

# The Development of Asian Language Education in Mauritius, with specific reference to Hindi: A Historical Perspective

Dr. Krishna Kumar Jha

Senior Lecturer & Head  
Department of Creative Writing & Publications  
Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka  
Mauritius

E-mail: [kkjha1026@gmail.com](mailto:kkjha1026@gmail.com) [M:+23057650253,-91-9953261842]

## About the Author

Dr Krishna Kumar Jha is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Creative Writing & Publications of Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius. Under his editorial, the Department is publishing 'Vasant' and Rimjhim, two quarterly literary magazines. As a former Head of Language Resource Centre at MGI, he had coordinated and launched Online Introductory Courses in Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Sanskrit, Modern Chinese and Bhojpuri. He is Coordinator of Secondary Hindi Curriculum of Ministry of Education of Mauritius. His key area of research is Mauritian Hindi literature, Second Language Teaching-learning and Mauritian Hindi Journalism. He is also associated with many socio-cultural organizations of Mauritius with the aim of promoting Hindi language and culture in Mauritius.

## Note in English

NA

## Abstract

The French Revolution of 1789 brought fundamental educational changes both in France and Ile de France. The local administrators and French elite class feared that should the dominated classes become literate their supremacy might be challenged. Therefore, once again, there was no educational planning until 1790, when the Colonial Assembly took charge of the colony (Cochin, 1936: p.127). Then, the National College was set up and a traditional curriculum - Mathematics, Drawing, Hydrology and Sciences - was adopted (Pritipaul, 1976: p.47). Unfortunately, due to financial constraints and political pressures, coupled with the outbreak of smallpox in 1793, the College had to be temporarily closed (Revue Historique, 25 January, 1891). In 1794, Moreau started a Day School, which was also closed only after one year - 1795.

Keywords-Education, Mauritius, Languages, History

## INTRODUCTION

It is a truism that Mauritius is a melting pot of cultures. Immigrants from Europe, Africa, India and China settled on this small island to forge a modus vivendi, whose roots have been continuously nourished by these four oldest civilisations. Each one has shared its rich cultural heritage to mould modern Mauritius, while still maintaining its distinct identity. In fact, Mauritians have perfectly known how to balance cultural diversity with national unity, and presently, the island brims with multiplicity in every sphere of life. The development of education, therefore, may be traced from the birth of this nation because its history began only some 350 years ago. Independent Mauritius owes many of its educational features to the schooling model developed during the French and British Colonial times.

## EDUCATION IN ILE DE FRANCE

The early years of the French Colonisation were significant in terms of educational development in Mauritius, which was then called Ile de France. Governor Mahé de Labourdonnais (1735-1746) first attempted social and administrative reforms, but the French East India Company did not support his reforms. Consequently, no educational development took place (Bunwaree, 1994; p.72). It was in 1767, when the island became a French Crown Colony that a locally available education became a subject of concern both to administrators and private citizens, who wanted to settle on the island. That was how colonial education started (ibid.p.72).

However, the first conspicuous signs of real interest in education appeared in 1789. Governor d'Entrecasteaux strongly recommended the creation of a school in the colony. Indeed, the first one - of Catholic bent - was under the order of St. Lazarre, where emphasis was laid on Bible Knowledge, that is, the Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ (ibid.p.72)

## EDUCATION AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The French Revolution of 1789 brought fundamental educational changes both in France and Ile de France. The local administrators and French elite class feared that should the dominated classes become literate their supremacy might be challenged. Therefore, once again, there was no educational planning until 1790, when the Colonial Assembly took charge of the colony (Cochin, 1936: p.127). Then, the National College was set up and a traditional curriculum - Mathematics, Drawing, Hydrology and Sciences - was adopted (Pritipaul, 1976: p.47). Unfortunately, due to financial constraints and political pressures, coupled with the outbreak of smallpox in 1793, the College had to be temporarily closed (Revue Historique, 25 January, 1891). In 1794, Moreau started a Day School, which was also closed only after one year - 1795.

Then, another attempt was made to set up a National College. Consequently, Dubreuil College was founded. As a private school, it was the first educational institution to receive a grant from the new Colonial

Assembly. Boyer started another college and it was conferred the title "Colonial College". In 1794, the Lakanal Plan had already recommended the setting up of "Ecole Centrale", which was established as the national institution for the elite. For this school to maintain its commanding position, the creation of other secondary schools was restricted. The only other secondary school that already existed was for the coloured children. Since the latter could not get access to "Ecole Centrale", the Assembly and the Commission of Public Instruction approved the establishment of a separate school. Thus, "Ecole Centrale" maintained its reputation until Napoleon came into power in France.

## EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM 1803 TO 1810

The Napoleon Era harbingered a new system of administration. Decaen was then appointed to govern Ile de France. "Ecole Centrale" was replaced by Lycée Ile de France and Reunion. The Lycée was a boarding school with the same bureaucratic and hierarchical structure as the Lycée de France. All the Classical and Scientific subjects taught by "Ecole Centrale" were maintained. Besides, Military Studies and Utilitarian Subjects were also added (Duvivier, 1891: p.484).

Since all secondary schools of that period were closed down, Lycée Ile de France became the sole institution to offer secondary education on the island. It is also claimed that General Decaen set up two Primary Schools for the coloured children and authorised the creation of two secondary schools for girls.

## EDUCATION DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD

In 1810, Mauritius became a British colony. From then onwards, there have been considerable significant changes in the Educational system of the Island. On 27th January 1813, Sir Robert Farquhar was appointed governor. He converted the Lycée into a British School. The Colonial Lycée was renamed "Royal College". Simultaneously, changes were made in the curriculum, where subjects like 'Hydrology' and 'Navigation' were included. In 1815, Reverend Jean Lebrun started a free primary school for the lower class of the society. In 1832, coloured students were admitted to the Royal College for the first time. However, the education imposed upon them by the

British was alien to their culture and religion. The process of Anglicising the Indians was deemed necessary by the British to disrupt the social solidarity and close relationships so evident in the Indian community. Governor Farquhar was convinced that education would promote colonial policies. He, therefore, entrusted missionary groups to carry out the education of Indians in Mauritius. By that time, the British had renamed Ile de France as 'Mauritius'.

#### MISSIONARY EDUCATION IN MAURITIUS

In 1840, major changes took place in the field of education. An ordinance was passed to waive all restrictions on the opening of schools. In the lapse of only one decade, the education system was completely anglicised and the curriculum was entirely re-modelled as per the British system. The Royal College had its first British Rector and two Masters of the same nationality. Due to a possible stoppage of the current parliamentary grant, the management of the Micro Schools passed on to the state.

By 1843, the Missionaries had already opened a number of schools. The Government, too, had set up five schools in Port-Louis and two in the North of the island. On the other hand, the 'Society for the Propagation of Gospel' had established two schools, the Micro Trust three, and the 'London Missionary Society' four. But, despite the existence the numerous schools, still, formal schooling remained inaccessible to a large section of the population.

During the eighties - 1880s - Dr Collier's efforts resulted into the opening of 'Loreto Schools' for the education of girls. Six Loreto Schools were opened under the guidance of Mother Looney. The Catholic system of education became more popular with the arrival of Pere Laval, the Apostle of the poor and the destitute. He easily won the admiration of the black population through his teachings of the masses, which were essentially moral and spiritual and therefore widely accepted. Besides, the success of the Catholic Authorities prompted the Anglican to respond to the needs of the changes in the demographic configuration of the country with the coming of the Indian Immigrants.

#### MAJOR PRE-INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL

#### DEVELOPMENT

In 1926, the first Indian was elected as a member of the parliament. Consequently, the White ruling class was not in a great hurry to provide education to the population at large. In fact, the state of education for the Indian and coloured population was summarised in a report by Dr Bateman, the first Director of Education in Mauritius and appointed in 1901. He stated as follows:

"Schools exist in Mauritius and cannot be closed. But, they were better closed to remain monuments of wasted money and useless energy, where children were looked after, perhaps kept out of mischief, but, certainly not in education."

In 1941, a major development took place in education. A.C. Ward was appointed as the new Director of Education. He started by carrying out an extensive survey and he recommended that the Oriental Languages taught in Primary Schools should be banned completely. Spontaneously, the Bissoondoyal brothers vehemently protested and contested the Ward Report. As a result, and in 1944, a new Education Act was passed, which brought numerous positive changes. The Education Report stated as follows: "It seems wrong that schools should ignore the available Indian Culture and regard, as no part of their basis was to introduce it into the schools".

In 1945, regulations were made concerning Teacher Training, Staffing, Examinations and English Scholarships. It harbingered the starting point in providing the Educational System an organised structure.

