



THE EASTERN MOSAIC

150 YEAR

CELEBRATIONS 2010

Eastern Mosaic commemorates 150 Years since the first indentured Indian labourers arrived in South Africa

How does one do justice in recollecting, and honouring, the journey through one and a half centuries of an Indian community who has been viewed, for the greatest part of that period, as a minority and as insignificant to the country they've adopted as home – a country far removed from their motherland, and alien to their culture, religion and ways of life? How does one not only commemorate but also empower the memory of such a people, and address their unique contribution to such a country, in the most solicitous and worthy of terms?

Paying true homage to people of Indian origin's contribution towards South Africa can never be fulfilled in a just and complete manner – there are too many stories, individual legacies, and significant moments in this history that have either been repressed by past regimes, or that have gotten blurred in the desert landscape of emotional memory. And herein lies the challenge for any media that claim to have an earnest interest in such a people – and that claim to hold the greater attention of such a people. A wholehearted attempt needs to be made – and the story of Indians in South Africa, from inception to this day, needs to be told – albeit abbreviated, incomplete, and for a television show with a lifestyle, magazine format.

Over the last year and a half, Eastern Mosaic took on this challenge in a hands-on manner, and made it the show's goal to use the platform of television to address the story of indenture, the legacy of Indian settlement as accumulated throughout 150 years, and the unique contribution, past and present, of people of Indian origin to the country they've fought so hard to call home. For Eastern Mosaic it's been a journey of re-awakening the past, and in the process elucidating the hold that this past has on the current meaning of Indianness in the South African context. And lest the show's ambitions allowed itself to run away with the fascinating and distinctive subject matter it encountered, Eastern Mosaic fully understood that it's impossible to create a pan-Indian identity, or to precisely define Indianness. All it could do in the end was to celebrate a cultural diversity as vast and multilayered as that found in the motherland, and to offer the kind of colourful justice that only a tv show with an energetic heart can achieve.

This pilgrimage into the past sought to bring to all South Africans a number of vignettes providing a window into the story of Indians in South Africa, thereby recording some of the most significant themes in this history. Herewith a selection of but a few of these features that Eastern Mosaic created...

From Past to Present – a Journey of 150 Years

- **Indentured Labourers Ilembe**

A feature on the culturally and historically rich district of Ilembe – the region bears a special significance when it comes to indentured labourers of Indian origin who worked the tea and sugar plantations. The focus was twofold: 1) The history of the indentured labourers of the period 2) Sites of historical significance. The towns of Kearsney & Kwa-Dukuza featured central in this journey of discovery. We also visited the Hindu Temple at Tinley Manor and Cane Cutters resort.

- **Lunch with the Bodasing Family (and a return to Kwa-Dukuza)**

In our research of the KwaZulu Natal KwaDukuza region, we stumbled upon a family of Indian origin with roots that go all the way back to that period when indentured labourers arrived on the shores of Natal. Their family name is Bodasing, and in this region, it's quite well known that no

other Indian family has made as large a contribution to South Africa's Sugar Industry as they have. We had lunch with them.

- **Streets named after Struggle Heroes**

We paid tribute to three individuals who have become known as true heroes of the struggle against Apartheid... They might no longer be with us, but they will never be forgotten because Durban's City Council has even renamed streets in their honour – thereby ensuring that their names are forever etched onto the city landscape. The three are: Monty Naicker, Lenny Naidoo and Krish Rabibal.

- **Salisbury Island**

Little good came from all the evils of apartheid – and yet, in the authorities of the past's bid to maintain white supremacy, they unintentionally strengthened the bonds between people of Indian origin. They supplied the mortar so to speak. And places like Salisbury, as well as Robben Island for that matter, today serve as metaphorical sites of political struggle – as institutions where the cause of a democratic vision became magnified. Subsequently we took a journey down memory lane and paid a visit to Salisbury Island, the site which once hosted the University College for Indians. But we did not go alone: joining us were some of the students, lecturers and staff who formed part of Salisbury Island and its politically-turbulent history.

