

“FIFTEEN INDIANS FROM LA TURQUOISE” (*June 3, 1828 - June 3, 2022*)

Jean Regis Ramsamy

Minister of Arts and Culture of Mauritius, former ambassador Mr Choonee,

Friends, Young scholars, Academics, Namasté, Vanakkam, Bonjour All of you.

I would like to applaud Mr Perthum, Mrs Bahadoor, Mrs Jankee and all indentured Labour route staff for all efforts made to plan this high meeting...

It's a great pleasure for me to attend this gathering and hear also colleague from Reunion Island Michelle and Sully.

I follow this event since the beginning, with Covid we don't have many times to meet, to exchange about Indian immigration.

The real title of my communication should be ***“Fifteen Indians from La Turquoise ”***.

2022 must be celebrated by the Indian community of Reunion Island, **and this for a simple reason.**

Since the 1980s, historians and researchers from the Indian Ocean and beyond, have wanted to know the date of the first convoy of Indians. Nobody made it.

We knew it was the sailboat ***“La Turquoise”***, we, then learned that it left Yanaon on March 16th but nothing more. I agree that there was not much left to find, but it had to be found all the same. **A detail**, but a very important one.

I must admit that my own research lasted several decades, meticulous work consisting of cross-checking different data, and questioning experts from Guadeloupe, Nantes, South Africa and Mauritius. Besides, I had also discussed at length with Reunionese historians like my compatriot Sully Govindin who is online with us.

The important thing is that these years of stubbornness have paid off. We are coming to the end of this deadline. The train of history is ringing at our door.

About two months ago truth came from the archives of La Réunion. By digging for the umpteenth time we succeeded by consulting a new series of online newspapers we were able to find the rare pearl. [\(pic 2\)](#)

The missing date was finally there, well kept in a pile of documents.

IT IS NOW ESTABLISHED THAT "LA TURQUOISE" LANDED AT BARACHOIS ON JUNE 3, 1828.

So, WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT this sailboat ? LA TURQUOISE? [\(pic 1\)](#)

The weekly paper published in Bourbon, a periodical, reveals that after a first departure from the small port of Yanaon on the Coromandel Coast, the boat made a stopover in Pondicherry before setting sail on April 15, 1828, to anchor in the peaceful waters of Saint-Denis on June 3, 1828. So exactly 194 years ago, it's not a simple date.[\(pic 3\)](#)

"La Turquoise" commanded by a french, Prévost de Langristin carried 15 Indian workers, they were the first to be hired. I don't know if you realize my friends, but this is a major discovery for Reunion.

We know that after this act of bravery the boat continued to cross the Indian Ocean. The boat left on July 16th for Mauritius and returned in September to Bourbon Island, still in this exceptional year, 1828.

I tell this story so that the picky researchers know that there were several versions of the boat "La Turquoise".

Other studies will tell us more about the history of this mythical sailboat. But upon their arrival, the fifteen "télinga" "laborers" dear to the famous poet **Leconte de Lisle**, were placed with planters near Saint-Denis.

In fact, we don't have a lot of information about them. But we can quote their name and age.

- **Gony Paty Palalou, 45**
- **Corounda Peda Tincadou 25,**
- **Taddy Pouligadou 28,**
- **Melam Circadou 25,**
- **Corou conda china Vencadou 18,**
- **Coussa Basaravadou,20,**
- **Bandy Tangadou 20,**
- **Cakity tatigadou 20,**
- **Bourty China Vencadou 18,**
- **Chinta soubadou 15,**
- **Gountourou Gangadou 21,**
- **Yani Pilli Vencadou 22**

We ONLY can observe only one man had 45.

At the end of 1828, there were already some 1,100 Bourbon Indians and one major thing worth mentioning: **slavery was not over.**

Let's come back to this absence for a moment.

Do you all know the date when Indians arrived in your country ?

In the thirty countries where the Diasporas are dispersed, it is mainly the date of arrival of the First convoy that counts. Our island has been neglected in that respect.

Ladies & gentlemen,

Imagine for a moment that **you did not know** your date of birth? it seemed unthinkable. Yet for two hundred years, we lived not knowing this date.

