Indian population from the sugar estate camps to the villages, and these communities did no longer have medical treatment at estate hospitals. Although some public hospitals were set up during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, at Poudre d'Or, Moka, Montagne Longue, Mahebourg and Candos (in 1922), and also a few dispensaries in big villages, medical care in the rural areas was inadequate. Dr Andrew Balfour, in his report on sanitation and health, recommended the recruitment of Indian doctors to staff medical institutions in the rural areas. He argued that

'no doubt large numbers of people die annually without medical assistance.' This idea caused a strong resistance from a group of twenty-two doctors, led by Dr Edgard Laurent. The latter, with an Indian ancestry, was at the same time a leading figure of the Retrocession Movement, (a short-lived 'back-to-France' movement). These doctors wanted to safeguard their advantages as private practitioners. Governor Hesketh Bell explained that he had no intention of interfering with their *'vested interests.'* Moreover, the poor in the rural districts were unable pay the fees required by private practitioners. The poor depended on the health services provided at the hospitals and dispensaries. Dr Hassen Sakir was sent to Calcutta to recruit Indian doctors. Thus, six Indian doctors came to Mauritius.[12] Moreover, an act of humanity has to be noted at a time when high mortality rate among infants was recorded; Dr E.L. de Chazal donated funds for the training of mid-wives who were to be employed by the estates.

It is to be noted that by the end of the nineteenth century, the health of Indians living on estates were no longer in the charge of the Protector of Immigrants. Ordinance 32 of 1894-5 created the Medical and Health Department and a Director was appointed. This new department was in charge of the health care of all Indians: at the depot, at the estate hospitals, as well as those living in the villages. However, although there was a decreasing number of in-patients, estate hospitals were maintained long after the Indian indenture era was over. In 1968, there were 27 estate hospitals with 560 beds served by 11 private practitioners.[13]

Adapted from:

Boodhoo, Raj. 2019 Infectious Disease and Public Health Mauritius 1810-2010. ELP Ltd.

Notes

1. Carter, M. 1995 Servants, Sirdars and Settlers, Indians in Mauritius. OUP p143
2. Deerpalsing and Carter Select Documents MGI Vol 2 p24; Vol 3 p249
3. See AGTF Newsletters. On line
4. Paturau, M. J. 1998 Histoire Economique de L'île Maurice.
5. Quenette, R. 1991 Le Grand Beaugeard. MGI Maurice
6. Boodhoo, R. Newsletter, AGTF. Ordinance 26 of 1913
7. Mouat F. 1852 Rough Notes. Calcutta
8. MGI Immigration Archives PN 11 30 November 1899
12. National Archives. SD 180 A. Governor Hesketh Bell to Secretary of State W.Churchill September 1921
13. Balfour, Dr A.1921 Report on Medical and Sanitary Matters in Mauritius
14. Titmuss, R.M. and Abel-Smith, R. 1968 Social Policies and Population Growth in Mauritius. Frank Cass Co Ltd p166

Cause and Response to Inequalities in the Indentured Labour Diaspora: A Framework for Comparative Analysis

Farzana Gounder, IPU New Zealand Tertiary Institute, New Zealand and Maurits S. Hassankhan, Anton de Kom Universiteit, Suriname

The CARE framework arose in response to Vijaya Teelock's keynote address at the 2018 *Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour, Migration and Diaspora* conference in Suriname. Teelock noted a significant gap in indenture studies: a shortage of comparative studies across the indentured diasporas. Through the proposed framework, we provide a platform for the systematic and comparative analysis of causality, consequence and response to acts of inequality, from the perspective of the plantation-based individuals.

The Cause and Response to Inequalities in the Indentured Labour Diaspora (CARE) framework¹ is a multi-level theoretical framework for the systematic analysis across the indentured colonies of (i) causal factors and pathways for discrimination in the allocation of resources, (ii) resultant health outcomes and (iii) the strategies that the plantation-based individuals utilised in response to perceived and actual acts of inequalities.

Central to the analysis is the consideration of how institutional level policies and processes influenced the (in)access to resources and thus mediated the ability to carry out social strategies and achieve equitable health outcomes.

A crucial aspect of the framework that needs to be considered is the *institutional practices*, which refers to a continuum of formal and informal practices embedded within the social and material structures and processes of indenture that established and maintained social order, power and dominance on the plantations, and which determined individuals' health outcomes.

Such practices were informed through actions that were (1) *regulative* (rule setting, monitoring, sanctioning actions, thus influencing individuals to comply through fear of punishment), (2) *normative* (evaluative and obligatory situations, thus influencing individuals to comply through moral obligations), or (3) *cultural* (meaning-making through shared norms and values about the social context, that influence individuals to comply through cultural frames of reference about right and wrong behaviour) (Scott, 2008: 54-57). Institutional practices thus governed the complex web of resource distribution and environmental exposure, and the consequential health outcomes of the plantation-based individuals.

Institutional practices are also dynamic, having to be performed continuously and are an essential consideration in the inter-play of performances of power, and the employment of social strategies in negotiations and contestations of such practices (Scoones, 1998). We have ordered the factors that consolidated institutional practices into three contexts:

Meta-level, regulatory policies and processes:

Factors include contractual rights and obligations on both sides, and governance regarding indenture, indentured labourers, and their offspring.

Social and material environments:

Such environments "both provide resources for health and contain risks for health" and "affect people's vulnerability to *illness and injury*" (Graham, 2004: 108). Examples include community norms, interpersonal relationships, plantation structures

¹ <https://farzanagounder.com/framework/>

of working and living situations, and healthcare availability.

Individual-level behavioural, psychological and physiological factors: Individual-level factors that can have a modifying impact against health inequalities or can exacerbate the consequences of health inequality.

During indenture, institutional practices created a complex web of barriers and opportunities for the plantation-based individuals, relative to their *social position*, the comparative place of an individual within societal stratifications. Social position dimensions include socioeconomic status, social capital, gender, and ethnicity (Graham, 2004: 107; Link & Phelan, 1995; Krieger et al., 2006; Mohanty, 2005; Quesada., Hart, & Bourgois, 2011). Social position is associated with power distribution, social and economic access to resources, and environmental exposure to risk, creating a social gradient in health inequalities (Diderichsen, Evans & Whitehead, 2001:14).

For the majority of the plantation-based individuals, the combination of institutional practices and social position created a vicious cycle, with adverse consequences for their health outcomes. An individual's social position determined the allocation and (in)access to health-promoting resources within each of these clusters of factors. In turn, the non-access to such resources restricted social position within the societal hierarchy through limiters on earning potential, types of employment opportunities, and upward mobility.

The social and material structures of the plantation-based environment, within which the plantation-based individuals lived and worked, also played a large part in determining the strategies that they used in responding to perceived or actual occurrences of inequity. Recent research reveals patterns in the labourers' response to the plantation environments across the indentured colonies. Some labourers accommodated to their living and working conditions, tolerating the situation with the knowledge that their indenture would end after five years (Lal & Munro, 2014). At other times, labourers found the conditions untenable and attempted to act to rectify the situation. Such outcries of injustice would usually be against the plantation managers' assault and battery of the labourers, and the withholding of full or part of the weekly wages. The resistance

took the form of institutionalised practices of complaints, through the courts, the agent-general or the plantation inspectors (Lal, 1986).

The labourers' attempts to use the legal machinery was not often successful: They lacked spoken or written knowledge of the colonial language; there was the risk that the interpreters were biased towards the colonial authorities; and while they may have been familiar with the traditional panchayat system of settling disputes, the labourers were unfamiliar with presenting their cases in the Western justice system. Consequently, the labourers' claims against the plantation authorities were often dismissed, or the plantation authorities were able to either escape conviction or to receive negligible punishment for offences (Hassankhan, 2014; Lal, 1986; Naidu, 1980).

The labourers, thus, became increasingly disillusioned with following due process to obtain redress. They believed that the plantation authorities (managers and overseers), indenture officials (the agent-general, district commissioner, inspectors), and the court officials (judges, magistrates, lawyers and interpreters) were colluding against the labourers and that it was futile to take any matters to the courts. The Girmityas, in frustration, turned to other forms of resistance, many of which were individualised, opportunistic acts. Examples include verbal and physical assault, which were often spontaneous and reactionary, destruction of property, petty theft, and non-performance of tasks. More organised forms of protest, while rare, did at times occur and took the form of revolts and strikes (Gounder, 2020a, 2020b; Hassankhan, 2014; Hoefte, 1987; Vahed, 2014).

Components of the CARE framework:

The CARE framework provides an analysis of the *causal pathways and agents* that determine resource access, the *individuals' response* to inequitable acts, and the *consequences* of causal acts of inequity and responses to inequitable acts. The framework is situated around the analysis of power and agency in acts of inequity, as seen in the matrix below:

Analytical categories	Definition of terms in relation to Causal factors of inequity	Definition in relation to Responses to inequity
<i>Context</i>	Situated manifestation of the inequitable act	Situated manifestation of the response to inequitable act
<i>Expression</i>	Manner in which the inequitable act was conducted	Manner in which the response to inequitable act was conducted
<i>Type</i>	Form of an inequitable act	Form of response to inequitable act
<i>Frequency</i>	How often did the causal act occur	How often did the response occur
<i>Duration</i>	How long was the causal act sustained	How long was the response sustained
<i>Temporal and spatial location</i>	When and where the act of inequality took place	When and where the act of response took place
<i>Agency attribution</i>	The agency associated with responsibility and power to mitigate inequalities	Repercussions, if any, for the agent of the inequitable act. ²

As an act is perceived to be inequitable from an individual's perspective, the consequences of inequality may be measured along the following aspects:

Analytical categories	Definition of terms in relation to individuals impacted by inequality
<i>Life stage at experience</i>	perinatal; neonatal, infancy; childhood; adolescence; adulthood
<i>Frequency of experience</i>	Was the act a sporadic or regular occurrence?
<i>Intensity of experience</i>	How severely was the individual affected?
<i>Duration of experience</i>	How long was the act of inequality sustained/experienced?
<i>Effect of experience on the individual level</i>	How did the experience of inequality adversely impact plantation-based individuals' physiological, behavioural and/or psychological health outcomes?

Future research can apply the framework to investigate labourers' responses to perceived acts of inequality: Resistance acts amongst labourers in different colonies towards the same causal factors (e.g. low wage), resistance acts amongst female labourers (as women and as mothers) in different colonies. The analysis of response using the framework will provide a clearer picture of (i) the types, expressions of response, (ii) the contexts within which these responses were located and (iii) the types and expressions of causal factors that the labourers could and did react against. Such an approach will keep the study firmly situated within the multilayers of complexity within which the labourers lived and worked.

Two much needed areas of study that would benefit from the framework are: the life course approach, which measures the impact of girmit on different stages of a person's life from the point at which they entered the plantation environment. Hence, for those born on the plantation, this could be from birth through, infancy, adolescence, and into adulthood. Another much-needed area of

investigation is the comparative analysis of the lives of plantation-based infants and children.

Social position influences not just an individual's experience of resource access, rather, it can have an ongoing intergenerational impact. We see the impact of resource inaccess on the labourers, their infants and children. Hence, (iv) the framework allows for the consideration of the perpetuation of intergenerational resource inaccess and the resultant intergenerational adverse health outcomes.

The application of the framework is not limited to the historical presence of inequalities, consequences and response. The framework also allows for a comparison between indenture and post-indenture health outcomes to determine what causal factors and their manifestations were limited to the plantation and those factors that persisted from the indenture plantation environment to post-indenture populations. Such an approach will allow the analysis of health from indenture into the diasporas of today.

² In contrasting the consequences of an act for the agents/perpetrators and victims/recipients it is possible to discuss the place of power and agency in acts of inequity.

Remembering Dr Idrice Goumany During Pandemic

*Assad Bhuglah, Mauritian Writer & International Trade Expert
assadbhuglah@hotmail.com*



This year the commemoration of the arrival of Indian immigrants is being celebrated at a grim period when the entire world has been scourged by the pandemic known as Corona virus also called as Covid-19. This reminds us of a tragic chapter of the Mauritian history when thousands of Indian immigrants, infected by smallpox, were left on their own to bear the ordeal. In the mid-1880s, several ships transporting passengers from India were suspected of spreading smallpox in Mauritius. Upon arrival at the harbour of Port Louis, these ships were asked to stay away for several days from the shore of Port Louis. The exhausted passengers, who had traversed the ocean for more than forty days, were disembarked and put on boats that despatched them directly to Flat Island or the Quarantine station of Pointe

aux Canonniers, located at the north-west of Mauritius. At that time, it was considered to be a remote place as there was no road infrastructure to access it easily. The most convenient and speedy route from Port Louis to Pointe aux Canonniers was by boat.

When those sick Indian immigrants were stacked in the quarantine, there was no doctor to look after them. All the doctors approached by the British colonial authority categorically refused to treat the patients on the ground that smallpox was highly contagious and deadly. It was against this backdrop that a young Mauritian doctor by the name of Idrice Goumany came to the rescue of the Indian immigrants. Dr Idrice Goumany was among the first batch of professionals of Indian

origin who completed his medical studies in 1886 in Scotland. The grandfather of Idrice Goumany, who originated from Cochin, India came to Mauritius in the late 1790s to work as lascars (boatman) at Port Louis harbour which was then under the control of the French colonial government. The parents of Idrice Goumany made huge sacrifice to finance his education, both at home and abroad, at a time when there existed many restrictions and prejudices for children of Indian and Afro origins to acquire education.

As a young doctor still in his late twenties, Dr Idrice Goumany had all the comfort and good things of life waiting for him. There was no compulsion for him to go and treat the infected Indian immigrants. He could have refused to do so just as his colleagues did. But he was compassionate and very sensitive to the sufferings of his country fellows. As a patriot and as a professional bound by Hippocratic Oath, he volunteered to take charge of the quarantine of Pointe aux Canonnières in 1887. He resided at the quarantine day and night, and with the meagre means available at hand, he cured many patients. Finally, he himself caught the disease and there was no doctor available to treat him. He died on 28 July 1889. He was buried in the compound of the quarantine of Pointe aux Canonnières. Due to strict sanitary restrictions in force, nobody from his family and close relatives could attend the burial ceremony.

This year marks 131 years since Dr Idrice Goumany left us. As a tribute to this patriot, every year on 2 November, we lay some flowers at his tomb in the context of the celebration of the Arrival of Indian Immigrants, perhaps with little idea of what could have been the pain, sacrifice and relentless devotion to duty exemplified by Dr Idrice Goumany. This year, the frightful experience of the pandemic lived by us all has revealed to us what it means to be on the frontline to combat the deadly disease. People are now in a better position to realise to what extent doctors, nurses and medical staff are exposed to danger; to such an extent that they have to stay in isolation from their family members in order not to infect them. People have also witnessed how it is agonising to be in quarantine for several weeks. But when we flash back to the isolation and quarantine life of Dr Goumany, there is no comparison to our situation under confinement and lockdown of today. At the time of Dr Goumany, there was no radio, no television, no telephone, no WhatsApp and no social media to keep connectivity with

family, friends and the outside world. There was no electricity, electric fans, air conditions and refrigerator to add comfort to the life in isolation.

The Corona virus pandemic has also revealed to what extent doctors and nurses become stigma or unwanted in their own society. There have been incidents abroad where frontline doctors and nurses have been chased away from their apartments by their neighbours for fear of spreading the virus. There have been cases, again abroad, where nurses have been aggressed by those very people to whom they wanted to extend medical assistance. These incidents give us an insight into the situation prevailing at the time of Dr Goumany and to understand the social attitude of the doctors who refused to treat the Indian immigrants.

Today, the most unbecoming attitude that the pandemic has revealed has been the reaction of a mob who tried to prevent the burial of a frontline doctor who sacrificed his life treating Corona-infected patients. Unfortunately, it happened in South Asia. The mob protested that the burial of the doctor at the cemetery would endanger the life of others in the neighbourhood. This incident makes us reflect that the burial of Dr Goumany at Pointe aux Canonnières was never a favour bestowed upon him by the colonial authorities. It was done with the idea of keeping his tomb away from the big public. Though the colonial government of that time gave assurance to the aggrieved family to build a monument in memory of Dr Idrice Goumany at Bois Marchand Cemetery, which is much accessible and closer to Port Louis, that promise was never fulfilled. Today, it is not because the Quarantine of Pointe aux Canonnières has been transformed into a prestigious beach resort, Club Med, that the problem of accessibility to Dr Goumany's tomb has been resolved. As it is now, it is on 2nd November that the family members of Dr Goumany and a limited number of public get the opportunity to visit his tomb. For the rest of the year, the dead body of the doctor rests in confinement!



How the Indenture system Freed the Indian women from India's stern society

Dr. Anand Moheeputh, Historian and Mauritian Writer

After the collapse of the lucrative Atlantic slave trade, the British Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger most probably heeded the advice of the Economist Adam Smith who argued that unpaid slave labour was “a costly form of labour” and that since India was teeming with an abundance of “cheap labour”, sugar could be produced more cheaply by “paid non-slaves”. The centre of gravity of British economic interest, since then, witnessed a shift to the East, more particularly to India.

The massive deployment of Indian labour on British Colonial plantations for a period spanning over eighty-five years from 1834 under the indenture system changed the colonies' economic landscape from one of gloom and doom to a level of unprecedented prosperity. As, for example, in the case of Mauritius where a sense of optimism was expressed by the planting community, the Governor, Sir William Nicolay, in a letter dated 11 June 1839 to the Colonial office wrote, “a universal joy is spreading throughout the colony”.

Such economic prosperity could not be attributed solely to Indian male immigrants. The role of the indentured women as an important cog in the wheel of the sugar industry globally has often received scant attention. It was mainly through the indenture system legalized by the British parliament in 1837, and severely condemned by some historians on account of its exploitative nature, that tens of thousands of Indian women freed themselves from India's abject poverty and ruthless hierarchical society under which they were reeling for years, if not centuries. At least two prominent Indian leaders, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Surendranath Banerjee saw indenture as a salvation for the “poor peasants” of India.

With regard to indenture, Mauritius was the first British colony, according to I.M Cumpston, to experiment with Indian labour. The initiative

taken by Hunter, Arbuthnot & Co to import in September 1834 a batch of thirty-six “Hill coolies” or “Dhangars” from the tribal region of Chota Nagpur, bordering the state of Bihar, set the stage for sugar producing colonies to start the process of requisitioning Indian labour.

But the indenture system at the very outset suffered from a drawback. It made no obligation on the part of estates' owners to include women in the system. Down the years that exclusion brought in its trail an acute shortage of female migrants with the consequence that it triggered what the historian, S.B Mookherjee, described as a “disquieting spectacle” among the Indian immigrants even in Mauritius.

The staggering disproportion in the gender ratio, for instance, in the case of Mauritius was glaring. Between 1834 and 1839, the Indian population in the island stood at 25,458 men and 500 women categorized as “wives” and “daughters”. That low proportion of Indian women in the colonies attracted the attention of Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who commented when the draft of the revised Indenture rules and regulations were on the anvil, that there was “a marked disproportion of sexes among the immigrants”.