- **Men of Dynamite – Celebrating Our Heroes event**

The mere knowledge that there were individuals who fought for our freedom is never enough. We need to honour them, keep their legacy current, and impress on younger generations their undying value to this nation of ours. Eastern Mosaic attended an event held at Freedom Park in Pretoria, which paid tribute to the pioneers and the last generation of Umkhonto We Sizwe freedom fighters. Through this event, we also commemorated the 20th Anniversary of the deaths of Prakash Napier and Yusuf Akhalwaya...

- **Mohammed Essop Nagdee**

We spent some time with a gentleman (Baboo 'Dollie' Nagdee) whose grandfather was a good friend of both Mahatma Gandhi and Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the longest serving Prime Minister of India. Indeed, Mohamed Essop Nagdee has a unique history that stretches over a century – and it's up to us to ensure that it doesn't get lost by the wayside.

- **Arranged Marriages**

The idea of an arranged marriage might, for some, seem outdated when compared to modern day notions of what a marriage should be all about. Then again, there are many examples of couples who got married through an arrangement, couples who have experienced a wonderful life as partners in a bond which only grew from day one. We asked Manisha Dinna, a counselling Psychologist who did her Masters on the subject to join us and share some of the insights she gathered from her research. In compiling this feature we also paid a visit to two couples who have been married through arrangement for an amazing 60 and 53 years.

- **Zuleikha Mayat**

Many South Africans know her as the author of *Indian Delights*, but Zuleikha Mayat is also a founding member of the Women's Cultural Group and a living example of empowerment and support during and after apartheid. Eastern Mosaic visited her at home.

- **Mosie Moola**

Not enough has been documented on specific heroes of the struggle. And many of us remain unaware of certain individuals who played vital roles in our turbulent past. Eastern Mosaic spent some time with one such person, Mosie Moola, the youngest of the 156 activists in The Treason Trial of 1956 – 1961.

- **The Naidoos (Ramni, Shanti, Prema and Murthie)**

With the Naidoos Eastern Mosaic explored an extraordinary history – it's a family narrative, and it bears testimony of an existence totally dedicated to the struggle. Joining us were the sisters Ramni and Shanthie and the brothers Prema and Murthie Naidoo, and they talked to us about their family, and its century-long fight for justice in both South Africa and India.

- **Interview Ronnie Govender – 150 years (in 2 parts)**

In Eastern Mosaic's Ronnie Govender interview (done in two parts) we covered the periods of the 50's, 60's, 70's, and right up to the modern day. The ultimate focus was political/cultural/social, as well as on the arts, and on sport & recreation. With this feature we attempted to sketch the Indian identity as formed and influenced by South Africa's history of segregation and discrimination. We also asked the all-important questions: "How did they maintain cultural oneness and unity?" "How did this manifest itself in everyday life?" We looked for unique moments, examples, movements, endeavours, and activities spawned by the Indian community that's lost in the annals of history for the rest of South Africa.

- **Omar Badsha Exhibition**

The full recognition of the works of South African artists of Indian origin remains an unfinished task. And the exhibition 'Under the Umdoni Tree', held at the Durban Art Gallery, takes a step in the right direction in rewriting South Africa's art history. The artists in focus were Omar Badsha, and his father, the late Ebrahim Badsha.

- **Jameel Chand**

The three ANC comrades Jameel Chand, Yusuf Akhalwaya and Prakash Napier operated as the first and only Indian guerrilla cell in Johannesburg between 1987 and 1989. As comrades, it was well-known that the three shared a bond of true brotherly love. Testimony to this was when Jameel Chand eventually married Firhana Akhalwaya, the wife of the late Yusuf Akhalwaya who was killed in a tragic bombing accident. We paid Jameel a visit and chatted to him about that time when love and bravery helped shape South Africa's history as we know it today.