The election of 1948 gave a new impetus to educational reforms. The elected Indians made a clarion call for the provision of education to all Indian children. From 1950 to 1960, there was a rapid expansion of Primary education aiming at increasing the literacy rate. The Student Population did increase by a minimum of forty thousand pupils, as the Table below testifies: (Source : Mauritius Annual Report on Education 1950-1960)

The sum-total of the Primary School Pupils' Enrolment was computed by the figures collected from Government Primary Schools, Grant-Aided and Non-Aided Schools.

The policy of the Government was to ensure universal and compulsory education, "on the principle that a

literate and intelligent population is the best guarantee for future economic wisdom.” Consequently, “Education for All” became the cherished slogan for all local politicians.

The liberalisation of education had a profound effect that changed the regnant order. The pressure from the Indian politicians was too great for the British Colonial Government to ignore. The population explosion in conjunction with the demand for Universal Primary Education was a blow to the ruling class. The elected Indians were exercising pressure through the Labour Party for social and political changes. And, in spite of Meade’s warning on the consequences of Universal Primary Education, education did become accessible to almost every Indian child by the time of Independence.

#### ASIAN LANGUAGES IN THE MAURITIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

In 1835, slavery was abolished in Mauritius but immigration continued till 1920. During that period, many Indian immigrants came to the island. They were considered as ‘aliens’ on account of their Culture: languages, customs, clothes, foods, religions and idolatrous rituals, which were all dismissed as primitive. Consequently, many unjust laws were enacted and thrust upon them. However, to counteract those hardships, the Indian immigrants had brought with them their Scriptures, namely, the ‘Ramayana’, the ‘Bhagvad Gita’, the ‘Satyarth Prakash’, ‘The Hanuman Chalisa’, and the religious books of the Tamils, the Telugus and of many other faiths, too. These were their only support to overcome their trials and tribulations. They resisted, they persevered and they finally succeeded.

When Indian immigration started, the right to education was denied. But, gradually, the situation changed when Reverend Beaton showed sympathy towards the Immigrants by displaying interest in the labour value of the children. But, nothing much had been done.

In 1852, a grant of about £200 was made for the foundation of an experimental school for Indian children in an estate in the district of Savanne.

On 22 March 1854, Governor Higginson gave another push to Education. He proposed to the Catholic Church

Associations to establish a school in Port Louis for elementary education to be dispensed in English and Tamil Languages, as well as for the training of prospective teachers to be employed afterwards in the schools.

Soon, Higginson developed another staunch belief. Backed by experience, he claimed that if Indian children were taught by Indian masters in their own mother tongues, the rate of success would be far greater than if it were otherwise. Consequently, a probationary school was opened in Savanne. Two were opened in Port Louis, “one for children from Madras, taught in Tamil language and the other for children from Calcutta, to be taught in the Hindu Dialect”. Higginson also envisaged importing native-speaking teachers from India and establishing a Training School in Port Louis for the training of Indian teachers.

By 1864, six Indian Schools were fully functional and some 1200 children of the immigrants were getting regular instruction.

However, by 1870, the progress had considerably slackened. Some schools had to be closed because of epidemics and limited funds were devoted to Indian education. The Annual Report on Education for 1870 in government schools reiterated the fact that very little had been done in the field of Indian Education. It stated as follows: “As yet, for the Indian population, estate schools will, it is to be feared, ever be a failure, until the law steps in and renders attendance for children at school, at least for a few hours of the day, obligatory.”

#### INDIAN VERNACULAR SCHOOLS

In 1876, Sir Arthur Phayre urged the Education Committee to set up a number of Vernacular Schools of a simple type for estate children. He wished that Indian children learn their own language, and maintained that learning English Language would be a waste of time for them and a waste of money for the Government. In fact, Indian Children would never have the opportunity to use English and their Mother Tongue will be a great asset to them. So, the entire credit of Vernacular Education goes solely to Sir Arthur Phayre.

1871 dawned the concept of Vernacular Education. Between June and November of the same year, four schools had already started dispensing this type of

education in Grand Port. Reverend William Wright, the Supervising Officer of Vernacular Schools, hoped to expand and extend the scheme to other beneficiaries. The number of schools was increased to five, but the Education Department disliked this development. Thus, they diplomatically advised that "Schools should not be suddenly broken up, but gradually amalgamated or absorbed or transformed with tact and discretion; and with due regard to the feelings and prejudices of those concerned."