Although the colonial government in India tried to ease the situation by proposing a ratio of twelve women to be transported on board a ship to every one hundred indentured men, the social climate on sugar plantations hardly improved. In many instances, the Emigration authorities at the ports of embarkation in India simply turned a blind eye to whatsoever prescribed regulations.

The wide imbalance could also be attributed to the fact that planters were more concerned with a high turn of productivity in order to gear up profits as best they could. Males' labour offered

bigger opportunities for boosting up wealth while women were dismissed as financial liabilities and a burden with limited output. As pointed out by Hugh Tinker, author of “A New System of Slavery”, the indenture system “was a lifeless system” and “human values meant little in the drive for production”.

How planters generally behaved is vividly exemplified by the British Guiana’s planter, John Gladstone, who insisted with his Calcutta agents Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Co, upon being sent “young, active able-bodied Indians”.

The first batch of Indians known as the “Gladstone Coolies” or “Junglies” because they originated from the tribal Chota Nagpur region - reached British Guiana, another large recipient of Indian labour in 1838, with 392 men and an abnormally low proportion of 22 women.

In Natal (South Africa), the “Coolie Commission” appointed in 1872 to look into the grievances of Indian labourers recommended amongst others the recruitment of indentured women to address the gender imbalance issue.

A skewed gender ratio that provoked a scarcity of female immigrants added to the woes of the male immigrants. In many instances, it impacted on the mental health of male immigrants giving rise to high incidences of crimes and suicides. The Guyanese born journalist, Gaiutra Bahadur, in her book “Coolie Woman...” writes that the suicidal rates during the indenture period, for example,

were alarming in British Guiana - “20 times greater than in India”

The shortage of women, for example, in Mauritius prompted Governor Nicolay as early as 1839 to write to the Indian authorities in Calcutta advising them to “include a certain number of women in every batch of labourers for Mauritius” because “paucity of women was responsible for grave disorders in some estates in Mauritius”.

But it was also a fact that Indian men, except in some rare cases, were reluctant to be accompanied by their families to unknown destinations, if not, on obscure expeditions, even though the indenture contracts mentioned a return passage after five years.

Because of their scarcity on plantations, most Indian women exercised, as Gaiutra Bahadur puts it, a “sexual leverage” in that they could change one or several male partners or “protectors”. They were more often induced by the ones offering them some advantages like a better and more comfortable life. Those escapades often ended up in brutal attacks perpetrated by jealous and spurned partners. “Wife murders” due to infidelity were quite common, for example, in British Guiana where, between 1857 and 1917, 169 women were killed by their husbands or partners, a figure that was “90 times more frequent in Guyana than in rural India” , according to Gaiutra Bahadur.

Reacting to the “evils” gripping the Indian society in the colonies, the Secretary of State for the



Portraits of indentured women in Mauritius. Source: MGIIIA

Colonies, Henry Labouchere (Lord Taunton) in 1856 recommended to the government in India a set of measures to redress the gender issue. These included increasing the proportion of women to male recruitment by a new ratio of twenty-five women to one hundred men. In 1868, the quota was fixed at fifty women to one hundred labourers embarked on any "Coolie ship" sailing to the colonies. But that ratio was subsequently reduced to 40/100 after a protest was lodged by the government of Bengal because of the recruitments of "a low type of women".

The new established criteria put recruiters under much pressure to search for women when demands for labourers began peaking up. Persuading Indian women to undertake long and treacherous sea voyages was an arduous task.

But at the same time, the exigencies for recruiting women in the indenture system saw the flourishing of rogue recruiters who not only lured women and girls into a life of make-believe but also resorted to kidnapping and selling their victims to licensed agencies in Calcutta in order to make up for the quotas required.

Denounced as "scoundrels" by John Scoble of the Anti-Slavery Society, those pseudo recruiters operated mainly in the vicinity of crowded bazaars, fairs, river banks and temples to prey on vulnerable women.

On the other hand, the plight of those women desperate to be pulled out of the quagmire of poverty isolated by family members and crushed by the rigid class and caste structures of Indian society found their last recourse for living a life at places like Ayodhya, Vrindavan, Kashi, Varanasi and Mathura. These holy sites were famous hunting grounds for recruiters.

Young widows dumped by in-laws, runaways fleeing homes from abusive treatment, women absconding from husbands' homes in desperation sought refuge at these places in order to live by begging or driven to the famous Indian "kothas" as prostitutes. Many could not endure the harshness of society and would commit suicide.

In a report on Colonial emigration compiled for the Bengal Presidency (1883), George Abraham Grierson, a Colonial Administrator in India, wrote that the female emigrants consisted of four groups: the prostitutes, wives of men who had

already been to the colonies and had come back to fetch them, destitute widows and absconding women who ran away from their husbands' homes with or without a lover or who had been turned out of doors by their husbands.

According to the Dutch historian, Pieter Emmer, quoted by Aakash Dev, many of the Indian women left India "willingly" and travelled on their own to face the challenges of the indenture system rather than be subjugated to India's social prejudices and harassment.

That was why many of them imbued with a rebellious state of mind realized the best option was to begin the process of reinventing themselves for a new life overseas. The indenture system though criticised as a disguised form of slavery and even described as a "monstrous system based on fraud" by the firebrand Indian nationalist, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, in 1912, came, anyway, to their rescue.

"The indenture system," argues Pieter Emmer, "helped them to emancipate from the hierarchical social system in India".

The role of indentured Indian women was crucial in weaving together family ties and bringing about an element of stability in the Indian community in Colonial territories. "Indian women migrants", writes the historian Marina Carter, "were primarily valued not for their labour power but for their role in fostering permanent settlement of Indian families in colonies".



Indian Convict Camp, 1859. Source: British Library

Indian indentured immigrants and their descendants in Fiji: An overview

*Dr. Rewa Singh, Assistant Professor and Anthropologist,
Maharishi Law School, Maharishi University of Information Technology, Noida, India*

Circumstances that led to Indians agreeing to Emigrate to Fiji

Among the many Indo-Fijians whom I interviewed whilst I was in Fiji, one of them told me that as per him Indians were fooled and brought to Fiji. They were told that they were to work on sugar cane plantations. But that was not the truth. They were made to clear forests and make room for creating infrastructure for sugar plantations. All of Nausouri and Nabua were nothing but jungles and were cleared by the Indians to be turned into sugar plantations. He added that men and women alike were used to work in the sugar cane fields and they were also required to harvest.

According to Lal (1983), there were various factors that led Indians to decide to leave their country: lack of employment, extreme poverty, droughts, and famines in India, among others. There were obviously many other factors that pushed the Indians to migrate to Fiji; they were shown a dream world, false promises and propaganda were made to trap them as cheap labour. This claim is established if we refer to one of the indentured labourers himself:

Totaram Sanadhya described in his self-account 'My 21 Years in Fiji', the way many Indians were tricked and deceived and taken to Fiji. According to Totaram (1991):

The arkati (recruiter) explained things to people there [in the half-way house], 'Look brothers, the place where you will work you will never have to suffer any sorrows. There will never be problems there. You will eat a lot of bananas and a stomach-full of sugar cane, and play flutes [symbolic of Lord Krishna] in relaxation.'

According to Ahmed Ali (2004), in one of the self-accounts of an indentured labourer, Devi Singh

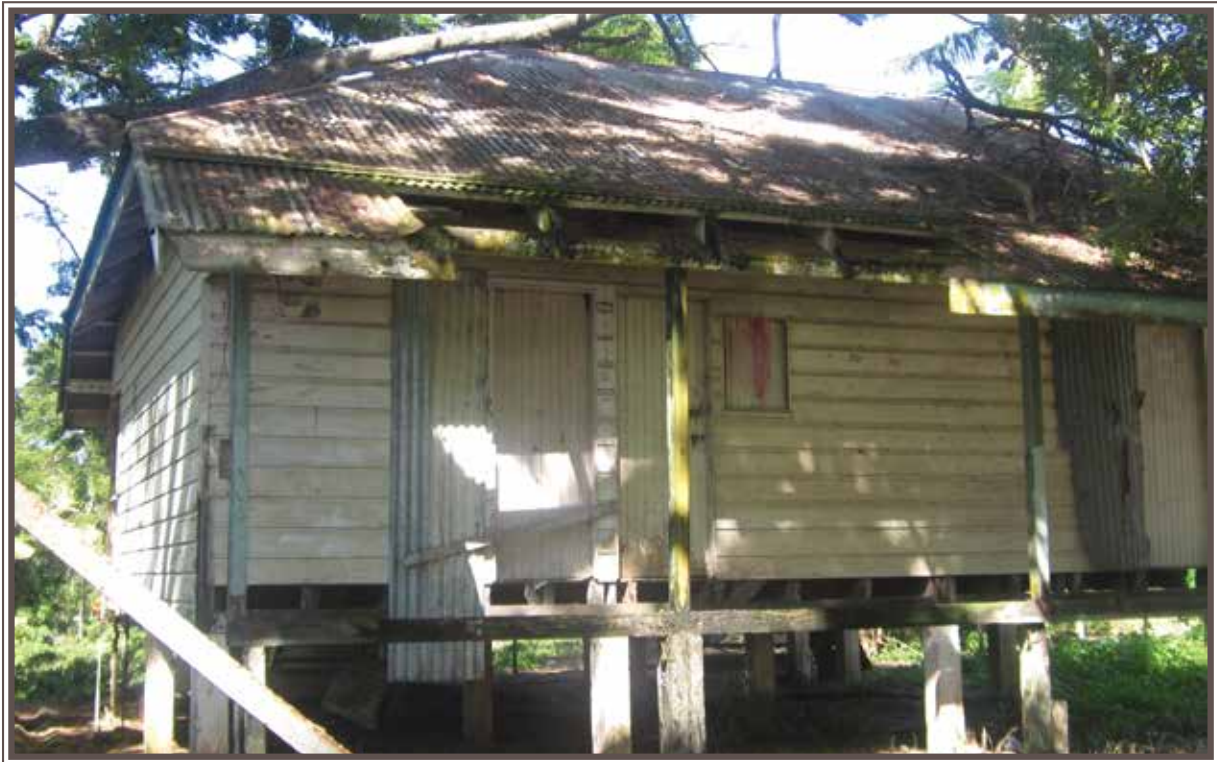
had stated that:

We were told Fiji was 700 miles away, and an island. Had I known the real distance I would not have come, it was too far from home. The journey by ship was quite satisfactory, we were adequately fed. I did not eat meat in India, but had to do so on board ship, otherwise I would have had nothing but dry bread to eat...

Most of the interviews that Ahmed Ali (2004) conducted with former indentured labourers revealed that most of the Indians had already left their villages in India in search of work when they came across the recruiters for the colonies. Lal (2004) suggested that the British went deep into rural India and showed a cash economy to the landless people, establishing a cycle of debt due to land revenue payments. Lal (2000b) also hinted that, this was compounded by the problems of uneven famine and scarcity of conditions in the Bhojpuri area and eventually, the commercialisation of agriculture which led to the culture of labour movement from the hinterland to the industries of Calcutta, and the tea gardens of Assam. Thus, the migration of Indian indentured labourers was in a way an extension of the migratory labour culture of the then landless Indians who intended to return to India when they had signed the contract. Lal (2004a) collected a song as part of his research in Basti, Uttar Pradesh, which he translated into English:

"Born in India, we are prepared to go to Fiji,
Or if you please, to Natal to dig the mines.
We are prepared to suffer there,
But Brothers! Don't make us labourers here."

Many Indians were motivated to migrate to Fiji because of many personal and non-economic factors. These "push factors" made them leave their villages and undertake a journey which took



A house on an estate. Source: Author

them far away from their motherland, however, with the intention to come back. Some surviving Indian indentured labourers were interviewed by an Australian historian, K.L.Gillion (1962) who observed that:

A family quarrel was a common reason given; others included the desire for adventure or to escape responsibility and burdensome social restrictions, the death of parents, or the undertaking of a pilgrimage...

All these factors coupled with the propaganda of the colonial officials helped the British Crown to obtain the targeted number of labourers needed to be sent on the plantations. Apart from all these factors and the tactics that were used by the recruiters to attract both men and women to sign the contract of indenture, the most shameless and deceitful were the tactics of local recruiters, hired by sub-agents working for the Emigration Agent. The recruiters and *arkatis* were quite aggressive in their approach when the female labourer target was not fulfilled. It was one of the saddest ways in which young single women were tricked to be taken as indentured labourers. It is perhaps best explained by Gillion (1962), how the local young women in rural India were followed at the religious pilgrimage sites:

Women who became lost or separated were offered

assistance to see some sacred shrine or to rejoin their husbands, but were taken instead to the depot where, after a few days, the shame of having lived in another man's house sealed their fates.

The historian, Adrian Mayer (1963) described in *Indians in Fiji* the difficulties of recruiting labourers such as women:

It was difficult to persuade married women to emigrate, however; and when the recruiters would not fill their quotas with such willing emigrants as widows and destitutes, for whom a life in Fiji promised a fresh start, they resorted to trickery and abduction. The recruitment of women, in fact, was even less of a 'free contract' than that of men, and the proportion of women was barely maintained.

In general the recruiters betrayed the Indians by telling them lies about the plantations where they would be taken to work. When the recruiters got the prospective recruits into their confidence, they convinced them that Fiji was an island near Calcutta, while recruits in South India were told that they had signed contract for Ceylon. However, Lal (2004a) in his final assessment asserted that:

...the elaborate machinery set up to govern recruitment was in fact effective, and that cases of fraud were certainly far fewer than it would appear from impressionistic and oral evidence.

According to Tinker (1993), after the Indians had signed the five-year *gimit* or the contract to become indentured labourers in Fiji, they generally spent two to three weeks in an emigration depot at their port of embarkation where the final procedures were completed. These depots were designed by expert British colonial architects who had past experience of indenture. The depots were quite similar to prisons; recruits were cut-off from the surrounding city, and they waited in a crowded place in a spiritless and transitional state. However, the authorities presumably had encouraged the prospective indentured labourers to play games and indulge in other forms of entertainment among themselves and reportedly many sang songs to pass the time before commencing the journey to Fiji.

This led many Indians to land at a place which was completely the opposite, or precisely the conditions were completely contrary to those that they were promised.

However, the majority of Indians who had stepped out from the caste system on entering the depots and the indenture ships to Fiji, served their *gimit* of five years and even stayed back another five years to get a free passage to return to India. But, even after completing the additional five years in Fiji, they were very reluctant to return to India as they thought:

When we arrive no one will have us join into their caste. We will be forced to suffer many caste-insults there. Therefore until death we are forced to bear these troubles.

Although the *gimitiyas* went through much hardship, dilemma, trauma and mental agony and misery, they still thought about their homeland. Some returned only to be taunted and insulted in the name of caste. The situation was such that they were compelled to return to the Fiji after their hard-earned money which they had accumulated penny by penny, had been ripped off from them, not by strangers but by their close relatives.

Conclusion

The journey to Fiji was a matter of life and death for the labourers who were told Fiji was either very close to Calcutta or within the district. The ship journey of two to three months was nightmares come true. It was extremely difficult for most of the labourers as there were people of different castes and religions, all crammed in a small space. They had to eat, sleep and sit together. Apart from this when diseases struck the ship, many labourers lost their lives. Despite the trauma, a strong bonding developed among them during the ship journey itself.



Cleaning of field. Source: Author



Bittersweet Connections: The Mauritian Model in Hawai'i

*Dr Nicholas B Miller, Assistant Professor, Flagler College, USA and
Associate Researcher, ERC AdG 695573 The Colour of Labour*

nbmiller@flagler.edu

Mauritius is often described as the staging grounds of modern indenture, serving as a model of sorts for its implementation in other world sites following the abolition of slavery. This extended beyond the world of formal European colonies. On 1 May 1865, the Hawaiian-language newspaper *Ke Au Okoa* presented to its readers the lessons of “o ka mokupuni o Mauritiusa”—the island of Mauritius. Emphasising similarities in terms of terrain, climate, latitude (respective to their hemispheres), and size (offering the counterpart of O'ahu, though Maui is actually closer in size), the article proclaimed that Hawai'i could achieve Mauritian levels of prosperity, if only Hawai'i were to apply Mauritian methods of labour and cultivation.

As similar as the islands might be geographically and climatically, fundamental differences distinguished them politically and economically at this time. In 1865, the Kingdom of Hawai'i was a recognized minor member of the community of nations, whose sovereignty putatively lay in the will of its native population as embodied by its native king. Mauritius by contrast never had an indigenous population and was then under the rule of its third European imperial master. Despite these significant political differences, sugar and indenture would connect these distant archipelagos economically and socially, transforming Hawai'i in the decades prior to US annexation in 1898 as profoundly as they had Mauritius several decades previously.

From the 1860s up to the 1890s, Hawaiian newspapers kept local settler and elite actors abreast of developments in the contract labour system of Mauritius. While some found Mauritius a model to be followed, others instead perceived

a warning. During this period, the conjuncture between the expansion of sugar production and indentured immigration from India was framed, by advocates and detractors alike, as the lessons of Mauritius. Unlike most other major global contexts of sugar production during this time, Hawai'i never drew upon India as a source of indentured labour. Instead, indentured migrants to pre-annexation Hawai'i came principally from China, Japan and Portugal, with a minority from Germany, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Norway. The absence of India from this list was not for want of discussion, but rather, the complex intersection of migrant choice and political factions in the island Kingdom.

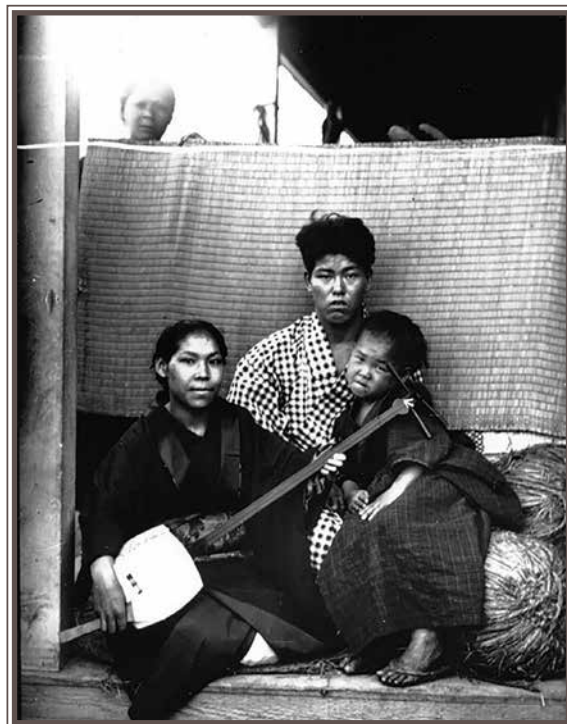
Until the late 1870s, labour migrants to Hawai'i came almost exclusively from China, via a system of co-ethnic transport and indebtedness managed by Chinese merchant labour brokers known conventionally as credit-ticket. Yet from 1864 onwards, government and private actors made recurrent attempts to establish formal state institutions of indenture. Mauritius loomed large in these debates. A government board of immigration was established in 1864, with future King Kalākaua as its secretary. At the end of that year, it funded a year long mission to China, Java and India by the German botanist, medic and immigration commissioner Wilhelm Hillebrand [1821-86], who was himself a member of the board. Information about Mauritius' labour system had been acquired immediately prior through the global networks of the Kingdom's Scottish-born foreign minister Robert Crichton Wyllie [1798-1865], with Mahébourg schoolmaster and dodo-enthusiast George Clark [1807-73] responding to a ten-part questionnaire on sugar cultivation and labour practices in Mauritius. The configuration of Mauritius as a sort of model first occurred during Hillebrand's tour, with local newspapers judging

his second-hand reports about the island's labour system, and those acquired by actors based in Hawai'i through other information networks.

