

Date : 22nd March 2018

Statement by President of the Plessislaer Arya Samaj, Mr Vijay H. Bundhoo.

Discussions were held between Miss V. Nardell of eThembeni Cultural Heritage Management and Mr Vijay Bundoo, at his home in Northdale. The full history of the Manaye Hall, formally known as the Samaj Hall in Plessislaer, has been provided to Byron Raman of Henwood & Khumalo. In summary, the Indian community residing in Plessislaer from 1900-1960 were responsible for the construction of the building now called the Manaye Hall, which provided this community with a much needed religious place to conduct their cultural and spiritual activities.

In 1942 two and a half acres of land was purchased by the Officials of the Samaj and continuing fundraising was conducted for several years to fund the construction of this important Hindu shrine - used during prayer meetings, religious functions and other community events. Construction was completed many years later, when the official opening ceremony of the Plessislaer Arya Smaj took place on Sunday May 14th 1950. The foundation stone was laid by the Late Mr. F. Satyapal and Mr Dasarath Bundhoo was given the honour of officially opening the Samaj Hall.

The Plessislaer Arya Samaj is recognised as a pioneer Hindu organisation and the organisation's roll in the impromptu hosting of the All-in-Africa Conference held at the Samaj Hall in Plessislaer is recognised as a significant step in the fight against apartheid in this region. On 25th March 1961 Nelson Mandela came to the Samaj Hall to request that the 1400 African delegates be given permission to utilise the Hall for a National Convention to create a new constitution for South Africa. The Honorable Secretary, Mr D. Bundhoo, had been hosting the RAM Navami celebrations at the hall on this day and Mr V. Bundoo was also present and able to assist with provision of benches from the local church. The Hindu community provided food and shelter for the delegates, many of whom slept in and around the hall with blankets and tarpaulines lent to them by the community. The Conference began at the Samaj Hall at 8pm on 25th March and was completed at 2pm on 26th March.

It is not clear why the Samaj Hall later became known as the Manaye Hall. Mr V. Bundhoo has attended meetings with Byron Raman of Henwood & Khumalo and I am told that agreements have been made to respect the original Hindu name and to ensure that the development is referred to as "The Plessislaer Arya Samaj" rather than the Manaye Hall - a name which has no bearing on the historical background of this place. This is the wish of the Hindu community responsible for the building and use of the Samaj Hall.

Mr V. Bundhoo has also discussed the matter of the front columns of the proposed development and I am told that Byron Raman of Henwood & Khumalo accepted Mr V. Bundhoo's request to remove the front columns, on account of their not being in keeping with the original structures. However, at this time I have not been able to discuss this matter with Byron Raman.

With the exception of the two points raised above, Mr V. Bundhoo confirmed that he was very happy with the development proposal, as it had been presented to him several months ago by Byron Raman.