I quote this example : We celebrated the birthday of the Queen of England all over the world and we talked about Reunion under English domination & rule. How many of us know that 2,000 sepoys made the trip and fought at Saint-Denis against the French?

Along the same lines, we can better understand **Trafalgar's victory** by knowing the role played by Admiral Nelson.

You should know that until now the Indians used to meet on November 11th, each year to commemorate the end of Indian immigration. In the same time, this meeting also attracts Reunionese of all origins, Chinese, African, French, Malagasy or Comorian and Europe. In this way, Everyone remembers that he had an indentured or slave ancestor.

This major discovery in the historical relations between India and Reunion is as fundamental as the installation of the Indian consulate in Reunion in 1986 or the opening of an airline in 2013 between Reunion and Chennai by Air Austral.

Reunion would also be the first place that would have welcomed Coolies in the 19th century. The first experience of Indian indenture has begun. **I say this** based on the list compiled by the **IDC** Indian Diaspora Council of our esteemed **Ashook Ramsaran**.

In view of the new discovery, it is obvious that great festivities will be organized in Reunion to mark the Bicentenary of "La Turquoise". We still have time, we can imagine associating you all to this event. This discovery OPENS NEW **EPISTE** -MOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES. **First you have to set that date in stone.**

I heard this afternoon our friend Lomarsh Roopnarine,

I size this time Also to mention that a family in Reunion island begin to open a new challenge to prove that Engagism was also a crime against humanity. Mr Egata-Patché Abady, near eighty is ask historians, barrister and others to assist him in this way.

May I remind you that one of the ambassadors of the road of the indentured workers was Mahen Utchanah, you know that he was close to our island and never hesitated to include us in most projects related to the Indian diaspora. I can only hope that this program **"Indian ocean Labour route Program"** won't forget Reunion island and will give us the place we deserve. **SISTERS' ISLAND, YES**, yet no less important. (pic 4)

Because of our latest discoveries, **and the will to find new directions of research on indentured labour route**, we intend to pursue our work through the francophonie with Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyane.

To quote the Emperor Marc Aurelius talking about the emerald, will say that **"the turquoise doesn't lose its value because it is not praised"**. (pic 5) Thanks for your attention.

Mr. Jean Regis Ramsamy holds a very prominent position as an active and globally recognized community leader and advocate, journalist, travels to other countries, publisher, historian and researcher on Indian migration to Reunion Island and other Francophone countries. His espouses his continuing interest in the global Indian Diaspora to connect back with their ancestral roots in India as well as research and writings on their second journeys. Mr. Ramsamy's efforts contributed tremendously to the wellbeing of the PIO community in Reunion Island and its inherent bonds with India in many beneficial ways. Mr. Ramsamy is Indian Diaspora Council (IDC) Director of Reunion Island and GOPIO Country Coordinator of Reunion Island. For his continuing efforts, Mr. Ramsamy was accorded the India's prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) in 2021



**Indentured
Labour Route**

2nd ILRP Indian Ocean Committee Webinar

**"Broadening Horizons: Empowering Young Scholars and Academics, and
New Directions of Research on Indentured Labour"**

9th and 10th August 2022

Venue: Mauritius Film Development Corporation (MFDC), Floréal, Republic of Mauritius

ZOOM LINKS

Time in Mauritius	Tuesday 09 August 2022
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**List of Participants in the 2nd IOC-ILRP Webinar entitled
'Broadening Horizons: Empowering Young Scholars & Academics & New Directions of Research on
Indentured Labour'**

(Submitted by Satyendra Peerthum, Acting Head TU/ILRP/IOC)