On 1 September 1865, a few months after the discussion of Mauritius in *Ke Au Okoa*, the English-language *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* offered a critical survey of indenture in Mauritius on the basis of a copy of the Commercial Gazette of Port Louis. The newspaper decried the number of desertion notices encountered, along with the system of "stipendiary magistrates" and the dehumanising practice offered to migrants merely through individual registration numbers. Four years later, in 1869, an article entitled "Mauritius and the Lessons She Teaches" in the same paper presented "the working of the coolie system, in what has been termed the most successful sugar country in the world". The paper warned that large scale Asian labour migration would displace white artisans and the indigenous population, with the "inevitable result" of the coolie system being, even if not "the design of any who advocate" it, the termination of "the dynasty of the Kamehamehas, and cementing a colonial alliance with our powerful neighbour".

Indian indenture, and the Mauritian model, however had their advocates in the islands, particularly among committed royalists. The two main proponents were Hudson Bay Company trader-turned coffee planter-turned perennial politician Godfrey Rhodes [1815-97], and British-aligned Queen Emma [1836-85], widow of Kamehameha IV [1834-63, r. 1856-63] and rival to the throne ultimately assumed, after election, by Kalākaua [1836-1891, r. 1874-91]. Both Rhodes and Emma were in favour of a migration treaty with the Government of British India and persistently advocated for mass immigration from India, especially during the late 1870s and early 1880s. This was however not the path taken. Resident American actors were anxious about the prospect of expanded British influence in the islands through the appointment of a local Protector, perceived as a precondition for any Indian migration treaty with the British government. Hawai'i's unusual status as a native-ruled state featuring a powerful resident Westerner community and an international consular system presented significant political complications not present in formal European colonial possessions.

Discussion of the Mauritian model was perhaps most intense during 1879, when Scottish botanist



Arning, Japanese Immigrants in quarantine.

John Horne [1835-1905], long time director of the Pamplemousses Botanic Garden (today the SSR Botanical Gardens), visited Hawai'i. After having lived in Mauritius since 1860, Horne was recruited by colonial administrator Arthur Hamilton-Gordon in 1876 to undertake a botanical survey of Fiji, which had just been annexed by the British in late October 1874. As part of his circumnavigatory return to Mauritius, Horne stayed in Hawai'i for over a month, where he was feted by local planters and politicians, and invited to speak at local planter and scientific societies. At a meeting of planters presided over by Godfrey Rhodes, Horne responded to questions relating to Indian indentured migration to Mauritius for over two hours, describing migrants' origins in India, their general rate of pay, their qualities as colonists and their general disposition to servile labour.

Once contract labour was institutionalised in Hawai'i by the mid 1880s, the lessons of Mauritius shifted to land use and cane variety. Horne was the bridge between these two topics. Hawai'i-based British planter Theophilus Harris Davies [1834-98] maintained a correspondence with Horne after his departure, receiving in 1884 a shipment of 26 varieties of sugar cane, 17 surviving. Another significant visitor from Mauritius arrived in 1891, when Arthur T. Robinson undertook his own global sugar survey. Well furnished with



HARVESTING SUGAR.

letters of introduction, Robinson conducted a comprehensive tour of plantations on Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui and the Island of Hawai'i, putatively working for a company based in Mauritius. At a meeting of sugar planters that year, he contended that the cultivation of sugar in Hawai'i was "quite equal to the practice" in Mauritius, though Hawai'i had better logistics of transport and far higher labour costs.

With a sugar complex worked by indentured labour firmly in place, the circulation of plantation knowledge between Hawai'i and Mauritius intensified through the institutionalisation of sugar planter journals and networking. By 1895, the Mauritian model as articulated in Hawai'i had become defined by extremely cheap labour and the disaggregation of production. During that year, an opponent to the dominance of what is now remembered as the "Big Five" sugar factors claimed that Mauritius offered an alternate approach, based on small landholdings.

Today, the two archipelagos retain remarkable similarities, economically—as major tourist

destinations and prime luxury property markets—as much as socially—in terms of the structuring role of indenture in the identity construction of substantial proportions of the contemporary population. The political futures of both islands was divergent: while Mauritius became an independent country in 1968, Hawai'i witnessed the overthrow of its monarchy in 1893, annexation by the U.S. as an organized territory in 1898, and US statehood in 1959. Given the radically divergent political histories of both sites, our understanding of the significant historical similarities between both contexts is best recovered through renewed attention to past connections. Hawai'i and Mauritius do not merely evidence similar legacies of nineteenth-century sugar capitalism: their histories were intimately connected by the operation of planter knowledge and networks across typical framings of imperial space.

Dutch Guiana or Suriname

Prof. Chan E.S. Choenni, University of Suriname

5th June, 2020 is exactly 147 years ago that Hindostanis from India set foot in Suriname. The sailing ship *Lalla Rookh* departed from the port city of Calcutta on Wednesday 26 February 1873 and arrived in Suriname on Wednesday 4 June 1873 after a journey of more than three months. However, the *Lalla Rookh* remained anchored on the Suriname River near Fort Nieuw Amsterdam. The *Lalla Rookh* was an iron sailing ship of 1,277 tons (the carrying capacity/contents of the ship) and had too much depth. Therefore, it could not sail to the port in Paramaribo.

The 410 Hindostani immigrants were only disembarked on Thursday 5 June 1873 in small boats and taken in at the Fort Nieuw Amsterdam located on the right bank of the Suriname River. Therefore, not June 4, but June 5, is the date for the commemoration and celebration of Hindostani immigration. From New Amsterdam, they were then handed over to the plantations of the owners who had ordered them. The first shipment of Hindostani immigrants has therefore not been accommodated in the so-called *Coolie depot* in Paramaribo located on the left bank of Suriname River, the place where the mai and baba immigration monument stands. Most of the immigrants who arrived in Suriname were taken in at the depot.

The *Lalla Rookh* (meaning the *tulip-cheeked*) became the icon of Hindostani immigration. In English-speaking countries, the day of first arrival of Indian immigrants is known as *Indian Arrival Day*. It is worth noting that the young woman Dhunputteea also arrived with the *Lalla Rookh*. She was *āji* (paternal grandmother) of dr. J. Ferrier, the first President of Suriname.

Traditionally, there are commemorations and celebrations on and around the annual Hindostani Immigration Day. Lectures, seminars and/or parties are often organised. In the past, parades were also organized in Suriname. Brochures and books were also sometimes published. Unfortunately, due to the so-called corona pandemic and the risk of the spread of the deadly COVID-19, all Hindostani immigration activities have been called off.

Nevertheless, Hindorama decided not to let the 147th Hindostani Immigration Day pass unnoticed and, despite all kinds of restrictions on this day, to publish a booklet with many pictures. With enthusiastic support from Radjin Thakoerdin (publisher Sampreshan | Hindorama) and Kanta Adhin (editor Hindorama.com) I have composed this colourful work on the history of Hindostanis that covers the period 1873–2015. It covers 52 pages in A5 format and is titled *History of Hindostani migration in short cutlery*

(1873–2015). This handy booklet deals with immigration from India, settlement and integration in Suriname, as well as integration in the Netherlands.

Historical photos

The booklet entitled *History of Hindostani migration in short cutlery (1873–2015)* of Professor Chan Cheonni is richly illustrated with photographs. Beautiful historical photographs have been taken that give an atmospheric picture of the development of the Hindostani community over time. This is part of a historical photographs project with the aim of providing the visual documentation of Hindostani history. You can contribute to this by submitting historical photos. The published booklet handily shows the fascinating history of a special population group. Hindostanis have succeeded in being successful in both Suriname and the Netherlands over time. Their culture has also been largely preserved. Politically, they have been less successful; a large part has been forcibly migrated from Suriname to the Netherlands. But against the background of their emigration from India, the exploitation and hardship in the contract period, this success is remarkable.

The more than 34,000 Hindostanis contract workers (almost a third returned to India) and the approximately 3,000 Hindostanis from the surrounding Caribbean countries who migrated to Suriname between 1865–1920, have gradually formed a Hindostani community. It reflects the strength of a community that has saved it despite all the setbacks, with many also succumbing to exploitation and hardship. We remember them today, but at the same time we celebrate the success of the Hindostani community. Through diligence, perseverance and faith in progress, the survivors have shown their descendants the way. We are grateful to them and proud of what we have achieved to our ability. Their history and our history must not be lost. On the contrary: this history must be documented and passed on to current and future generations. Partly for this purpose, Hindorama.com started as a website last June. This *portal* from and about the Hindostanis also provides up-to-date information both in the Netherlands and in Suriname. Hindorama.com has been around for one year and has become a successful website with a digital library, managed by volunteers. Unfortunately, the celebration of one year Hindorama.com is currently not possible in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we hope to hold a celebration in the form of a seminar in August 2020. The booklet on the history of Hindostanis will be available on site. Further information will follow in due course.

Indenture-at-wide: Learning from Madeiran Sugar Routes¹

Cristiana Bastos, PI, ERC AdG The Colour of Labour Universidade de Lisboa – Instituto de Ciências Sociais Portugal

1. Madeira and sugar

Madeira's archipelago stands 320 miles off the NW of Africa at 32° N. It includes the larger island of Madeira (286 sq. miles), the smaller Porto Santo, and the islets of Desertas and Selvagens. Unlike the nearby Canaries, which were inhabited by the Guanches, Madeira had no indigenous population. In 1419 it was claimed by the Portuguese after being visited by the Atlantic-scouting captains Zarco and Teixeira. The settlements began in 1420, modeled on European feudalism, with large estates endowed to aristocrats and a mass of landless peasants.

Madeira is also the birth site of the modern plantation system. In 1425, Madeira became the first stopover of the sugar cane in that plant's trajectory from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, a crucial step in its longer journey from New Guinea to the four corners of the world. It was in the Atlantic colonies that sugar plantations became the core of a global economic system that led to modern capitalism.² Sugar became a most profitable commodity – the “white gold.” Its demand expanded constantly, and so did the interest of financiers. Sweet and addictive at the consumers' end, sugar production was a bitter, bloody and destructive endeavour that caused ecological disruption, indigenous dispossession, and massive displacements of people coerced into the field tasks of planting, cutting, transporting and threshing the cane, plus further assisting in the processing of the liquid, molasses, crystals and sugar loaves.³

Madeira's 15th century plantation experiment generated riches for some, opened connections



Portuguese young girls at work on sugar estates in Hawaii in the 1880s-1890s

to Flemish and Genovese markets, and brought enslaved labourers from the Canaries and Africa. But the island's forest wood was soon depleted, the territory was limited, and competitors entered the market. In 1532, the Portuguese administration relocated the sugar-producing technology to the wider horizons of Brazil. Madeiran estates gave way to wine production. Small-plot agriculture expanded with mainland settlers bonded to contracts (“colonia”) with the landlords. In the 18th and 19th century, British wine traders and producers became highly influential in Madeira, adding a layer of complexity to the existing feudalistic structure. There was a second wave of sugar cane production in Madeira in the 19th century, but in smaller plots, remaining a residual production to our days, mostly for the processing of fine molasses (mel de cana) and rum.

The plantation system had in the meantime conquered the West Atlantic: Brazil since the 16th century, Barbados since the 17th, followed by most Caribbean islands and Guianas. Millions of enslaved Africans were trafficked across the

¹ The basis for this article was originally presented as the lecture “Comparing and connecting: labour and racialization in plantation and industrial economies – notes from colonial Guiana, Hawaii and New England”, delivered at the International workshop *Towards Establishing a Comparative Framework for the Study of Indentured Labour* at the Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture, University of Mauritius, 5th – 6th March 2019. I am much indebted to Vijaya Teelock, Satyendra Peerthum, the Indentured Labour Routes Project, The AapravasiGhat Trust Fund, and the members of the Colour of Labour Nicholas Miller, Marcelo Moura Mello, Colette LePeticorps, Rita Kantu and other participants in the workshop for their comments, and to the many interlocutors I had along the research conducted in the project *The Colour of Labour- the Racialized Lives of Migrants*, supported by the European Research Council Advanced Grant # 695573.

² Sidney Greenfield, “Madeira and the Beginnings of New World Sugar Cane Cultivation and Plantation Slavery: A Study in Institution Building,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 292, no. 1 (1977): 536-552; Jason W. Moore, “Madeira, Sugar, and the Conquest of Nature in the “First” Sixteenth Century: Part I: From “Island of Timber” to Sugar Revolution, 1420-1506.” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 32, no. 4 (2009): 345-90; Alberto Vieira, *Canaviais, Açúcar e Aguardente na Madeira, séculos XV a XX*. Funchal, CEHA, 2004.

³ Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power. The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin, 1985.

Atlantic to work in the sugar fields and mills. The racialized colonial violence upon which stood the plantation economies created deeply wounded societies in permanent tensions and active revolts; by the 19th century, the system was still profitable but increasingly unacceptable. Abolition and Emancipation made their way to the plantation world, replacing enslavement with indenture, while keeping the structure of production, the violence, the devastation, the generalized displacements, the racialized societies.⁴

2. Sugar Labour Routes

The massive displacement of African men and women as enslaved laborers to the American and Caribbean plantations of sugar, coffee, cocoa, cotton, etc., is well documented by scholars and heritage activists. The post-emancipation massive displacement of Asian men and women as indentured labourers to the Caribbean and also to the then British colonies of Mauritius and Fiji is equally well documented, as illustrated by the Indentured Labour Routes Project. Yet, besides those two major displacements there were also other modes of capturing labouring hands into plantations, from the “blackbirding” (a form of group kidnaping) of South Pacific Islanders into Australia and Fiji⁵ to the establishment of three to five year contracts to entire families willing to relocate themselves in a distant land.⁶

Madeiran islanders were also recruited as working hands for sugar plantations in the British colonies. They were recruited, or lured, or wrongfully brought into unknown situations that ended in the sugar cane fields of British colonies in the aftermath of emancipation. Sometimes, Madeirans were legally contracted and knew their rights and duties. Sometimes not. Recruiters for British planters seeking field hands found their way into the most vulnerable islanders, those who experienced in their bodies the downsides of agricultural fluctuations and famines and longed to escape them. In some cases, they embarked in semi-coercive conditions, in others they knew where they were going and had

contracts that resembled what would later become the indenture system. Madeira had been the experimental site of the modern sugar plantation; now, Madeirans were the experimental subjects of bonded plantation labour.

3. Madeirans into British Guiana and the Caribbean

Mainstream Portuguese history, so focused on its own empire, gives little or no attention to the large outflow of Portuguese islanders into British plantations. Yet their number is estimated above 30,000 – an impressive figure for an island which rarely had over 100,000 people. Right after Emancipation, already in 1835, a few hundred Madeirans disembarked in Georgetown headed to Demerara plantations under legal contracts.⁷ In nearby Trinidad, a group of Azoreans had been wrongfully brought to sugar plantations where they found brutal working conditions and death, and soon pleaded for rescue.⁸ From then on, and particularly between 1846 and 1848, tens of thousands of islanders from Madeira, and occasionally from the Azores, Cape Verde and the Canaries, moved into sugar-cane plantations in the Guianas and the Caribbean; sometimes they left Madeira not fully aware of what their destination was, and could end up in St Kitts or St Vincent while thinking they embarked to Cape Verde.⁹

After the end of their contracts, some Portuguese labourers remained in Guiana and competed with the recently freed African-descendants in the food-and-drink retail business. They grew into a successful community that attracted more Madeirans to Guiana for business and trade. At that time, indentured South Asians had become the pillar of the plantation labour force.

In the tensely racialized Guianese society, the Portuguese became one of the six races of the nation, along with White, Black, Indian, Chinese and Amerindian, a status that lasted after the colony became a republic in the 1960s. During

4 Among many others, see Mintz, Sweetness; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Richmond, U N Carolina Press, 1944; Philip Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

5 Laurence Brown “A Most Irregular Traffic”: The Oceanic Passages of the Melanesian Labor Trade.” In *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World Book*, ed. E Christopher, C Pybus and M Rediker, 184–203. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

6 Susana Caldeira, *Da Madeira para o Hawaii: a emigração e o contributo cultural madeirense*. Funchal: CEHA, 2010; Cristiana Bastos, “Portuguese in the Cane: The Racialization of Labour in Hawaiian Plantations.” In *Changing Societies: Legacies and Challenges*, ed. S Aboim, P Granjo and A Ramos, 65–96. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2018; Nicholas Miller, “Trading Sovereignty and Labour: The Consular Network of Nineteenth-Century Hawaii.” *The International History Review* 42, no 2 (2019), 260-277.

7 M Noel Menezes, *Scenes from the History of the Portuguese in Guyana*. Victoria Printing Works, 1986; Jo-Ann Ferreira, “Madeiran Portuguese migration to Guyana, St. Vincent, Antigua and Trinidad: a comparative overview.” *Portuguese Studies Review*, 14, no. 2 (2006): 63–85.

8 The Historical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. Publication No. 796 “A petition from certain Portuguese colonists to the governor of Trinidad, 1835”. I thank Jo-Ann Ferreira for this reference.

9 Caldeira, *Da Madeira*; Bastos, Portuguese.



Portuguese young girls at work on sugar estates in Hawaii in the 1880s-1890s

that time, many Portuguese-Guianese moved into new destinations, mostly in Canada, where they formed multi-hyphenated communities.