- **Legends of the Tides – the Real Fisherfolk**

The seinettors was a Durban fishing community that emerged in 1865. Theirs is a story that forms the substance of legend, and little has been done to preserve and document this unique history, as well as the way in which they pioneered the art of fishing. Recently that changed with a long awaited book titled *Legends of the Tides*, and Eastern Mosaic joined its author, Dr Neelan Govender as part of a feature on them.

- **Monty Naicker story (Part 1)**

Regarded by many as the greatest South African of Indian origin since Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Monty Naicker dedicated his life to the struggle, so that we can enjoy the fruits of our freedom today. In Part 1 of Eastern Mosaic's Monty Naicker feature we paid tribute to Monty Naicker the man, the activist, leader & hero...

- **Monty Naicker story (Part 2)**

In Part 2 Eastern Mosaic attended a very special event held at the Kendra Hall in Durban – the launch of the book *Monty Naicker: Between Reason and Treason* by Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed.

- **Dr T P Naidoo**

Dr TP Naidoo is a long-time Eastern Mosaic supporter, and one of our very best friends. To South Africans of Indian origin he is well-known for his outstanding commentary on Hinduism, and as a national icon, and champion of Indian culture in general, he has been honoured with many accolades. We paid him a visit at his home.

- **Ashwin Trikamjee interview – 1860 Legacy Foundation**

For people of Indian origin living in South Africa, this year represents momentous significance as we commemorate the 150th year since the first Indians arrived on our shores in 1860. In this regard, the 1860 Legacy Foundation is playing a central role, and we interviewed its Chairman Ashwin Trikamjee.

- **Papwa Sewgolum**

Golf's long and chequered history of racial discrimination bares many shameful moments in our country's sporting past. Consider the case of golfer Papwa 'Sensunker' Sewgolum – the reality is, if it wasn't for apartheid, South Africa could've had another world-beating golfer at the same time as Gary Player. We retraced our steps a bit and took a closer look at this golfing legend of Indian origin who was often referred to as a better golfer than the men for whom he caddied.

Eastern Mosaic's 150 Year Commemorative Community Project

For Eastern Mosaic the story of Indians in South Africa formed but one part of the show's 150 Year commemorations, as it was also decided to initiate a 26-week project – the goal of this project was to target underprivileged communities, schools that are situated in poor areas, the elderly and infirm, and those who generally are in need and surviving on the fringes of society. The show's message was clear: all South Africans, no matter what their race or culture, are as much a part of this significant year. Eastern Mosaic didn't embark on this initiative without assistance, and the largest disaster relief organization of African origin, Gift of the Givers, was approached to become its partner. Subsequently, there was a commitment to give no less than 150 items to the needy and in each of the 26 weeks. Thus far we've handed out tracksuits, shoes and socks, raincoats, blankets, fruit packs, food hampers that feed a family for a month, health and hygiene packs, cosmetic packs, educational toys, children's books, stationery packs – and that's just to name some of the items. When the final handout takes place in the 26th week the sum total of aid given will border on R1 000 000. Herewith a list of the recipients:

March:

Sandfield Primary

Mothers from the Malvern community on Mothers Day

Summerfield Primary

Bayview Community

April:

Fathers from the Malvern community on Fathers Day

Beacon Ridge Primary

Durban South Primary School

Westham Secondary School

iGugulethu Primary School

May:

Palmview Primary

June:

Ramuthar Primary

Esibonelo Sihle Creche

Cato Manor

Malakazi Care Centre

Swanvale Primary

Open Doors Shelter Part 1 – Pinetown

July:

Newlands East

KwaMashu Police Station

Durban Central homeless

August:

Crossmoor

Durban & surrounds homeless

Open Doors Shelter Part 2 – Pinetown

October:

Acacia Primary School

Umzinto families

Burnwood Secondary School

Westcliff families