Into that Heaven of Freedom: The impact of Apartheid on an Indian Family’s Diasporic History

a talk by
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Dr. Keshavjee, a member of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, and author of “Into that Heaven of Freedom: The impact of apartheid on an Indian family’s diasporic history,” on the untold story of the struggle for equality in South Africa that took up the greater part of the 20th century and in its wake produced two moral giants, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Discover how the Indian Muslim community contributed to Africa in the midst of their struggle for human rights. The book has a foreword by Ahmed Kathrada, the longest serving human rights prisoner alive today, who spent 26 years in prison with Nelson Mandela.

This book captures the history of the South African Ismaili families and some of the people among whom they lived from 1894, when the first Ismaili, Jeevan Keshavjee, left Kathiawar (Gujarat) and arrived in South Africa, up to 1994, when the country attained its multiparty democracy following the release of Nelson Mandela. It covers the growth of the greater family, and its dispersal first to Kenya, then to Canada, the UK, Portugal, the US, and elsewhere, and its many successes. It covers apartheid in South Africa and the family’s contributions to the struggles against it; the colonial and postcolonial periods during which the family flourished in Africa; and finally the diasporic reality in which we find ourselves today. With 60 historical photographs, a family tree, and a facsimile of Mahatma Gandhi’s letter to Velshi Keshavjee in 1938, this unique account is not only a multigenerational family history but also a history of the Asians of Africa over a hundred years. It’s an account of a legacy to bequeath to the generations to come.

Dr Mohamed M. Keshavjee is a graduate of Queen’s University, Canada and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. A lawyer by profession, he was called to the Bar at Gray’s Inn London and Osgoode Hall in Canada. He is a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada. He is also an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, where he practised law for some years.