4. The route to Hawaii

Beyond the boundaries of the European empires in the late 19th century, the indigenous Kingdom of Hawaii, along with a number of visiting white traders and missionaries turned local landowners, converted the island into a major sugar producer. The labour needs and the demographic decline of Hawaiian population propelled a politics of sponsored immigration that targeted different groups in different times: Chinese, Portuguese islanders from Madeira and the Azores, Japanese, and, after annexation to the United States in 1898, also Koreans, Filipinos, Puerto Ricans. Why Portuguese islanders from so far away, when it would cost less to planters and the Hawaiian government to bring Asian workers? Partly, it was precisely to counterbalance the predominantly Asian repopulation of Hawaii. Plus, there was a small community of Portuguese sailors and whalers in Hawaii who pleaded for their homefolks. Furthermore, a close collaborator of King Kalakaua, the German naturalist and physician Wilhelm Hillebrand, went to Madeira and found such remarkable resemblances to Hawaii that he actively engaged in the recruitment of Madeirans.¹⁰

In the end, as historians of labour argue, a workforce divided by nationalities, reframed as ethnicities, was of the interest of the planters, as it prevented the united insurgence of labourers.¹¹ Portuguese islanders enjoyed some privileges, above all the fact of being sponsored as families. The contingents of

Madeirans and Azoreans arrived to Hawaii between 1878 and 1913, bringing a total of near 20,000 men, women and children. Although the voyage was harsh and long – six months sailing or six weeks on steamer – and the work in the cane fields was brutal, Portuguese islanders signed the contracts to Hawaii on their free will and most of the times moved there for good. After the end of contracts, many moved to the city and engaged on urban jobs, others kept farming with homesteading, or remained in the plantations, and others moved to the mainland U.S. Few returned to their ancestral islands. In the early 20th century, the Portuguese were over 10% of the population in Hawaii. They were counted as a separate group as late as in the 1930 census. Much of their heritage became part of the material and intangible cultural references of Hawaii – the small guitar that evolved as ukulele, the fried dough malasadas and other foods, the religious rituals, etc.

Concluding note: comparing and connecting.

What do we learn from the study of the recruitment of Portuguese islanders for the sugar labours in foreign plantations? Although their number is small when compared to the millions of enslaved Africans and indentured Asians, their case is rich in a variety of forms and adds nuance to our analysis of indenture systems. They shared with other workers the violence of the plantation, and they entered it in a variety of ways. Not enslaved, although sometimes reported as victims of “white slavery,”¹² their modes of bondage varied. Some signed contracts at departure, others at arrival; some were lured or nearly kidnapped, others went as stowaways; some had no idea of where they were going, others knew it; some escaped famine, others wanted to further improve their lives. In the highly racialized plantation societies where they settled, Portuguese islanders were sometimes brought to buffering zones and intermediary positions as those of foremen, and benefited from marginal racial advantages to move beyond the plantation labour into other jobs and social positions. They became part of the social mosaic of the plantation societies inherited from a divided workforce of multiple displacements and modes of bondage, with the collective wounds flattened by the celebratory representation of the society’s multi-ethnic character.

¹⁰ Bastos, Portuguese; Caldeira, *Da Madeira*; Miller, Trading.

¹¹ Edward Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985; Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii 1835–1920*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983; Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii’s Interracial Labor Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

¹² José Silvestre Ribeiro, *Correspondência para o Ministério do Reino*. Arquivo Regional da Madeira, liv. 644, 1846–1851.

Kala pani : énigme, survivance et résurgence des images.

Comment l'écriture de l'exil archaïque

permet-elle la gestation du leg indo-diasporique?

Minakshi Carien

Docteure en Science de l'Arts : Théorie, Praxis, Esthétique de l'Université d'Artois

«Émigrer est un déracinement. C'est rompre brutalement avec tout son environnement familial et social, parfois même religieux»

C.SCHNAKENBOURG

« De ce grand-père inconnu à mon fils suspendu à son souffle fragile, nous suivions tous une ligne continue et impitoyable, où chacun est responsable des fautes commises par l'autre.»¹

DEVI

Aborder le kala pani c'est se questionner sur la conscience diasporique indienne du XIXe siècle, en partant de l'exil², de l'ascendance des aïeux³ et des processus d'intégration dans différents territoires. Comment l'écriture de l'exil archaïque permet-elle de faire naître la gestation du leg indo-diasporique dans plusieurs territoires? Ce phénomène devient un terreau fertile de travaux de recherche pluridisciplinaire, portant sur les legs indo-diasporiques dans plusieurs territoires. Ces legs deviennent l'expression des mémoires vivantes et des images latentes des ancêtres d'origine(s) indienne(s). Les legs indo-diasporiques du XIXe siècle peuvent être perçus comme relevant d'un paradoxe : rattachés à la survivance et à la résurgence des images littéraires et artistiques. Dans quelle mesure les images des legs indo-diasporiques témoignent-elles de la survivance et de la résurgence des ancêtres dans les imaginaires des contemporains ? Ce paradoxe peut, en un sens, témoigner de l'attachement à une conscience diasporique, dite archaïque ou

originelle, traduisant tant l'effacement de l'Inde dans les flots migratoires que l'enracinement en terres créoles, tant de l'engloutissement des histoires personnelles que de la mythification de patronyme, marqueur de cette appartenance ancestrale. Alors le terreau fertile devient l'enveloppe maternelle, le ventre, le lieu de gestation de la survivance et de la résurgence de ce leg

imaginé ou recherché par les descendants. Ce paradoxe des images archaïques peut être affilié à la malédiction des eaux noires, non plus son poids religieux mais son poids symbolique. Comment les terrifiantes « Black Waters » ont-elle dissimulés les mémoires et les vécus de leurs parents émigrés pour les plongés dans les anonymats des convois ? Comment le contemporain révèle-t-il visuellement cette méconnaissance de ces aïeux engagés, comment sa recherche tend à immortaliser les portraits des disparus ? La malédiction, dont sont porteurs les enfants d'immigrants,

1 K.R. Issur, V.Y.Hookoomsing, L'Océan indien dans la littérature francophone, Paris : Karthala, Presses de l'Université de Maurice, 2001, p. 190, note 37, A.DÉVI, Le voile de Draupadi, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1993, p.47.

2 A.Devi, Le voile de Draupadi, Paris, L'harmattan, 1993

3 V.S. Naipaul, Le regard de l'Inde, éd. Grasset et Fasquelle, 2010, pp.9, 28, 30

4 E.Moutoussamy, La Guadeloupe et son indianité, Paris, Caribéenne, 1987

peut être nommée méconnaissance, silence, oublis, anonymat, dissimulation, perte. Cette problématique du kala pani ouvre sur des questions de réécriture littéraire et de réappropriation artistique, elle peut traduire une volonté de donner corps et vie à cette identité d'indo-descendante. Dans un premier temps, nous présenterons le kala pani comme une énigme puis une survivance des conditions difficile de travail, enfin comme une résurgence des images archaïques.

1. Kala pani comme énigme de la conscience diasporique indienne.

Selon J-R Ramassamy-Nadarassin, le kala pani est une malédiction que « certaines couches d'Indiens réfutaient à traverser l'océan de peur d'être jugés impurs. Inspiré du Code de Manou ou lois de Manou, cette croyance considérait que l'hindou s'exposait à la traversée d'espaces souillés. »⁵ Ce qui avait pour conséquence de lui faire perdre sa caste originelle. Mais dans le cadre de la recherche sur la conscience diasporique, le kala pani va bien au delà de ce cadre religieux. Il témoigne du vécu des ancêtres. L'énigme du kala pani contient d'abord l'empreinte de la brisure vécue par les émigrés à leur arrivée. Le terme énigme, qui vient du latin aenigma, réunit les notions de paroles obscures ou équivoques. Selon Singaravelou, les « Indiens » ou travailleurs sous contrat communément appelés « coolie » venaient principalement du Sud de l'Inde, recrutés par des maestri, de 1854 au 30 Juin 1861, ils embarquaient sur les ports de Pondichéry et Karikal, du 1er Juillet 1861 à 1889 sur les ports de Madras et Calcutta. L'interdit religieux était réservé à l'origine à la caste des brahmanes ; l'administration indienne, les magistrats l'utilisaient pour décourager et effrayer les Indiens de quitter leur terre mère. Il devint vecteur de peurs, d'histoires terrifiantes et d'angoisses liées au départ vers des terres inconnues.⁶ Les diasporas indiennes du XIXe siècle ont comme similitude d'être plongées dans un univers nouveau. Si au départ ces travailleurs projetaient de ne rester que la durée de leur contrat, l'administration coloniale aura recours à divers procédés dont l'exemple le



Minakshi CARIEN, Grands-parents paternels n°2, 2020, Photographie, 103,47 x 52,42 cm, Photographie numérique retouchée, archive familiale, © Carien Minakshi

plus manifeste est la venue des femmes indiennes qui facilite la création en ces terres de foyers et de familles indo-descendantes.⁷

2. La peur transmigre et dissimule des conditions de travail difficile

Cette peur est transmise de génération en génération. Elle se métamorphose par des images et des récits restés vivants, qui se sont maintenus en vie. La survivance⁸ de la peur d'être jugé impur transmigre et le vécu devient mystérieux. En effet l'ascendance de nos grands-parents paternels en témoigne. Ces grands-parents étaient tous deux descendants de travailleurs immigrés d'origine indienne. Ils étaient tous les deux agriculteurs. Ils étaient tous les deux de nationalité française. Ils sont nés en Guadeloupe. Toutefois leurs ascendances restent brouillées et énigmatiques. De leurs aïeux, ces deux grands-parents ont conservés le travail de la terre.

E. Moutoussamy et A. Murugaiyan reviennent aux conditions de travail des Indiens avant de présenter le recensement des patronymes qu'ils ont effectué dans l'île. L'Indien est confronté à un « travail obligatoire », « arbitraire », une « durée de journée de travail », non limitée pendant la récolte ». Les conséquences sont les suivantes:

5 J.R. Ramsamy-Nadarassin, Les travailleurs indiens sous contrat à la Réunion (1848-1948) Entre le retour programme et le début des intégrations, La Réunion, 2012, Thèse pour le Doctorat en Histoire Contemporaine, Université de la Réunion Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Département d'Histoire), Glossaire.

6 Singaravelou, Les Indiens De La Guadeloupe, Étude de Géographie humaine, travail soutenu comme thèse de doctorat de troisième cycle, le 1er Février 1974, à l'Université de Bordeaux III, p.41. « A ces difficultés de recrutement s'ajoutaient les nombreux obstacles opposés par l'administration indienne dont le respect de la Convention de 1861 restait purement théorique. Les sous-collecteurs et collecteurs de districts multipliaient les formalités à remplir et les tracasseries administratives à Madras comme à Calcutta ; les magistrats d'origine indienne étaient encore plus farouches que les européens. Ils évoquaient entre autres arguments pour effrayer les émigrants, le « kala-pani », la terrible malédiction qui s'abat sur celui qui ose affronter les flots noirs des Océans. »

7 M.Carien, Femme indo-guadeloupéenne et création : non sati mais çakti, Arras, 2018, Thèse pour le Doctorat en science de l'Art : théorie, praxis et esthétique, Université d'Artois, Laboratoire Texte et Culture, pp.66-100, Chapitre 1. Pulsions et Impulsions archivistiques en regard de l'Histoire coloniale.

8 Définition survivance, site internet Centre Nationale des Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/survivance> (Consulté le 25/08/2020).



Minakshi CARIEN, Ascendance brouillée,
2011, Photomontage, 60 x 90 cm, Paris.

« frappé par les épidémies, brisé et détruit par les terribles conditions de travail et les mauvais traitements, l'Indien mourrait précocement », « le taux de mortalité très élevé des deux premières décennies diminue ». Il en demeure pour les auteurs que « la population d'origine indienne fut décimée ». Il parle même « d'hécatombe ». L'extinction de ces patronymes identitaires témoigne du crime perpétré contre ces ancêtres et traduit l'appauvrissement des patronymes indo-guadeloupéenne. »

3. La résurgence du vécu ancestral par la littérature.

V.S Naipaul écrit « Pour ces gens, l'Inde, le passé avait été balayé comme le présent (...) Les mêmes paysages conservés dans la mémoire lointaine, le même climat, le même calendrier, les mêmes idées sur les possibilités de l'homme, les mêmes langues »⁹ (V.S. Naipaul, 2010). Mais le kala pani devient un mythe de tous les sévices qu'a connu l'Indien, de son départ à son arrivée en Guadeloupe, les suicides, la maltraitance. Ce mythe porte en lui les lacunes du vécu en terre d'habitation. Selon P.Chamoiseau, les immigrants sont immergés dans les mêmes environnements qu'ont connus les Affranchis, logés dans les mêmes cases, noyés dans une sorte d'esclavage. Parfois ils étaient jetés « aux fers pour le rendre raisonnable. » (Chamoiseau, 1987). Ils sont contenus par l'expression d'Henry Sidambarom « être une chair de sacrifice ». En tant qu'émigrés, les Indiens ont été déracinés, contraints de s'adapter et de s'éloigner des us et coutumes de l'Inde. Dans l'univers littéraire, une résurgence des images latentes s'opère. La résurgence permet de faire réapparaître » voire même de faire « renaître » des images disparues ou oubliées. E.Moutoussamy écrit « Les tâches rouges

sur le corps (...) frappèrent d'épouvante ceux que le sort préservait encore. (...) Le bateau s'ingénia à briser les espérances en passant de l'aurore au crépuscule, de la vie à la mort sans se laisser dévier de sa trajectoire. » (Moutoussamy, 1987, p.89) Les tâches rouges font état des sévices vécus par ces travailleurs dans les plantations. L'écriture de E.Moutoussamy exprime une fracture qui peut être portée et exprimée par la malédiction des eaux noires dans les terres créoles. Les eaux noires qu'ils empruntent pour aller travailler les mènent à l'exil et au deuil. Les eaux deviennent le point



Minakshi CARIEN, Grands-parents paternels n°1, 2018, Photomontage,
6,56 x 4,80 cm, Photographie numérique et cartes postales numérisées de la
collection de Boisel 2 et Douglas Gressieux., © Carien Minakshi

de rupture. Mais les eaux englobent bien des secrets qui dans le fil du temps se transforment en trace et absence de l'Inde mère. Le temps a effacé les désillusions de ces êtres en les métamorphosant en inconnus. La quatrième génération rêve de l'Inde comme d'un mystère rempli d'épopées et de rêveries. Selon Ananda Devi, les terrifiantes « Black Waters » englobent les mémoires des émigrés. « L'exil est devenu leur patrie, pas cette terre, pas cette île, non, l'exil. » La fracture porte le poids du voyage. La traversée de l'océan produit un sentiment de brisure, une fracture liée au déracinement et à l'exil. Une brisure qui se consume dans le feu des plantations de canne-à-sucre.

En conclusion

Le Kala pani est un interdit religieux mais dans le cadre des immigrations indiennes du XIXe siècle, il incarne le vécu de ces êtres qui deviennent invisibles, inconnues, anonymes en

9 V.S. Naipaul, Le regard de l'Inde, éd. Grasset et Fasquelle, 2010, pp.9, 28, 30

terres coloniales. La littérature indo-diasporique, de Trinidad and Tobago, de Maurice et de la Guadeloupe, ouvre la porte d'une écriture basée sur l'oralité, un imaginaire qui témoigne d'un vécu ancestral, qui décrit un univers qui s'ancre dans la fracture, dans la malédiction des eaux noires. La malédiction est entourée d'obscurité, on ne peut pas retrouver la genèse. Les blacks waters dépassent le cadre religieux, les écrivains et artistes témoignent de la méconnaissance, de l'oublie, des silences de ces personnes en faisant survivre et resurgir le vécus de leurs ancêtres.

Cet article invite les lecteurs à un voyage identitaire basé sur un questionnement sur les héritages en terres créoles. Une problématique qui commence dans les flots migratoires puis qui se pose dès l'enracinement des travailleurs Indiens au XIXe siècle. L'Indien est déraciné dès son départ, il perd l'Inde, sa descendance portera le fruit de ce sacrifice, il lui laisse une ascendance inaccessible. Ces populations ont été confrontées à la perte et au deuil. Ils ont été contraints de se reconstruire. Cette acclimation ou intégration n'ont pas été choses aisées. Le lecteur est confronté à cet univers artistique et littéraire, il est convié à regarder autrement, à observer, retracer et réécrire, se réapproprier ce leg qui reste et demeure inaccessible dans l'exil et le deuil des ancêtres. Selon A. Gotman, l'héritage "aurait comme fonction d'opérer une continuité entre le passé et le présent (...) Il sert à fabriquer un corps qui ne meurt jamais, une collectivité des morts et des vivants, famille, royaume, nation et aujourd'hui humanité... Ancêtre de l'histoire qui, elle, introduit un rapport d'explication entre passé et présent." L'héritier doit contempler ce leg inachevé et tenter par son imaginaire de combler les lacunes qui sont intrinsèques à cette survivance et à cette résurgence.

Le Kala pani devient le lieu de gestation d'où émerge une symbolique rattachée aux vécus des ancêtres perdue et retrouvée en terres coloniales. La portée identitaire du kala pani est une symbolique des âmes perdues et retrouvée au sein même de cette écriture. Les ancêtres traversent, leurs patronymes sont portés, immortalités. Leurs esprits s'animent dans les livres comme les branches des arbres en terres coloniales, ces vers ravivent les âmes des mânes perdus et les fait danser comme des ombres portées.

Références bibliographiques

- AGAMBEN, G, 2008, Qu'est-ce que le contemporain?, trad. M.Rovere, Paris, Rivages poche, petite bibliothèque.
- CARIEN, M, 2018, Femme indo-guadeloupéenne et création : non sati mais çakti, Arras, 2018, Thèse pour le Doctorat en science de l'Art : théorie, praxis et esthétique, Université d'Artois, Laboratoire Texte et Culture.
- CESAIRE, A., 1955, 2004, Discours sur le colonialisme, suivi de Discours sur la Négritude, Paris, Présence Africaine.
- CHAMOISEAU, P, 1997, Ecrire en pays dominé, paris, Gallimard.
- DEVI, A, 1993, Le voile de Draupadi, Paris, L'harmattan.
- GOTMAN, A, 2006, L'héritage, Paris, Edition Puf, Edition Kindle.
- Kumari R. ISSUR et Vinesh Y. HOOKOOMSING (dir.), 2001, L'océan Indien dans les littératures francophones, Karthala - Presses de l'Université de Maurice.
- MOUTOUSSAMY,, E., 1987, La Guadeloupe et son indianité, Paris, Caribéenne, collection Partis-pris.
- 1987, Aurore, Paris, L'harmattan.
- MOUTOUSSAMY, E., MURUGAIYAN, A., 2009, Signification des noms indiens de Guadeloupe, Paris, L'harmattan.
- NAIPAUL, V.S, 2010, Le regard de l'Inde, Paris, Grasset et Fasquelles, traduit par François Rosso.
- 1992, L'énigme de l'arrivée, Paris, Le livre de poche, traduit par Suzanne V.Mayoux.
- RAMSAMY-NADARASSIN, 2012, Les travailleurs indiens sous contrat à la Réunion (1848-1948) Entre le retour programme et le début des intégrations, La Réunion, 2012, Thèse pour le Doctorat en Histoire Contemporaine, Université de la Réunion Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Département d'Histoire).
- SCHNAKENBOURG, C., 1980, Histoire de l'industrie sucrière en Guadeloupe au XIXe et XXe siècles tome I La crise du système esclavagiste (1835-1847), Paris, L'harmattan.
- SIDAMBAROM, H, 1990, Proces politique Bordeaux, Bergeret.
- SINGARAVELOU, 1974, Les Indiens De La Guadeloupe, Étude de Géographie humaine, travail soutenu comme thèse de doctorat de troisième cycle, le 1er Février 1974, à l'Université de Bordeaux III.
- TEELOCK V., 1999, The Influence of Slavery in the Formation of Creole Identity, in Comparative Studies of South Asia Africa and the Middle East 19(2):3-8 · September 1999.
- TOUMSON R., 1994, Les Indes antillaises : présence et situation des communautés indiennes en milieu caribéen, actes du colloque de Saint-François, 21-22 décembre 1990, Toumson R. (Dir.), Paris, Edition L'harmattan.