1. The 2nd Webinar of the Indian Ocean Committee will take place on Tuesday, 9th August 2022 and Wednesday, 10th August 2022 between 13.00hrs and 17.30 hrs. The co-conveners are Satyendra Peerthum, Acting Head of the Technical Unit and Historian at AGTF/Chairman/Coordinator of the Committee and Babita Devi Bahadoor, Research Assistant at AGTF and Acting Secretary of the ILRP and Secretary of the IOC.
 2. The key stakeholders of this project are the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, the Mauritius Film Development Corporation, the Department of the Languages and Cultural Studies of the Manipal University of Jaipur, the History Department of Benares Hindu University, the Indo-Caribbean Cultural Association, GOPIO, and Global Rainbow Foundation.
 3. It is being proposed for His Excellency Prithviraj Roopun, President of the Republic of Mauritius and ex-Minister of Culture to launch the webinar.
 4. Professor Maurits Hassankhan the Chairman of the ILRP will deliver the welcome address (Suriname)
 5. Rishiraj Kanhye, Chairman of AGTF, will also deliver his welcome address as AGTF is the main partner of the ILRP (Mauritius)
 6. Speech by Satyendra Peerthum, Chairman of IOC and Acting Head of TU of AGTF, on the 2nd Webinar and its speakers and tributes to Dr. S.Peerthum and Mansraj Ramphal of Trinidad
 7. Dr. Doug Munro, Emeritus Professor Queensland State University, will provide the keynote address for Day 1 which will include a tribute to Professor Brij Lal of Fiji
 8. Dr. Vijaya Teelock, Vice-Chairperson of the ILRP, will be chairing a session and concluding remarks/summing up for Day 1 (Mauritius)
 9. Mr. Chand Ramgoolam, Director of AGTF, will give his concluding remarks for the webinar and vote of thanks (Mauritius)
 10. Dr. Professor Chowdhary, Head of Dept at Manipal University Jaipur, will provide the keynote address for Day 2.
 11. Dr. Neha Singh, Assistant Professor of Manipal University of Jaipur, will present her paper, chair a session, and present the concluding remarks/summing up for Day 2 (India)
 12. Dr. Fazana Gounder of NZ/Fiji will be chairing a session, present a paper and represent the ILRP Pacific Committee
 13. Mr. Mukhesswur. Choonee, former Minister of Culture, former Ambassador, and Chairman of GOPIO and Girit Foundation, will also be intervening and speaking about the work of GOPIO and indentured labour
 14. Mr. Armoogum Parsuramen, former Secretary of the UNESCO Board, former Director at the World Bank, former Minister of Education and Chairman of the Global Rainbow Foundation, will also be intervening on the importance of UNESCO, world heritage sites, the ILRP, and on indentured labour and its global importance.
 15. Dr. Lormarsh Roopnaraine of Guyana/USA will present a paper and represent the ILRP Caribbean Committee
 16. Dr. Ashutosh Kumar of Benares Hindu University will present a paper and chair a session.
 17. Dr. Michele Marimoutou of La Reunion will present a paper and chair a session
- The following will only be presenting a paper only:*
18. Dr. Rabindra Kumar Varma of India
 19. Dr. Jaivardhan Singh Rathore
 20. Dr. Sushma Pandey
 21. Dr. Govindin Sully of La Reunion
 22. Mr. Satyendra Peerthum of Mauritius
 23. Ms. Babita Bahadoor of Mauritius
 24. Mrs. Kiran Jankee Chuttoo of Mauritius
 25. Professor Golam Vahed of South Africa
 26. Professor Kalpana Hiralal of South Africa

27. Dr. Selvan Naidoo of South Africa
28. Dr. Marek Ahnee of Mauritius
29. Dr. Jean Regis Ramsamy of La Reunion
30. Dr. Arvind Bissessur of Mauritius
31. Dr. Nalini Naidu of Fiji
32. Dr. Amita David and Dr. Archana Tiwari (joint paper)
33. Dr. Kumar Mahabhir of Trinidad
34. Dr. Amit Mishra of India

Issues:

- I. The venue has been booked and confirmed by the MFDC
- II. Intervention of President needs to be confirmed
- III. Keynote speakers and participants also confirmed
- IV. The programme is being prepared
- V. The abstracts are being received with 3 so far and call for abstracts already being sent out
- VI. Each participant will have only 10 mins
- VII. The launching of the 1st ioc webinar is still pending due to the lateness of submission by the participants.
- VIII. The zoom license is being acquired.