

## Foreword

Memories, like dreams, having escaped from space and time, follow a chronology of significance to the heart. The remembering mind isolates events, enhances them, and removes inconsistencies that indicate a more human, less exalted existence. In these biographical stories, based largely on memories with their built-in filters, those more fascinating human elements may have been omitted.

As the act of recording requires authentication, it becomes necessary to return memories to specific historical, political, economic and social contexts in order to find congruence with actual happenings. In the process, wisps of memory, clues to forgotten events, take on substantial form when they connect with happenings described in little known written accounts. Such books and papers, no longer in circulation and gathering dust, suddenly assume new significance and personal collections become treasure troves.

I was lucky to find treasures that included the work of local Indian writers and, in particular, the work of PS Joshi. With their help and the help of other historians, I have infused symbolic truth with worldly reality in my attempts to recapture the spirit of the times.

My original intention was to write about the Cape Boys Location and Marabastad as well as the Asiatic Bazaar and to call my book "Memories of Marabastad," but people who once lived in the Cape Location and Marabastad are writing or have written about these places and as their accounts would be more authentic, I decided, to confine myself to the Asiatic Bazaar. Once I began my research, I realised that just this one location offers a range of human experience that goes far beyond my capacity to capture it all. This book, therefore, is only a small record of life in the Asiatic Bazaar.

Many more wonderful stories are still to be told.

The women and men whose stories appear in this collection, pass through our lives for the most part unknown and seemingly ordinary but they were involved in momentous struggles for human dignity and respect and some of them walked side by side with renowned figures such as Gandhi and Mandela. My immersion in the lives of these dozen or so individuals who lived in the Asiatic Bazaar, has given me insight into the indomitable spirit of a people who held fast to their self esteem, rose above degrading circumstances and prospered. Though their lives, greatly circumscribed by regulations and environment, focused on survival, the traditions that they brought with them from the mother country sustained them and helped them develop a close-knit, vibrant community

They lived in overcrowded conditions and though the congestion was a curse, it was also a blessing as it minimized barriers of religion, ethnicity, culture, caste and race. Close proximity in the yards that enclosed them, turned neighbours into families and dependence on entertainment outside the home brought them together at the sports grounds, in the bioscopes, the streets, the cafés and dance halls.

When they moved to Laudium, they lost the intimacy that engenders a strong community spirit and, with the blessing of apartheid, split up into ethnic and religious factions.

Muthal Naidoo

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