Why do the descendants of Makua slaves and liberated Africans remember history differently?

The case of the Durban Zanzibaris

*Dr. Preben Kaarsholm
Department of Social Sciences and Business
Roskilde University, Denmark*

Among the Africans taken as slaves or liberated Africans to Indian Ocean destinations, Makua speakers from what is today Northern Mozambique were the most numerous. The Makua – Amakhuwa – are the biggest language group in Mozambique with one third of the population according to the 2017 census figures speaking Emakhuwa (5,8 million) or the closely affiliated Elomwue language (1,6 million)¹. Diasporas of descendants of Makua slaves and liberated Africans are found in societies across the Western Indian Ocean and in the Atlantic world. In Mauritius archives, they are registered as Makua or Mozambique, while in South Africa, they became known as Zanzibaris. Both in Madagascar and along the Swahili coast, the designation Makua seems to have been generally associated with slave descent and genealogy.

It is strikingly different how the history of origins has been commemorated among Makua diasporas in different settings, and also how the Makua language has been either preserved or lost. In Mauritius, the diaspora of Makua descendants has faded into the Black Creole population and the language been lost. This is also the case on the west coast of Madagascar, where people have kept their Makua roots quiet to avoid the stigmatisation of slave descent. In South Africa, by contrast, the Zanzibari descendants of liberated Africans have maintained both Makua language use and links with Northern Mozambique.

The Zanzibaris were taken to Durban in the course of British anti-slavery campaigns in the 1870s and made to serve as indentured labourers in Natal. They comprised 508 people – a third of them children – most of them taken as slaves on the

coast between Mozambique Island and Angoche. Some came from further inland and spoke Yao, Makonde or other African languages, and – judging from their names – some were already Muslims or Christians. In the process of their being collected and transported as slaves, however, they became a diaspora-in-the-making, and a particular type of Makua language usage became a lingua franca among them. Linguists have shown that the Makua spoken by the freed slaves has characteristics in common with dialects like Naharra spoken near Nampula and Mozambique Island.

A number of factors accounts for the differences in language preservation and memorialisation among the different Makua diaspora groupings. These have to do with the trajectories of enslavement, transit routes and barracoon experiences, registration and bureaucratic processing, with different philanthropic embraces, networks and community alliances, and with strategies for recognition within different political contexts.

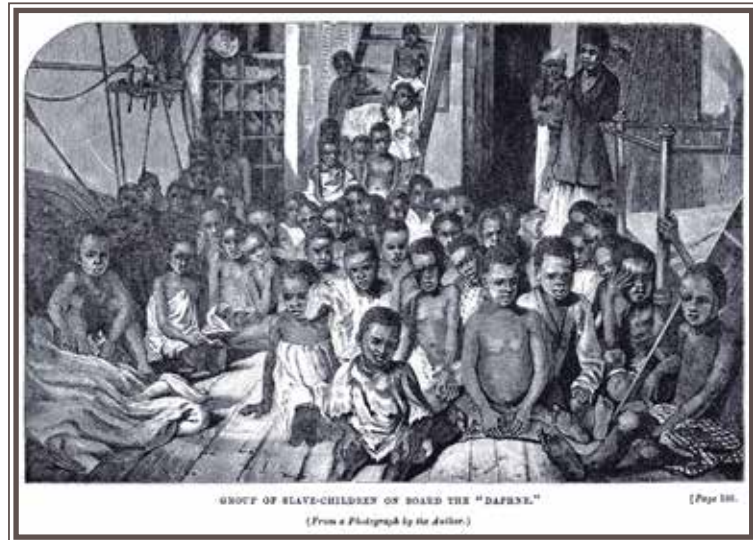
As far as the Durban Zanzibaris are concerned, Islam was the single-most important factor for safeguarding the distinctiveness in terms of language preservation and cultural cohesion. This provides a contrast with Mauritius and Madagascar, where Catholic and Protestant philanthropy dominated. It also meant that the Muslim Zanzibaris underwent a very different development from that of the freed Makua slaves arriving in Durban, who came under the wings of the Catholic St. Xavier's Mission. Sufi Islam was particularly important in allowing for an accommodation of Makua cultural practice and a balance between matriliney and patriarchy.

1. IV Recenseamento Geral da População: Resultados Definitivos Moçambique, Maputo: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2019: 82.

Transnational links with Northern Mozambique were upheld through Sufi tariqa – brotherhood – channels through mosques in what is now Maputo back to Ilha, Mossuril, and Angoche in Northern Mozambique. Expertise in healing and trade in cultural and Islamic medicines played an important role in keeping such channels alive.

For the Muslim Zanzibaris, the experience of indentured labour alongside Indians and the relations of patronage developed from the 1890s with resourceful Indian Muslim business-men linked to the Grey Street mosque and to central Indian Sufi shrines in central Durban became particularly important. They provided land for the Zanzibaris, and helped them become a distinct Islamic community on the Bluff peninsula facing Durban's international harbour, a community that incorporated also important groups of Indians and Malawians. Arab and lost tribe identity inventions became important strategic weapons in struggles to avoid the paying of the poll tax, pass laws, and being racially segregated as Africans and Zulu speakers. The elaboration of a distinctive Zanzibari identity became important especially in the context of apartheid and the Group Areas Act in the 1950s and 60s. Makua was claimed to be a Swahili dialect, and the Makua slave descendants managed to have themselves classified as Other Asiatics rather than African natives.

By contrast, the Makua liberated Africans, who became the wards of the Catholic St. Xavier's Mission, which bought land to house them also on the Bluff already in 1880, went through a very different trajectory. While the Muslim Zanzibaris were encouraged to emphasise and develop creatively their distinctiveness, their Catholic fellows lost their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, became Zulu speakers, and were used to spread the gospel among other Africans in Natal and the Durban region. They also accepted to have an African chief appointed, agreed to pay the African poll tax, and to carry reference books – passes – like other Africans, whereas all these things were resisted vigorously by the Muslim Zanzibaris. Consequently in 1960, with the implementation of the Group Areas Act, what remained of this



Sullivan 1868 children on deck grafik

Christian group at the Bluff – about 2,000 people – were removed to the African townships of Umlazi and Lamontville, and have since disappeared from view as a distinct grouping.

For the Muslim Makua, apartheid thus meant a step forward in terms of recognition and access to limited citizenship rights. They lost their land provided for them on the Bluff by the Juma Masjid Trust, but were given housing instead from 1962 in the new Indian township of Chatsworth, which gave them access to apartheid modernity amenities of electricity, tapped water and sewage and to education in Indian schools up to Std. 12. This was a great step forward from children's having attended the African school run by the Catholics at the Bluff, and opened up new possibilities for upliftment within the working-class Zanzibari community. It also meant, however, that Makua language use and cultural practices of socialisation for boys and girls, representing a coming together of Makua traditional and Islamic custom, came under pressure, and that English increasingly became the preferred language.

With the ending of apartheid in 1994, the context for aspirations and diaspora strategies changed radically, and with policies of affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment, it was now a political asset to be African rather than non-African. This meant that new forms of self-understanding came to be given voice increasingly among the Zanzibaris, and that their history of enslavement and of victimisation and land loss

² A unique and well-researched portrait of the community at this time is presented in a two-part TV programme produced in 1996 for the SABC by Junaid Ahmed with the title 'Zanzibaris: Identity and Community' and 'Zanzibaris: The Struggle for Kings Rest'. The programme includes historical footage of life at both Kings Rest and Chatsworth, of Zanzibari cultural life, ritual, food and clothing, and has interviews with historical and contemporary community leaders.



Zanzibari Descendants visiting Zanzibar in 2011

under apartheid were foregrounded. In 1995, the Zanzibari Civic Association registered a land restitution claim with the new Government to have its land at Kings Rest given back, and in 2003 was given rights of property to most of the land². This was a great triumph, but has subsequently involved many problems, and the transfer of the land and the building of new housing on it have not yet begun. Problems include resistance from white suburban house owners on the Bluff, a competing land claim from the Indian Juma Masjid Trust – the former patrons of the Muslim Zanzibaris – as well as mistrust and divisions over entitlements within the community.

After 1994, there has been a strong move among some of the Zanzibaris to identify themselves as Amakhuwa and to seek recognition of Makua linguistic and cultural rights within the South African constitution and also recognition on the side of the Government of Mozambique as a Makua diaspora. An Amakhuwa Research Committee has been formed, which aims to collect historical documentation, oral and family histories, and to re-invigorate links with Northern Mozambique.

The new initiatives of Makua diaspora identity assertion have taken place within a context, where both Makua language maintenance and the sustainability of balances between Sufi Islam and Makua cultural traditions among the Zanzibaris have gone into decline. This has to do with the

physical and geographical dispersal of the Zanzibari community out of Chatsworth and the influx of new African neighbours speaking Zulu and other African languages than Makua. The tendency for English to be the preferred language for children and the young has also gained strength since 1994. At the same time, the significance of the rites of passage at puberty, which used to be the central instruments for Makua cultural socialisation and the instalment of respect for elders has declined. Mostly so in the case of the circumcision schools for boys, which have more or less gone out of existence, less so as regards the *nimwari* rituals for girls, where women have proved themselves to be more effective cultural guardians than men. The balance between religion and culture has also been affected by wahabi and tablighi efforts to purify Islam, boosted by support from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, which have attacked the coexistence of Makua ritual and Islamic practice, including the recognition of women's ritual practices and matrilineal entitlements.

The Durban Zanzibaris are thus today at a crossroads, where they face – on the one hand – unique opportunities for memorialising and highlighting their diasporic history, and – on the other hand – have to address challenges of dispersal and disagreement concerning how their history should be remembered and represented.

MGI Folk Museum of Indian Immigration

*Dreesha Teelwah
Curator, Folk Museum of Indian Immigration,
Mahatma Gandhi Institute*

Museums have the special mission of showcasing the historical and cultural heritage, inter alia, of a nation or nations with a view to connect the present and future generations with their respective past. In Mauritius, there are some thirty museums. Some of the Museums showcase the memories and heritage of people who migrated to Mauritius from different parts of the world and during different periods. Few address the history, memory and cultural heritage of Indian Immigrants except the MGI Folk Museum which has promoted and disseminated the historical and cultural heritage of Indian Immigrants who came to Mauritius during the period 1834-1910.

The Folk Museum of Indian Immigration, inaugurated on 11th March 1991 by the former Vice President of India Sri Shankar Dayal Sharma, is situated on the campus of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute which is a Centre of studies for the promotion of Indian culture and traditions. The Museum is the result of two main exhibitions that were organized by the Institute on Indian Immigration in 1984 and slavery in 1985. In the absence of a permanent place to exhibit the artefacts that were acquired for the above mentioned exhibitions; the Folk Museum of Indian Immigration was conceived and set up.

The tangible collections that are exhibited in the museum have been acquired mainly through donations from the descendants of Indian immigrants. A few of them have also been purchased. Agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, costumes, jewelleryes, religious relics and religious manuscripts, belongings to Indian traders and free passengers and other personal belongings of Indian immigrants are some of the artefacts that have been displayed in the Museum. The elements of intangible heritage on the other hand, have been collected by researchers.

The museum comprises several sections. It has a section that focuses on the living conditions of the indentured labourers on the sugar estates. As such, a miniature of the Rivière des Anguilles Sugar



kitchen utensils used by Indian Immigrants

Estate Camp, located in the South of Mauritius, as it was in 1876 and also a diorama showing the village life of indentured labourers have been included. The recreation of the Baithka also enables visitors to understand the cultural and linguistic strategies of the then Indian immigrants. The Baithka was a place where the Indian languages, mainly the Hindi language, and other cultural values were transmitted to the children of Indian Immigrants. In addition, the place was used by the Indians to hold formal and informal meetings and social and cultural activities. A typical kitchen used by the Indian Immigrants and their descendants have also been recreated to give a vivid idea of the life of the then labourers. The kitchen houses traditional fireplace and a number of kitchen utensils such as mortar and pestle, stone grinders, containers to keep pickles, water carriers, drinking vessels, plates, amongst others, are on display in the kitchen.

The Museum also has a section which sheds light on the traditional medicine introduced by Indian immigrants for healing. Their interactions with



Immigrant tin ticket. Source MGI Folk Museum of Indian Immigration

other immigrant settlers like Chinese, Malagasies, Africans and French further enriched their knowledge on traditional medicines.

The immigrants hailed from different regions in India with different religious and cultural backgrounds. They also brought with them their beliefs, rituals and other practices from their homeland. Many of these beliefs and practices have survived to the present. One section of the Museum highlights the different beliefs, rites, festive events and social practices of the immigrants.

To promote cultural heritage related to the way of dressing, the Museum recreated a few costumes of Indian Immigrants which were worn in 19th century Mauritius. This section is the result of a collaborative project carried out by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), the Mauritius Research Council and the Fashion and Design Institute. Researchers who worked on the project went down memory lane, to find documents, pictures, publications to identify the fabrics, patterns and techniques of cloth-making during the immigration period. Authentic jewellerys of indentured labourers are also on display in this section. Toe rings, hand ornaments, nose ornaments, upper arm ornaments, necklaces, hand ornaments for children are some of the jewellerys that are on display.

In 2017, the Museum devoted a corner to the memory of Adolphe de Plevitz (1858-1876), M.K Gandhi (1901) and Manilal Doctor (1907-1911), who championed the cause of Indian immigrants in Mauritius. Some personal belongings of Manilal Doctor such as his passport, his fountain pen, a medal of honour given to him by the people of Fiji, his pocket watch, his gold cufflinks and a silver purse gifted by the people of Fiji to his wife, amongst others are exhibited. All these artefacts have been given to the Museum by Mona Doctor, granddaughter of Manilal Doctor (following a Memorandum of Understanding between the Doctor family and MGI, signed on 28th July 2017, to mark the 110th anniversary of the arrival of Manilal Doctor in Mauritius). Through a collection

of pictures on Manilal Doctor, visitors are also able to have a glimpse of Manilal Doctor's second visit to Mauritius in 1950, as the chief guest in connection with the Indian Republic Celebrations. This section also comprises an interactive exhibition to enable all those who want to know more on the above mentioned personalities who defended the cause of Indian Immigrants.

Interactive exhibitions have in fact become a new approach for the Museum to engage visitors with the history and cultural heritage of Indian Immigrants. In this regard, eight interactive exhibitions have been set up in the Museum.

1. Place of origins of Indentured labourers
2. Agricultural tools and implements and its evolution over the years
3. The Guirni necklace: A shining heritage of Mauritius
4. Defenders of Indian Immigrants (Adolphe de plevitz, M.K Gandhi and Manilal Doctor).
5. Folk tales and Folk Songs: A cultural heritage of Mauritius
6. The Yamse: Popular Culture with many facets
7. Historic sites of Indentured labour
8. Indian Indentured Labour: Beliefs, Rites and Practices

They have also become useful pedagogical tools for school children. These screen-based exhibitions are on permanent display in the Museum and hence accessible to the general public at anytime. In addition as a way of promoting cultural awareness among young learners, the interactive exhibitions are also used for outreach purposes in state and private schools as well as other institutions upon request.

Museums across the world are playing a significant role in bringing changes in different aspects of life. By interconnecting with culture, tourism and the economy, they are able to better respond to community needs of the day. Taking this trend into consideration, the Folk Museum of Indian Immigration will continuously visits its strategies to play a significant role in not only safeguarding the Indian cultural heritage but also in its dissemination. It is also important for the Museums to re think their role in relation to new generation, owing to their ubiquitous presence on social media and interest in technological innovation.

Flat Island- An insight into the Quarantine Station (1850s-1880s)

*Christelle Miao Foh and Ashvin Nemchand,
Research Assistants*

In these times of Covid-19, when quarantine and self-confinement are being enforced in many countries, this article proposes a retrospective on the use and the functioning of Flat Island quarantine station during the 1850s and 1880s. Flat Island is located in the North of Mauritius and was established as one of the main quarantine stations of Mauritius in February 1857. It was designed to isolate indentured immigrants suffering, or suspected of suffering, from cholera. Little was known about the means of propagation of cholera and it remained a much dreaded disease. During the 19th and 20th centuries, it was common practice to use small islets such as Flat Island to confine passengers and large numbers of immigrants. Islets such as Flat Island were considered to be apt for quarantine purposes. It was free from outside influences and therefore, diseases could be easily contained and controlled. The archaeological remains on Flat Island, and architectural plans, maps and historical documents help to better understand the system of Mauritian indentured immigration as well as the medical and maritime practices prevailing at that time.

The design of the quarantine station

The topography of Flat Island made it ideal for the creation of a quarantine station. The size of the islet (253 hectares) allowed for the construction of several isolated units, ensuring thus optimal control over the immigrants and the diseases. The entire island from North-East to North-West and down to the Southern part was occupied by the quarantine station.

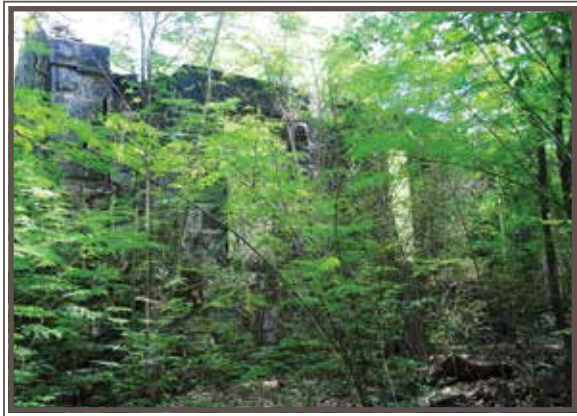
Flat island was accessible by two jetties: a suspended jetty and the other one made of stones. The suspended jetty found at the Palissade bay on the Western side of the island was used to embark and disembark indentured labourers. In very special circumstances, they were also disembarked at the Stone jetty at the Pass, usually reserved for the landing of Government Officers. The suspended jetty gave direct access to the coolie camps and its adjoining amenities. The coolie



Map of Flat Island, 1857. Source: MNA

camps were separated into two sections, each one having the carrying capacity of approximately 300 indentured labourers, or the equivalent of the number of indentured labourers that a ship could transport.

The sheds of the camps were built in timber and covered with thatched roofs. It was often reported by the Surgeon Superintendent of the station that the sheds were not adequate and did not provide much shelter to indentured immigrants during cyclones and heavy rains. Provision for accommodation was also made for free passengers, or deck passengers as they were classified, and Europeans who travelled on the same vessel carrying indentured immigrants. Andrew Balfour in 1920 confirmed that passengers were quarantined according to their social status. The quarters of passengers considered to be of



Structure of hospital, Flat island.

higher status were located on the eastern part of the island, away from the camps of the indentured labourers and close to the administrative and medical amenities. The administrative and medical sections could be accessed by the stone jetty. It was composed of the Doctors' quarters, the Pilot's and steward's quarters and a communication station by semaphore.

The Coolie camps, and the administrative and medical sections were connected by a pathway. Mid-way along the path, the hospitals and adjoining amenities, the kitchen and privies, the dead house and medical stores were constructed. Out of the four hospitals which were planned, only two were built. One of the hospitals was built in stone and one in wood. The stone structure of the hospital, one of the largest buildings of the quarantine station can still be found on the island.

Means of subsistence on the island

Food

The climate on Flat Island is hot and frequently arid. The topography combined with the climate of the island made it difficult to rely on inland production of food for the permanent medical and administrative staff living on the island. Food and water were strictly controlled and rationed on the quarantine station, especially during the dry season.

In view of decreasing the dependency of the staff on resources from the mainland, the Royal Botanical Garden was requested in 1857 to survey the fertility of the soil of Flat Island to determine the feasibility of cultivating vegetables. Two plots were identified at the Pass and on the eastern part of the island. Several experiments on potential and viable vegetables that could be grown were carried

out and it was concluded that root vegetables such as yams, sweet potatoes, maize and pigeon peas were suitable for cultivation. However numerous attempts to cultivate these vegetables failed due to a lack of workforce to maintain the garden and all consumable and non-consumable items had to be shipped from the mainland.

The food supplied to indentured labourers was the same as that provided at the Immigration Depot (now Aapravasi Ghat); a supply of rice or root vegetables as the main staple food, ghee and salted fish. In addition, the charter party of ships carrying indentured workers also mentioned that ships had to provide a two-day provisions and medicines for indentured immigrants landing at the quarantine station, while those for the remaining days were at the cost of the Government.

Provision of fresh meat was also made for staff living permanently on the island. Animals such as deer and cows were imported from Mauritius for meat. The deer were left to stray in the wild. The distribution of meat to the latter was strictly controlled and was supplied in particular circumstances when provisions sent from Mauritius were delayed or had turned bad during transportation. Another source of fresh produce was fish. Fishing was also practised as a recreational activity.

Water

The quarantine station had also put in place different means to obtain water. Existing wells were used and later additional ones were constructed. The water from the wells was however brackish and improper for regular consumption by humans. It was preferably used as drinking water for the animals reared on the island. To convert the brackish and the surrounding sea water into potable water, the British government installed an apparatus for the desalination of water in 1858. Nicolas Pike described the installation in 1873, the: 'Works containing a condensing apparatus stand near the jetty in which 12,000 gallons of pure water can be condensed in twenty-four hours. A donkey-engine is used for this purpose; and after the water is condensed, it passes through an iron filter three feet deep by eighteen inches in diameter, and is then conveyed into iron tanks, each containing 400 gallons. The whole establishment is in excellent order, and must have cost the Government a considerable sum of money. Wells have been dug for cattle, some of them from eight to ten feet deep (...) We were informed that the waters of these wells were unwholesome for man, as they possess deleterious ingredients that



Water system at Flat Island.

frequently act as purgative.’

The metallic remains of the distilling apparatus can still be found on Flat island. Besides, distilling water, the system which included a steam plant too, appears to have powered several processes associated with the functioning of the site.

Rain water was also harvested. Several cisterns were placed adjacent to the main buildings of the station to collect water from the roofs. By 1874, a system of pipes and pumps, connecting the different tanks was installed to manage water efficiently.

Conclusion

The key role of Flat Island during the 19th and 20th centuries, in preventing epidemics and the propagation cannot be denied. The survey conducted in 2015 and 2016 by the AGTF and the Mauritian Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, led by Dr. K. Seetah from Stanford University is helping to identify some of the existing structures of the former quarantine station and assess their state of conservation.



These remains are composed mainly of roofless buildings with walls made of native Mauritian basalt, coral and brickwork and floored with concrete. These are believed to be remains of the houses of staff who worked on the island and the hospital wards. However, examinations of the buildings, revealed the existence of previous wooden floors and partitions. The partitions indicate that many of the houses, and some of the other buildings, were in the past much larger. The lack of actual wooden remains could be an indication that upon the abandonment of the site, there was a systematic removal of almost all of the reusable material, including all wooden and steel components that might have been reused elsewhere.

The vestiges of the quarantine station on Flat Island are closely connected to the wider story of indentured labour and the Indian diaspora of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In order to conserve this intrinsic part of the system of indenture, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund is endeavouring towards the conservation of these assets as well as the listing of Flat Island as a National Heritage.

References

1. National Archives Department, Mauritius; RA series (1850-1880)
2. Conservation Plan for Flat Island

From the Yamsé to the Jako Malabar: A focus on religious practices during indenture

(India, Réunion Island, 19th -mid 20th century)

Dr Céline Ramsamy-Giancone

Chairperson of the Organisation for Diapora Initiative (ODI)

From the middle of the 19th century to the early 20th century, a large number of indentured labourers came from India to Réunion island. As in other colonies, they were British citizen originating from various parts of India (Bengal, Orissa, Mysore, Pondicherry, Madras, Karikal). During the period of indenture, many testimonies indicated that one of the most popular festivals was the Yamsé or Muharram. Although the majority of the workers were Hindus, they all together shared this event. How does one explain this kind of practice? In Réunion Island, a common practice that was described by different authors, speak sometimes about men covered with paint and dressed up as a “tiger”. Later, in the 20th century, columnists and authors spoke about the “Jako malabar”: a man covered with paint, who danced before walking on fire, raising fear and admiration. I attempted to understand this ritual pertaining to the indentured workers in Réunion island, and tried to explore the customs of these people on the plantation, who were mostly from the popular castes of India, and were all unified in suffering the ordeals of indenture.

The first Indian practices in Bourbon island

During the 18th century, due to the economic activity of the East India Company, Bourbon island (first name of La Réunion), like its “sister” Ile de France (later Mauritius island), witnessed the arrival of Indian workers from India. They came as slaves or free workers and were recruited for their various skills (stonemasons, bricklayers, carpenters, sailors). In 1764, a lazarus priest described their religious practices in Réunion island: The Indians wearing tiger and lion skins, organise the processions of their divinities. The lascars and other idolaters publicly worship in Bourbon, on certain days of the year, they cover



Jacquot Colbe

themselves with lion skin and tiger’s skin, and walk in great pomp in all the streets of Saint-Denis and Saint-Paul. Moreover, a garrison accompanies them as in triumph.

How does one interpret this astonishing description? I could make a connection between this amazing ceremony with the Moharram, which is the commemoration of Imam Hussein’s death, which happened during a great battle, in Karbala city, in 680 A.D. This ritual included people carrying a cenotaph, symbolising Imam Hussein’s body. In this procession, there were men covered with paint, simulating tigers and lions, as protectors of the cenotaph. Nicholas Pike wrote a very interesting description in 19th century, about this procession in Mauritius, by Indian indentured immigrants: The lion who watched over the sacred remains of Ali is represented by a brawny follower of the prophet, whose skin is painted to imitate the tawny hide, and a goatskin thrown over his shoulders for a mane. He utters the most hideous roars as he rushes about the crowd, restrained by a cord held by a priest.

It would be interesting to study the life of Indian people in India, during the same period, and make

some connections. Various testimonies show that this shared rituals between Hindus and Muslims took their roots in India, among the lower castes. The descriptions given by French travellers provide an interesting insight into the celebration.

A shared practice rooted in India

According to Brunet, in 1828, the Yamsé or Muharram was a religious festival more linked with the lascars and “Maures”, but the celebration was also practised in a large part of India. In the Ponamale city, the author reported the presence of a man covered with paint, while others recited prayers, shouting “Īali ! Īali !”. After ten days of celebrations, the presence of Hindus is observed: From day to day the gathering increased, new actors came to join the first ones, so that at the end, all classes, and all castes appeared to me to take part. In the middle of 19th century, in 1846, Victor Fontanier, a French Consulate travelling in Cochin, reported the popular celebration of the Moharram, which included Hindus and Muslims: I saw in Bombay the Hindus mingle with the Mohammedans for their ceremonies of the Baïram and the Moharem, as also the Mohammedans take part in the dusséréh and the diwâli. (...) The festivals are especially remarkable for the noises that are made there, we hear that tom-tom, doorbells, bells, copper horns, of which the most appalling charivari of Europe would give a faint idea.

These precious testimonies, among others, help us to appreciate the numerous descriptions of the Yamsé in almost all the regions where indentured workers migrated to. This shared practice could be understood in two ways : first, that in adversity the workers shared more easily their practices and were “united” ; second, that many of these people were from poorer castes, or were converted from one cult to another. In Réunion island, one can find the following description: according to Maillard, in 1963, the Indian indentured labourers were celebrating this festival. They walked in a procession and crying “Yamsé, O Ali, Yamsé O Ali !”. At the same time, a famous French artist, Antoine Roussin, painted a scene entitled “Yamsé, Indian workers festival”, showing men dressed up as tigers.

In 1859, when the population of Réunion island was 199,400, and the immigrants made up about 64,700, and in 1870, 91,3% of the indentured were Hindus, very few were Muslim or Catholic, there were many such testimonies. Over time, at the beginning of the 19th century, there were fewer

such descriptions. However, in Réunion island, during the Pongol festival, including walking on fire, men dressed up as tigers, called “Jako malabar” have been reported. At that time, a new wave of free Indian merchants arrived in the island from the Surat region. Most of them were Muslims, and requested the construction of a mosque. The Hindu immigrants, called “malbars”, who were from South India, started to establish links with the Tamils in Mauritius, and their practices became closer to Tamil rituals. Since, the “Jako malabar” ceremony was regularly celebrated, it was no longer described as a tiger, but as the Hindu god Hanuman. The public exhibition of Hanuman maintained, though, some similarities with the previous practices of the Muharram tiger.

In 1929, an author born on a plantation in the eastern part of the island described the “Jako malabar” during the Pongol festival, organised by the last indentured labourers: he was all striped with paint and he had a long tail, taller than he was. He arrived around ten o'clock, dancing on the steps, on the square of terracotta. All the Indian inhabitants were there all around: some played drums. They threw coins at him on the ground, he fell back and picked them up with his mouth. What interested us in all of this was all the acrobatics. After this demonstration to the master, they were going to continue the party among themselves. At the top of the longière, (their barracks) there was also a mast, with a flag, at the top of which they tied the tail of the tiger when the party was over.

Nowadays, this ceremony is no longer performed, and there is only one or two “Jako malabar” left. Unfortunately with the gradual disappearance of the ceremony, a whole chapter of the history of popular Hinduism will be erased. It seems important to us to keep the traces of this heritage, which shows how the indentured labourers recreated one aspect of their original practices in their host country.

Acknowledging the fact that the Muslim's component of this practice has been obliterated from the collective memory, it was important to retrace its historical evolution. This study contributes to shed light on the indentured labourers' stance when it comes to the practice of different cults. At least for that period, indentured labourers showed an open-minded spirit of sharing. Worships and beliefs were not separated by impenetrable borders. Only the perpetuation of an ancestral ritual as a memory of the original mother country mattered.

Between Memory and the Past: The site of Bras d'Eau as remembered by the elders

Babita D. Bahadoor
Research Assistant

Bras d'Eau has for decades been of intrinsic value to the community in terms of heritage as well as asset. Since the French era to present time, the land has been used for various purposes, from grazing land to sugarcane cultivation and sugar production, orchard and nursery, and today, a national park rich in biodiversity.

Each year in the context of the International Day for Monuments and Sites, guided visits are organised to the ruins of the old sugar estate for visitors to appreciate the history and heritage of the site. According to a brief survey conducted during guided visits between 2015 and 2019, about 75% of visitors aged (15 to 70 years) who were interrogated, did not know about the existence of a sugar estate at Bras d'Eau. 10% argued that the ruins found in front of the visitors' centre were that of a mill but was not sure whether it was a sugar mill or *moulin l'alouest* (Aloe fibre mill) but said that they knew about it from hearsay. The rest (most of them were aged 50 to 70 years) stated that they did not know about the existence of a sugar mill at Bras d'Eau but were somehow connected to the site before it was proclaimed a National Park in 2011. Above all, the fact that their indentured forebears used to work and live at Bras d'Eau sugar estate, the site was emotionally meaningful to them. Consequently, further research was conducted to assess the importance of the site to the local inhabitants through collective memory.

The research methodology adopted was oral history. Although history appears to be perpetually suspicious of (collective) memory (Nora P, 1989: 9), it provides a different perspective and helps discover new elements in the history and heritage of a site. Like archival research, oral history has enabled us to understand how important the different elements of Bras d'Eau were to the community even after the closure of the sugar estate and the cessation of indenture in Mauritius,

to the present time. Our approach consisted in interviewing witnesses of past events at the estate. This was not only a difficult task but an impossible one. Therefore, we were required to locate, as far as possible, inhabitants in nearby regions, aged between 70 and 100 years, who could provide crucial information on the sugar estate as per the memories transmitted by their parents or grandparents. The targeted regions were Poste de Flacq and Roches Noires villages.

After the abandonment of the sugar estate for several years during the mid-19th century, the State acquired the land in view of reforesting the estate which led to the establishment of a nursery and an orchard where endemic and indigenous plants were raised for commercial purposes. The creation of a nursery and orchard at Bras d'Eau were beneficial to the inhabitants and small planters as it offered opportunities for employment, purchase of plants, and land leasing options and grazing rights. During the post-indenture era, some residents in the nearby villages of Bras d'Eau were given the opportunity to lease some portions of land at Bras d'Eau for the cultivation of manioc, maize and other cash crops.

One of the interviewees, who agreed to disclose his identity, Mr. Rajcoomar Mungur, resident of Roches Noires, aged 82, recalls that he started working as a gardener on contractual basis at the nursery of Bras d'Eau at the age of 15. He earned Rs 2.04 per day. His work consisted in cleaning the Eucalyptus forest and other plantations from morning to 4 p.m. He further mentions that he came across some of the main components of the old sugar mill, used in the process of sugar manufacturing, such as old machineries. However, that equipment has been dismantled.

He further added that he learnt that there was

an aloe fibre mill in the surroundings but stated that during his childhood he never saw any such industry at Bras d'Eau, not even the ruins of the aloe fibre mill, but confirms the presence of pandanus or vacoas and sisal plants growing in several parts of the estate. At present, Mr. Mungur grows vegetables for sale at the market of Flacq,

“Ou kone ki laz mo ena? 82 ans... lontan mo ti travay dan gouvènmàn aster mo okip mo plantasyon... mo pena letan... mo rest dan karo... mo fek sorti lavant-la, aster mo pe al lakaz... »



Mr. Mungur returning home from his plantation passing through Bras d'Eau on his bicycle, bought for Rs50

The house of the forest 'sirdar'

During my search for potential local informants, I came across a person who was born and had lived at Bras d'Eau during his childhood. This further aroused my curiosity to find out more about the site and the people who had resided there. Mr. S. Ghallu, ex-Principal Executive Assistant at the University of Mauritius and a resident of Roches Noires, who has recently retired at the age of 64, remembers that during his childhood, his parents and two sisters used to live in a stone building which was found behind the visitors' centre. His father was employed as gangman, a post similar to that of a 'Sirdar', at the Bras d'Eau forest. However, a 'Sirdar' was engaged on sugar plantations whereas a 'Gangman' supervised labourers working in the forest. He further explains that as his grandparents lived at Roches Noires, his parents used to go to Bras d'Eau for prayers and to perform birth rituals. The building mentioned by Mr. Ghallu was found next to the recently accommodated tortoise enclosure. At first glance, the stone building

without a roof, appears to be derelict and seems to date back to the 20th century. Inside the building, we found a worn out coconut broom, a pickaxe and rattan baskets littered on a rotten damp foliage floor covered with fallen branches and dried leaves on which grass has started appearing. This building now seems to be an open-air gardener's store. We still wondered for what purpose this building was initially constructed. A park ranger once informed that this building dates back to 1930s as the number "1937" is scribbled on the façade of one of its walls but this information seems to be erroneous as there is no written evidence. A site visit was carried out with Mr. S. Ghallu and he gave us details about the structure of the building. He mentioned that the building comprised 3 rooms: 2 bedrooms and 1 living room, and a small kitchen which was annexed to the right-hand side of the building. The roof was covered with wooden shingles, now damaged with time due to weathering, cyclones and neglect.

Mr. Ghallu recalls that they used to rear livestock and poultry at Bras d'Eau. Due to cyclone Carol, the family was asked to evacuate for precautionary measures.

Bras d'Eau Railway Platform

Mr. Mungur states that after he turned 18, he resigned from the nursery of Bras d'Eau to join the Beau Champ sugar estate as a cane cutter and remembers that there used to be a platform for the railway that crossed the Bras d'Eau sugar estate. Mr. Krishna Ramasawmy, assistant priest (pussari), aged 67 years of Roches Noires also confirms the existence of a railway and its platform and wagons transporting sugar to the port. He used to work at the nursery of Bras d'Eau and remembers that there were 37 men working at the nursery, each having a specific task such as nursery men, gardeners, labourers, forest rangers, etc. He also confirms that cattle and sheep were reared at Bras d'Eau. Both informants wish the visitors' centre would include information on the history of the sugar mill and indentured labourers.

Mr. Ghallu who had lived at Bras d'Eau also confirms the existence of a railway platform. He witnessed trains passing through the Bras d'Eau forest. He still remembers that whenever they would hear the air whistle of the train, his two sisters would put him in a carton box and pull him in the courtyard to imitate the train passing by; it

was one of his favourite outdoor delights.

The importance of the Bras d'Eau Forest to the local inhabitants

The wife of Mr. Mungur, Mrs. Parbatteaa Mungur, aged 70, mentions that she was married to her husband at the age of 13 and since then, she and her mother-in-law accompanied by two grand-dimoun and other children, used to go to the Crown land of Bras d'Eau at 6 am to fetch wood and grass for the cattle which her mother-in-law reared. She received a cow as dowry and said that her cow really helped her financially for the welfare of the family and the education of her children. Mrs. Akaloo, aged 84 from Plaines des Roches, and her son also used to fetch wood and grass at Bras d'Eau sugar estate for her 3 cows. The history of both Mrs. Mungur and Mrs. Akaloo are similar: they married at a very young age, 13 and 16 years respectively and after their wedding, they both had to fetch wood and cut grass for the animals they reared. Both mention that there were other people, namely women, residing in Plaines des Roches, who fetched wood and fodder from Bras d'Eau.

Mrs. Mungur says that Bras d'Eau was divided into different "karo" (fields) where they used to cut different types of grass at an orchard for the animals and these "karo" bear specific names, depending on the types of plants found there.

Name of fields	Details or types of plants
Karo dite (tea field)	There were no tea plants but a type of plant named "dite" used to grow there, where they used to cut grass for animals.
La lian serf	Known as <i>Hiptage benghalensis</i> which they used to feed to cattle, sheep and cow
La lwa sizay or cisaille	Referring to Sisal plants. According to Mrs. Mungur, the leaves were very dangerous. It could easily cut one's hands. These leaves were used to make ropes for tying tobacco. Apparently, the sisal leaves from Bras d'Eau were sent to a tobacco industry situated at Plaines des Roches for tobacco packaging.
Sidge or Fey kali	According to Mr Ramsamy, old priest, the plant 'sidge' is known as 'Fey kali ». Mrs. Mungur said that this plant contains a milky solution which is very harmful to the skin.
Tekoma	Used to have tekoma trees growing there.
Mahogamy	She mentions that there exists 2 types of Mahogamy wood, one for making furniture and the other one's bark and branches are used during prayers.
Chabbar khallaa	Another name given to a field



Mrs. Akaloo

She remembers that she used to drink water from the well known as "Puits des Français" whenever she would come at Bras d'Eau.

Places of Worship

What also connects most inhabitants of the nearby villages to the site is the kalimaye, place of worship of Goddess Kali. There are two kalimayes at Bras d'Eau: one at the beginning of the road leading



First kalimaye near the vestiges of the Bras d'Eau sugar mill in 2018

to entrance of the Bras d'Eau National Park next to vestiges of the sugar mill, and the second one is found near the sea shore, at the end of the Bras d'Eau village. Kalimayes dating back to the 19th century are still present on almost all sugar estates of Mauritius. They were very meaningful in the lives of indentured labourers and their descendants as corroborated by Claveyrolas (2014: 142) who affirms the existence of two kovils and an old kalimaye on the sugar estate of St Antoine, confirming the presence of temples near and on sugar estates.

Informants mention that since their childhood, they used to go to the first kalimaye near the Bras d'Eau sugar mill for prayers. One of the interviewees, Mr. Mungur says that since his childhood, he prays at the kalimaye by lighting a lamp every morning and afternoon as the place is very sacred and bears much shakti (powers). Mrs Birjoo aged 64 of Roches Noires village states that during her childhood in the 1960s, there used to be 7 stones representing the 7 forms of Goddess Kali, and where she, her parents and grandparents used to pray by lighting a lamp and offering flowers and fruits each Friday. She says that the statues of the other Hindu divinities were recently added. White and red candles were lighted at the shrine in remembrance of the ancestors (gran dimoun) according to Mr. Satish, the brother of Mrs. Birjoo who lives in Roches Noires village. Candles were lighted for protection against spirits which they believed resided in the forest. Thus, those who believed in the existence of spirits lighted a candle at the kalimaye to avoid being followed back home by the spirits whenever they went to fetch wood or grass from the forest.

Mr. and Mrs. Mungur also offer fruits, flowers and sweets at the kalimaye as Prasad each year. Mr.

Ramsamy of Roches Noires informs that he cleans the kalimaye almost every day so that the place remains clean for other devotees. According to him, the kalimaye has always been a sacred place for many inhabitants living in the nearby villages of Roches Noires, Poste de Flacq and Poste La Fayette.

According to some residents of Roches Noires and Poste de Flacq villages, the second Kalimaye located on the seashore was also visited by devotees but not as often as the one found at the entrance of Bras d'Eau National Park. As this place of worship was recently built by the villagers, no lighted candles are found here. It was built so that people could perform ceremonies when they go to the seaside on the occasion of *Ganga Snan*, a Hindu festival.

Conclusion

Bras d'Eau plays an important role in the life of the community as it serves as a place of memory, identity and history. Today Bras d'Eau is an important site for the community and visitors who not only enjoy the natural setting of the place but also appreciate it as an important historical site. For them, Bras d'Eau is a significant heritage site where the sugar industry thrived with the contribution of their forebears. The site has the potential of becoming a National Heritage in the near future mainly because of its heritage values. Moreover, the National Park of Bras d'Eau is bound to become a potential asset to the tourism enterprise in the context of the promotion of heritage tourism in Mauritius.

Loto du patrimoine et crowdfunding: actions en faveur de la conservation et de la restauration du patrimoine en France

Mirella Hoareau,

stagiaire à l'Apravasi Ghat dans le cadre d'un Master 2 en Tourisme et Patrimoine Culturel

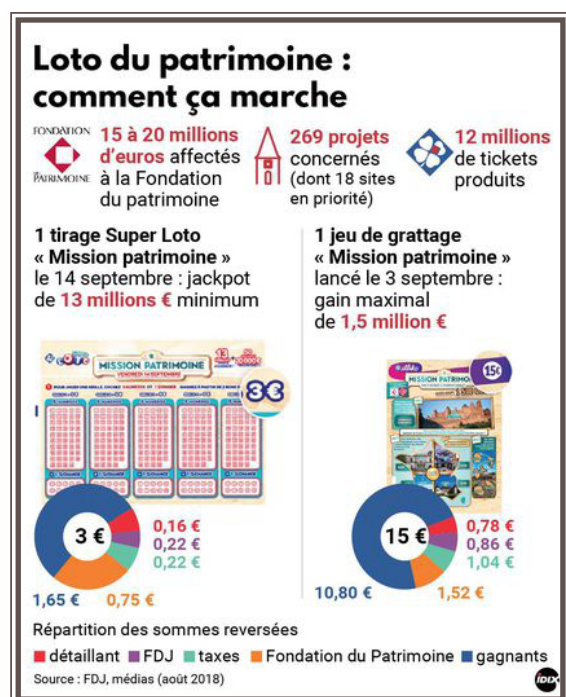
1. Loto du Patrimoine

Présentation de la mission Patrimoine en péril ou "Mission Stéphane Bern"

Le Président de la République française, M. Macron a confié en septembre 2017 à M. Stéphane Bern, journaliste et animateur de radio/TV, une mission de recensement du patrimoine local en péril et de réflexion sur des financements novateurs pour sa restauration. C'est ainsi qu'un loto du patrimoine a vu le jour sous la tutelle de la Française des Jeux (FDJ). Chargée de récolter le prélèvement de l'État sur les sommes mises sur les jeux de tirage et de grattage dédiés au patrimoine, la Fondation du patrimoine a créé un fonds patrimonial. Pour une meilleure utilisation des recettes et de gestion des données personnelles, des conventions sont également signées en début 2018 entre le ministère de la Culture et le président de la Fondation du patrimoine.

Modalités de versements des fonds du patrimoine

Selon les règles de gestion de la Fondation du patrimoine, l'aide financière est versée au maître d'ouvrage en deux acomptes de 30 % chacun sur présentation des autorisations de travaux délivrées par les autorités compétentes et des factures conformes aux devis présentés initialement et respectant les prescriptions éventuelles émises par l'Architecte des Bâtiments de France (ABF). Spécificité pour les biens protégés au titre des monuments historiques, les délégations de la Fondation du patrimoine et des DRAC¹ se réservent le droit d'examiner la conformité des travaux réalisés.



La Mission patrimoine 2018 en quelques chiffres

En 2018, 2004 monuments (39 % de patrimoine religieux, 21 % de châteaux, 7 % de patrimoine agricole...) ont pu être signalés par le grand public sur une plateforme web. Après examen des services du ministère de la Culture et de la Fondation du patrimoine, 269 projets ont été retenus dont : 18 projets dits emblématiques/prioritaires, un par région, et 251 projets de "maillages". Sur un billet de loto à 3 €, 0,75 € revient à la Fondation et le reste aux autres contributeurs. Pour un jeu de grattage à 15 €, 1,52 € est inscrit dans la cagnotte du patrimoine. Au 31 décembre 2018, la Fondation du Patrimoine a perçu 19 591 828 €

¹ DRAC : Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles

au titre des jeux du patrimoine. Des subventions exceptionnelles, à hauteur de 40% et 60% du montant des travaux, ont été accordées en 2018 aux projets liés au patrimoine inscrit ou classé au titre des monuments historiques grâce aux taxes prélevées par l'État sur les jeux du patrimoine. Sur un montant total de 14 millions d'euros, 2 millions d'euros ont été redistribués au Centre des Monuments Nationaux (CMN) en 2018 et 12 millions d'euros aux Directions Régionales des Affaires Culturelles (DRAC) en janvier 2019. Au final, 234 projets ont été soutenus en France en 2018, dont certains ont été reportés ou écartés pour diverses raisons (manque de maturité de l'opération, abandon du programme travaux, fonds trouvés). En 2019, 121 projets seront financés par le fonds patrimoine en péril.

Projets subventionnés par le loto patrimoine : cas de l'île de La Réunion

Projets soutenus en 2018 par le loto patrimoine	Projets à soutenir en 2019 par le loto patrimoine
4 Projets :	3 Projets liés à l'engagisme :
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domaine de Maison Rouge à Saint-Louis : 118 000 € (41%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temple tamoul des Casernes à Saint-Pierre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maison Choppy de l'école Saint-Charles à Saint-Pierre : 100 000€ (43%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temple Tamoul du Gol à Saint-Louis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiosque de la villa Folio à Hell-Bourg : 6000€ (40%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapelle du Domaine de Bel Air à Sainte-Suzanne, liée à l'évangélisation des engagés du site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hôtel Laçay à Saint-Paul : 186 000€ (25%) 	

2. "Crowdfunding" patrimonial en France

Le crowdfunding ou financement participatif est un outil numérique permettant de collecter des fonds via une plateforme web en vue de financer un projet.

Les plateformes de crowdfunding

Il existe une multitude de plateformes généralistes/multispécialisées en France comme KissKiss BankBank, Commeon, Ulule (sites) ou spécialisées dans le patrimoine comme Dartagnans. Ces sites sont en concurrence avec les plateformes de financements des institutions "officielles" de sauvegarde du patrimoine (Fondation du Patrimoine, Centre des Monuments Nationaux) qui connaissent un succès grandissant, notamment grâce à la "Mission Stéphane Bern".

Quelques chiffres du crowdfunding pour le patrimoine culturel

Depuis 2008, date de lancement des premières plateformes françaises, le crowdfunding connaît un développement soutenu et les Français se montrent plus généreux avec une hausse de 39 % en 2018 des fonds collectés par rapport à 2017. Généralement, les campagnes de crowdfunding liées au patrimoine affichent un taux de réussite plus que convenable variant de 50 à 80 % selon la communication faite, la popularité et l'ampleur des projets. En effet, le secteur culturel représente près de la moitié des dons avec 44 millions d'euros récoltés en 2018 : dont 36 % pour le secteur de l'audiovisuel, de la musique et 16 % pour le patrimoine (chiffres du baromètre du crowdfunding 2018 KPMG).

Principales raisons du succès du crowdfunding patrimonial

En plus de la démocratisation de l'accès à internet, la mission du patrimoine en péril, lancée par Stéphane Bern, a permis de sensibiliser le public à la problématique de la sauvegarde du patrimoine français, mais également à la pratique du crowdfunding. Avec les coupes budgétaires des financements publics pour la culture et le patrimoine, le financement participatif apparaît donc comme une solution numérique au service de la conservation et la restauration du patrimoine culturel. Le succès du crowdfunding s'explique par : son accessibilité à tous où chacun peut choisir le projet et son mode de financement ; sa transparence sur la destination finale de ses fonds ; sa traçabilité où le donateur peut suivre l'évolution des projets financés et éventuellement apporter sa contribution à son développement.

Kali/Mariamamma Worship in Guyana: A Brief Overview¹

*Dr. Marcelo Moura Mello
Anthropologist & Lecturer,
Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil*

Between 1838 and 1917 almost 240.000 men and women from India crossed oceans and reached British Guiana.² As elsewhere in the Caribbean, Indians were recruited as indentured labourers to work mainly on sugar plantations, in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery. The great majority of the immigrants hailed from North India (especially from what is now Bihar and Uttar Pradesh), having sailed through the port of Calcutta (Kolkata), while far less people, originally from Tamil and Telugu-speaking districts, sailed from Madras (Chennai). As expected, diversity characterized the immigrants. In terms of religion, Hindus comprised more than 80% of them, while 16% were Muslims, and around 1% Christians (Look Lai 1993). Of course, it would be a mistake to suppose that all Hindus practised the 'same' Hinduism, a religious tradition that, by definition, is heterogenous.

A detailed history about the development of Hinduism in Guyana still waits to be written (but see Jayawardena 1968; McNeal, Mahabir, and Younger 2014; Kloß 2016a). Suffice it is to say that during indentured, central institutions from India were transformed. In plantations, a heterogeneous group of persons had to live together, in close contact – something already experienced in depots and inside the ships that crossed the *Kala Pani*.³ As a result, the caste system collapsed. Throughout the years, the creolization of Indians and their cultural practices (Cf. Jayawardena 1963) took place; in parallel, East Indians themselves promoted efforts of revitalization of their religious traditions.

It is in this context that Sanatan Dharmaraised, becoming the dominant Hindu organization in British Guiana in the twentieth century. Considered as an orthodox, Brahminic, and North Indian Hindu tradition, its emergence was influenced by missionaries from India, and it was a response to the challenges posed by reformists movements as Arya Samaj, and to the stigmatization of planters and of Christians. To legitimize itself

in a society marked by Anglo-European values (see Williams 1991), this Hindu sect condemned practices morally suspicious, as animal sacrifice and spiritual possession, attaching them especially to the *Madrasis*, the people of South Indian descent. This explains, in part, why the worship of the goddess Kali (*Kali Mai Puja*) is also known as *Madras religion* in Guyana. Although contrasts between North and South Indians already existed in India, in the Caribbean plantations the diversity of the subcontinent was reduced, as Khan (2004) rightly posed, to a few contrastive categories. Certainly, it would be simplistic to reduce Kali Mai Puja to its South Indian origins (Kloß 2016a; McNeal 2011), since in the Caribbean “practices from varied localities and communities in India were submerged and reformulated in relation to one another” (McNeal, Mahabir, Younger 2014: 178). But it is important to have in mind that the association between Madrasis and Kali worship is, in some measure, the result of a process of differentiation among Hindus themselves – since the indentured period, the dark-skinned Madrasis are stereotyped as superstitious and backward, and many Sanatanists consider Kali worship devilish and as a distortion of Hinduism.



Pujarie Takechand Mangal (Bayo) praising the Mother, in front of the murti of Mariamma. Blairmont Kali Temple, June 2018. Photo by the author

In parallel, this association derives also from a process of cross-identification of Hindu practices. The legendary pujarie (priest) Jamsie Naidoo stated in an interview (Younger 2010:64) that the main deity of Kali worship is the South Indian goddess Mariamma (see below),⁴ but “for the sake of communicating with North Indians” Madrasis resorted to the name of the goddess Kali to refer to their religious practices. From the perspective of my interlocutors, during indentureship – also referred as boundtime – Indians as a whole, and Madrasis in particular, faced the prejudice and the repression of planters and Christians, something that prevented the continuity of religious practices. According to many narratives, during indentureship many children felt sick. The Old people prayed to the Mother Goddess, and she manifested herself (possessed a person) to deliver a message: on her way from India to British Guiana, she was forgotten, and to remind her devotees that her puja must be continued, she made the children sick. Since then, many temples in honour of Mariamma were built. In the last decades, other temples were founded by Guyanese that migrated in places as New York, Toronto and Trinidad & Tobago (see Kloß 2016b for the transnational dimensions of ‘Guyanese Hinduism’).



The altar of the Big temple, which houses the murtis (from left to right) of Saraswati, Lakshmi, Mariamma, and Durga. Blairmont Kali Temple, June 2018. Photo by the author



Two devotees and members of Blairmont Kali temple in front of the murti of the god of the sacrifice, and guardian of Mariamma, Khal Bhairo (June 2018 – photo by the author)

Among my interlocutors, Mariamma, also called Mother, is associated both with sickness and with cure. As many priests and devotees say, Madras temples privilege the aspect of cure. In other words, the focus on healing is the major reason for the prominence of Mariamma in this religious tradition. At a weekly basis, usually on Sundays, Kali members and Guyanese from different ethnic and religious background seek relief and comfort from the effects of diseases and sickness, and from health and domestic problems in temples located across the Atlantic coastal region, especially in the region of Berbice. Under the supervision of priests, people do devotion to several deities, some of them defined as North Indians, others as South Indians. During the service, offers (pujas) of coconuts, fruits, vegetables, sweets, incenses, mantras, and, in some cases, cigarettes and liquor, are disposed in the altars, under the feet of the murtis (sculptured form of deities). Depending on the case, animal sacrifices are performed. The culminating point of the rituals is the calling up, when some deities are invoked⁵ and manifest themselves in religious experts, the marlos, whose bodies become, temporally, sites of divine agency, vehicles of cure and of transmission of oracular messages. To perform healing treatments, Mariamma and other deities, especially Khal Bhairo and Kateri, use, among other things, a branch of leaves of the sacred neem tree (*azadirachta indica*). The deities, as it is said, take the form of neem to heal people.

⁴ I inform readers that I have not spelt the names of Hindu deities with phonetic and orthographical consistence. I raise no objection to any other forms of spelling. In Guyana there is no absolute concordance among Hindus regarding the correct spelling of these names.

⁵ Currently, few Madrasis have fluency in South Indian languages, but some mantras in Tamil are widely known among devotees.



Devotee manifesting the goddess Ganga during the service (Blairmont Kali temple - June 2018, photo by the author)

Despite the fine ethnographical descriptions available (Bassier 1977; Kloß 2016b; Singh; 1978; Stephanides & Singh, 2000), Kali worship, or Madras religion, still is poorly known, and highly stigmatized. As a final word, I would like to suggest not only that there is much more research to do, but that it is necessary to be more attentive to local concepts, as the concept of form (see Eck 1998). As I learn from my interlocutors in Blairmont Kali temple, Mariamma and Kali are the same and simultaneously different forms of one Supreme Goddess, which manifests itself in a multiplicity of forms to look after their children. In this way, if it is necessary to have in mind the historical transformations of Hindu practices in the Caribbean, and in Guyana in particular, the concept of form points precisely to the inherently transformative aspect of deities as Mariamma. The association between Kali and Mariamma is not an oddity, but consistent with the principle that oneness and multiplicity are inextricably related, something that can generate continuous transformations of religious practices.



Young devotee picking flowers to make a maala (garland of flowers). Blairmont Kali Temple, June 2018. Photo by the author.

1. References

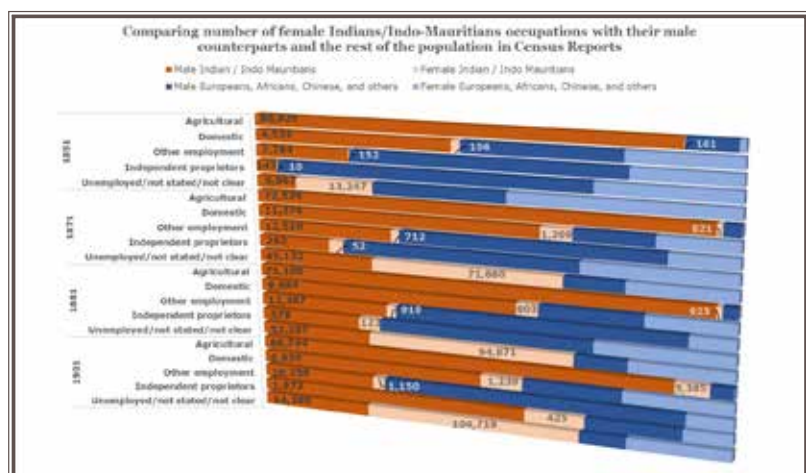
2. Bassier, Dennis. 1977. Kali Mai worship in Guyana: an overview. Georgetown: University of Guyana.
3. Eck, Diana. 1998 [3^o ed.]. Darsan. Seeing the divine image in India. New York: Columbia University Press.
4. Jayawardena, Chandra. 1963. Conflict and solidarity in a Guianese plantation. London: The Athlone Press.
5. _____. 1968. "Religious Belief and Social Change: Aspects of the development of Hinduism in British Guiana." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8(2): 211-240.
6. Khan, Aisha. 2004. Callaloo nation. Metaphors of race and religious identity among South Asians in Trinidad. Durham: Duke University Press.
7. Kloß, Sinah. 2016a. "Manifesting Kali's power: Guyanese Hinduism and the revitalization of the 'Madras' tradition." *Journal of Eastern Caribbean Studies* 41(1): 83-110.
8. _____. 2016b. Fabric of Indianness. The exchange and consumption of clothing in transnational Guyanese Hindu Communities. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
9. Look Lai, Walter. 1993. Indentured labour, Caribbean sugar. Chinese and Indian migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
10. McNeal, Keith. 2011. Trance and Modernity in the Southern Caribbean: African and Hindu Popular Religions in Trinidad and Tobago, Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
11. McNeal, Keith; Mahabir, Kumar; Younger, Paul. 2014. "Hindu healing traditions in the Southern Caribbean: history and praxis". In *Caribbean healing traditions. Implications for health and mental health*, edited by P. Sutherland, R. Moodley, and B. Chevannes, p. 176-187. New York: Routledge.
12. Mello, Marcelo Moura. 2014. *Devoções manifestas. Religião, pureza e cura em um templo hindu da deusa Kali (Berbice, Guiana)*. PhD Dissertation in Social Anthropology. Rio de Janeiro: Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.
13. Singh, Karna. 1978. Kali Mai Puja. A Study of a Guyanese East Indian folk cult in its sociocultural context. Georgetown: Department of Caribbean Studies (University of Guyana).
14. Stephanides, Stephanos and Singh, Karna. 2000. *Translating Kali's feast. The goddess in Indo-Caribbean ritual and fiction*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
15. Younger, Paul. 2010. *New Homelands: Hindu Communities in Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, South Africa Fiji and East Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
16. Williams, Brackette. 1991. *Stains on my name, war in my veins. Guyana and the politics of cultural struggle*. Durham: Duke University Press.

The oral history of the descendants of indentured Indian immigrants: inspiration for modern Mauritian woman

*Maurina Soodin, Researcher
and Kiran Chuttoo Jankee, Research Assistant*

In the context of the 2006-09 Oral History project documenting life histories of indentured immigrants and their first-generation descendants, and the 2010-11 Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage related to indenture, the Apravasi Ghat Trust Fund interviewed almost 800 descendants of indentured and Indo-Mauritian labourers. In these interviews, they shared their own and their predecessors' experiences of how they handled hardships, challenges, shortages, diseases and patriarchy during the post indenture period. This article will focus on the information gathered from the oral testimonies regarding the role of the woman in these families.

According to the census data, the number of Indian/Indo-Mauritian¹ women in Mauritius increased from 7,310 in 1846² to reach 13,714 in 1851³, 97,635 in 1881⁴ and 117,170 in 1921⁵. Although their number increased significantly each decade, the ratio of female to male Indian/Indo-Mauritian remained disproportionate. This difference in numbers is explained mostly by the need for robust labour on fields and in factories, for which men were preferred. A quick look at some of the Census Reports also shows that very few women



were officially employed in agricultural activities, while the majority was declared as unemployed. Of the 225 estate owners who answered the questions of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the Conditions of Indian Labourers in Mauritius in 1839, only 8 confirmed that they employed a total of 55 women on contract. When the women were hired on the estates, it was to carry out lesser demanding tasks or domestic work, for which they were paid less than the men. At the Plaisance Estate in Grand Port owned by Mr de Bissy, 6 women are described as working “voluntarily ... in the fields at weeding and planting canes” against wages of 3 rupees a month, and the same daily ration as the men⁶. The attitude of planters can be seen in the contract signed between Mr. Jamin⁷ - through his agents - and 49 Indian labourers on 23

1 The term “Indian” was used to refer to immigrant labourers and their families in the 1846 and 1851 Census Reports. In the 1861, 1871 and 1881 Census Reports, the term also included those born of Indian parents. As from 1891 to 1921, the term referred to residents born in India including Old Immigrants (those who did not renew their indenture contract) as well as Indians who came for other occupations than on sugar plantations. A new term “Indo-Mauritian” was coined to refer to those born in Mauritius of at least an Indian father around the same time.

2 Rawson, W. et al. 1852 (December 30),

3 Anon 1849

4 Kyshe, J. 1881 (December 6),

5 Walter, A. 1926 (June 12),

June 1837, whereby free passage was promised to the wives accompanying their husbands. However, it was clearly stated that Mr. Jamin would not provide the wives with any ration, although he did engage himself to offer them employment against a “just remuneration” with no further details. One difficulty hence faced by men bringing their wives was the cost of supporting their wives and children. Yet, women like Bhojrubee, a Bengali indentured woman, were a major partner in the progress of her husband, Immigrant Nundlall, who became a small landowner and land speculator between the 1860s and 1880s (Peerthum S. 2017. P 95).

The few Indian/Indo-Mauritian women who were employed by estate owners thus toiled hard on sugar estates usually as part of the petite bande. However, most engaged in small scale farming, rearing cattle, goat and poultry and selling milk and eggs. Subsistence gardening was also a major activity they undertook. They saved the wages earned by the family members by avoiding expenses related to foodstuff purchase. Some cultivated small plots of land granted by the estate for subsistence gardening while others worked in small vegetable plantations against a small token payment and a tiny share of the vegetables. Staples such as manioc, sweet potatoes, and potatoes thus obtained, as well as freely available greens such as bred mouroum and malbar collected from open fields, which are today an inherent part of our Mauritian cuisine, thus added to the meagre rations. Feeding all the family members in the period of scarcity and poverty were a daily challenge for them and barter was another means for them to procure necessary food items. This tradition has survived to this day, whereby any fruit or vegetable harvested from the backyard garden is shared between neighbours and relatives.

Another aspect of the Indian/Indo-Mauritian cuisine was the need to adapt to tough conditions on the camps. The ‘chulha’ or hearth, became a central place where they would cook using firewood, warm themselves and the children during cold nights while narrating stories and riddles. The ‘machaan’ shelf above the ‘chulha’ was used to dry clothes from the heat emanating from below and to preserve organic spices like harvested garlic. The harsh conditions also drove them to ingenious ways to adapt. Dishes such as ‘baygan ké chatni’ (satini brinzel) where they would not only use the fireplace but also the embers to prepare food, ‘Kari lapo banan’ (banana peel curry) where even the

banana peel would be consumed to avoid wastage or even ‘Marr chonka’, a soup made from boiled rice water and spices are such examples. ‘Zasar’ (pickles), which consisted of seasonal fruits and vegetables such as mangoes, fruit cythere, suran or bilimbi pickled with spices and chillies at hand were another means for them to preserve food for later use. Vegetables like bitter gourd were also dried and pickled while they were available in abundance, for consumption during time of scarcity, says Mrs Sungkur of Bois Mangues.

The Indian/Indo Mauritian girls were married off at a young age, and gave birth to an average of 6 to 8 children. In addition to helping with the family savings, they therefore also raised their children and took care of their extended families. According to the Oral Interviews, they were trained for this role very early in childhood. The elder sister/s would become a substitute mother for the younger siblings. When the first sister was married off, she would be replaced by the second sister in the learning and tasks and so on. They would help the mother prepare the meals, look after the younger children and help with collecting firewood as well as rearing of cattle. Mrs Coolamun of Flacq had 11 children. Similarly, Mrs Gowressoo of Hermitage got married at the age of 15 had 10 children yet her son became Minister. Mr Sookye from Plaines des Papayes and Mr Khimia from Bois Mangues have sons who are teachers and civil servants. The informants were many to say that sons were encouraged to study whereas daughters were allowed to leave school as soon as they lacked interest. They were rather encouraged to practise household chores, do cooking and develop such skills like stitching, knitting and embroidery that would benefit the family.

Deeply connected to their roots, Indian/Indo-Mauritian woman were also the custodians of their cultural heritage and ensured their transmission to future generations. The knowledge, knowhow, skills, memories, traditions, rites and rituals brought by the indentured immigrants and generated by the Indo-Mauritians have survived in Mauritius mainly through women. During difficult times, the women relied on each other for moral support as well as on their traditions for spiritual guidance. During the month of Ramadan it was the women who prepared for specific dishes for sehri and sweet dishes and dinner for iftar, says Mrs Gulaman of Camp de Masque Pave. During rituals such as Lalna (celebration of childbirth), Geet Gawai

6 Ibid, pg 145

7 1840 Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the present Condition of Indian Labourers in Mauritius, pg 140-141

(part of wedding rituals which is also an element listed on the UNESCO Representative list of ICH for humanity), which were attended exclusively by women, they would share stories and tips in a congenial atmosphere to boost the confidence of each other. Relevant passages from the orally transmitted religious text such as Ramayana and Quran, are still chanted by the women during every ritual, from birth to death, including weddings, as a moral compass to promote societal values. Rituals such as Harparawri and Baharia puja at the local Kalimaye still help them make the connection between the ancestral Gods, their present physical surroundings, and the family as per the interviews and report by Dr Pavi Ramhota on Intangible Cultural Heritage related to an AGTF project on indenture carried out in 2010.

There was a strong bonding among the women in the villages and camps, as demonstrated above. They also benefitted from the spread of movements to empower the Indians and Indo-Mauritians such as the Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, and Sanathanist/Puranic movements. Concurrently, some also contributed to the expansion of these movements, as seen in the case of Shrimati Sumangali Devi, wife of Dr Chiranjeev Bhardwaj, who taught Hindi to “girls and women folks” in the part-time school started with her husband in 1912⁸. One of the first women to speak in public gatherings in Mauritius, she inspired many Indian and Indo-Mauritian women into social work, which eventually led to the creation of an association of Arya Samaji women of Vacoas that was further replicated in other localities. The success of the part-time school soon led to the creation of the Aryan Vedic School in 1918 by Pandit Cashinath Kistoe and his wife Shrimatee Duljeet, where young girls were also educated.

Today, this sense of belonging and community is perpetuated through the various mandalis and women associations that have emerged in almost every village. Although the functioning of these groups has become more formal, the main concerns remain the same, namely promotion of their ancestral and community values. The Ramayan Sewa Sadan of Mare La Chaux is an instance of such a grassroot organisation that regroups women of different age groups who not only meet and perform to perpetuate the traditional practices but also support each other in their daily life.

Despite a reduced position on the sugar estates, the women’s role in the family and community increased with time, especially as the Old Immigrants and their families moved out of the camps into the emerging villages and hamlets in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Bibliography

Allen, R.B. 2003. *Slaves, Freedmen, and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Anon. 1849. “Report of the Committee appointed to conduct and complete the census of the colony in 1846.” In *Parliamentary Papers 1849*, XXXVII:192–234. http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/StatsbySubj/Documents/archive%20esi/External%20Trade/Report/1.%20POPULATION%20CENSUS/REPT%200390/REPT_0390_0001.pdf.

Kyshe, J. 1881. December 6. *Census of Mauritius and its dependencies taken on the 4th April 1881*. December 6. Statistics Mauritius. http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/StatsbySubj/Documents/archive%20esi/External%20Trade/Report/1.%20POPULATION%20CENSUS/REPT%200393/REPT_0393_0001.pdf.

Peerthum, S. 2019. August 22. “Brief on the role of Indian and Indo-Mauritian women in the making of modern Mauritius.”. Unpublished, August 22.

Peerthum, S. 2019. June 2019. “Daughters of Indenture: The Female Indian Immigrant Labourers”. Unpublished, June 2019

Ramyead, L.P. 1984. “The establishment and cultivation of modern standard Hindi in Mauritius.”. Doctoral, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/28612/1/10672771.pdf>.

Rawson, W., Wilson, A., and Hugon, J. 1852. December 30. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to take a census of the island of Mauritius and its dependencies*. Census. Port Louis, December 30. Statistics Mauritius. http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/StatsbySubj/Documents/archive%20esi/External%20Trade/Report/1.%20POPULATION%20CENSUS/REPT%200391/REPT_0391_0001.pdf.

Walter, A. 1926. June 12. *Report on the Census Enumeration made in the colony of Mauritius and its dependencies on night of 21st of May 1921*. June 12. Statistics Mauritius. http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/StatsbySubj/Documents/archive%20esi/External%20Trade/Report/1.%20POPULATION%20CENSUS/REPT%200397/REPT_0397_0001.pdf.

8 Ramyead 1984, pg 51

My Grand-mom Recipes

Gato Patat (Sweet Potatoes Cakes)

*Aarti Pydatalli,
Heritage Field Guide*



Each year, Mauritius celebrates Diwali with great fervour at the national level. Houses are decorated with lighted 'diyas' or earthen lamps as a symbol of prosperity and victory of light over darkness in honour of Goddess Lakshmi. Diwali is a very popular celebration in Hinduism and is usually celebrated in the month of October or November, depending on the new moon of the 15th day of the Hindu month Kartika. To further brighten this festival of lights, a variety of Indian and home-made sweets are gifted to families, friends and neighbours. The most popular Mauritian sweet made on that occasion is the famous 'gato patat' or sweet potato cake.

To prepare the cakes, you will need the following ingredients:

- 1kg sweet potatoes
- 500 grams white flour
- 250 grams grated coconut
- 250 grams white sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla essence
- Oil for deep frying

Method

1. Wash and boil the sweet potatoes until tender. Drain the water and mash the sweet potatoes into a smooth paste. Allow to cool.
2. Meanwhile prepare the filling by mixing grated coconut, vanilla essence and sugar in a bowl.
3. When the potatoes are cooled, add flour and knead into smooth dough. Add more flour if needed. Make 25 balls out of the dough.
4. Roll the dough balls into flat rounds of about half centimetre thick and six centimetres in diameter.
5. Fill the dough with 1 tsp. of the grated coconut fillings and fold into semicircular shapes. Seal the edges with the back of a fork.
6. Deep fry the cakes into a pan over a medium heat until golden brown. Allow to cool on a paper towel

Gato patat is eaten either hot or cold with a cup of tea or as a snack. The dough may also be fried like puri (fried flat bread) without the filling inside. The cakes, once fried can be preserved for a few days in an air tight container.

On a final note, it would be right to say that the descendants of Indian immigrants have perpetuated their cultural heritage through different types of festivals and culinary practices. I am very fortunate to have received the blessings of my grandmother and my loving mother to whom I am very grateful for having taught me how to make 'gato patat'. They used to boil sweet potatoes to eat as breakfast before going to work and at tea time whenever there was a shortage of bread.

Board Members

Mr Dharam Yash Deo Dhuny
Mrs Somatee Gokool
Mrs Pooja Fulena-Boothoo
Mr Dilraj Mathoora

Mrs A. Sahebally Jauhangeer

Mrs L.D. Rupear

Mr Nirvaan N. Seedoyal

Mr Ankush Kapoor

Mr Shivajee Dowlutroo
Mrs Uma Devi Kowlessar

Dr Anwar Janoo
Mr Mukesh Jhummun
Mrs Sadhna Ramlallah
Mr Omduth Bundhoo
Ms Divya Boothoo
Mrs Jayshreebhye Cooshna

Chairman
Vice Chairperson
Representative of the Prime Minister's Office
Representative of the Ministry of Finance,
Economic Planning and Development
Representative of the Ministry of Arts
and Cultural Heritage
Representative of the Ministry of Education,
Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
Representative of the Ministry of Tourism
and External Communications
Representative of the
High Commission of India
Representative of the National Heritage Fund
Representative of the Mahatma Gandhi
Institute
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member

Members of Administrative Staff

Mr Vedanand Ramoutar
Mrs Indira Devi Gyaram
Mrs Devianee Chuckowree
Mrs Drishtee Conhyea
Mr Pravin Sharma Boodhun
Mrs Doorgawatee Rughoo
Ms Prithhee Nankoo
Mrs Sarika Ramjeeawon
Mrs Pavisha Beedasy-Prayag
Mr Vivekanand Cahoolessur
Mr Amirchandsingh Teerbhoohan
Mr Deva Pauvaday

Officer-in-Charge
Programme Coordinator
Accounting Technician
Confidential Secretary
Accounts Clerk
Clerk
Management Support Officer
Management Support Officer
Management Support Officer
Office Attendant
Office Attendant/ Driver
Office Attendant/ Driver

Members of Technical Unit

Dr Corinne Forest
Mr Lovehin Andiapen
Mr Vikram Mugon
Mr Satyendra Peerthum
Mrs Maurina Soodin Runghen
Mrs Babita D. Bahadoor-Rambhujun
Mrs Kiran Chuttoo Jankee
Mrs Natasha Kheddoo-Ramcharitar
Mrs Christelle Miao Foh
Mr Ashvin Kumar Nemchand
Mrs Vijayalutchmee Beejadhur-Poteah
Ms Madvee Jane Moteea
Mrs Soonanda Nankoo-Bhadye
Mrs Lutchmee Pydatalli
Mr Kishan Doorgathian
Mr Sanand Gowressoo
Mr Deenesh Kumar Cungaram
Mr Mahesh Sharma Ramdhony
Mr Subhir Ramsurrun
Mr Louis Headley Ramyad
Mr Vivekanand Seechurn
Mr Arunagiri Sungaralingum
Mr Varun Sharma Badoo
Mr Ramdass Ravind Basoodelsingh
Mrs Sakuntala Devi Gopaul
Mrs Vidwantee Jugun
Mr Sooraj Ranoowah
Mr Mohunparsad Bahadoor
Mr Hansraj Dhanookdharee
Mr Vijayanand Mulloo
Mr Moti Gossagne Mahadeo
Mr Kanagasabey Nagadoo
Mr Joseph Marcus Sophie
Mr Mindranath Ramchurn

Head Technical Unit
World Heritage Site Manager
Heritage Interpretation Manager
Historian
Researcher
Research Assistant
Research Assistant
Research Assistant
Research Assistant
Heritage Guide/ Public Outreach Officer
Heritage Guide/ Public Outreach Officer
Heritage Guide/ Public Outreach Officer
Field Guide
Site Conservation Worker
Site Conservation Worker
Site Conservation Worker
Site Conservation Worker
Site Conservation Worker
Site Conservation Worker
General Worker
General Worker
General Worker
General Worker
General Worker
Security Guard
Security Guard
Security Guard
Security Guard
Security Guard
Security Guard
Security Guard
Gateman