In 1878, although around 3023 Indian pupils were being educated, Indian Education was still in its embryonic stage in Mauritius. At time, there was a total absence of religious instructions to Hindu and Muslim children. However, some form of coaching in 'baithkas' or Community Centres in their vernacular were always guaranteed, though it was done in a haphazard way.

#### ANGLO-VERNACULAR SCHOOLS

By 1880, some schools had been established to provide French Language to Creole children and Indian language/languages to Indian children. By that time, the number of Indian pupils receiving elementary education had increased. However, at the beginning of 1882, these schools were taken over by the Education Department of the Government. They came to be known Anglo-Vernacular Schools since English was added to their Curriculum. All these schools were situated in the Grand Port District.

In 1857, 'Hindustani' was taught at the Royal College. A note from planters and the contemporary Commercial Gazette testified that the then Rector and the teacher of 'Hindustani' were not on the same wavelength. The Gazette reported that "the Rector and Mr Taleb Hussein, Professor of 'Hindustani' are at variance. The latter has asked the Government to abrogate his contract and to pay his passage back to India."

So, the hope for any advance in Indian education was diminishing further and further. Consequently, some people again suggested that some form of state legislation, coupled with a 'Compulsory Attendance Act' were vital to ensure that Indian Children benefit from a few hours of schooling daily.

#### IMPACT OF MAHATMA GANDHI AND MANILALL DOCTOR ON MAURITIUS

In 1901, Mahatma Gandhi came to Mauritius and stayed for few days. He was dejected on seeing the conditions of Indians here. He had several meetings with these people at Taher Bagh, in Port Louis and other places across the island. He inspired them a lot and encouraged them to improve their condition by sending their children to school and showing greater interest in the political affairs of the island. After returning to India, Mahatma Gandhi convinced barrister Manilall Doctor to go to Mauritius for the general welfare of Indian community.

In 1907, Manilall doctor came to Mauritius and stayed up to 1911. During his stay, he emphasised on education through his newspaper "Hindustani", published in 1909. It was the first Hindi newspaper in Mauritius. Through it, he also exposed the cruelty and the stark discrimination of the colonial powers, thus making the Indians conscious about their religion, culture, languages and rights. His influences brought drastic changes in the education sector in Mauritius.

By 1908, education was further liberalised. Indeed, several attempts had been made to provide half time school to the Indian children. The instruction focussed on the obligatory subjects of ordinary schools up to Standard IV. The schools were normally situated in the vicinity of Sugar Estates, Indian Camps and villages. Besides, a Labour Act was enacted in the year which raised the age from 10 to 13 years at which minor might enter into a written contract. With this provision, the establishment of more schools and the improved economic condition of the Indians, the way was paved for the future advance in Indian education. (Annual Report on Education in Mauritius)

#### HINDI BOOKS TO REINFORCE HINDI EDUCATION IN PRE-INDEPENDENT MAURITIUS

In 1912, Chiranjeev Bhardwaj replaced Manilall Doctor in Mauritius. Besides being a medical practitioner, he was a genius of Sanskrit and Hindi. He contributed immensely to propagate the Hindu Religion, Culture and language throughout the island. He left Mauritius after four years of loyal service.

In 1916, Pandit Atmaram came to Mauritius. Although

his mother tongue was Marathi, he wrote history of Mauritius in Hindi, first historical Hindi book in Mauritius. He helped in disseminating Hindi throughout the island. In his book entitled 'Hindi in Mauritius', Mr Somduth Buckhory wrote: "People who considered themselves educated on the strength of their knowledge of English and French, felt for the first time, that their education was incomplete without a knowledge of the Mother tongue." Acknowledging the phenomenal work done by Pandit Atmaram, he added: "He is such a scholar that it is no exaggeration to say that it will take Mauritius generations before producing another one like him." (Hindi in Mauritius, Pp 45-46)

Pandit Atmaram breathed his last breath on the Mauritian soil. He contributed a lot through his Hindi publications, namely, 'Hindu in Mauritius' (1921) and 'History of Mauritius' (1923).

From 1923 onwards, a series of Hindi books were published. Pandit Lakshminarayan Raspuj published 'Raspuj Kundaliyan' (1923) and 'Shatabdi Saroj' (1935). Pandit Kashinath Kistoe published 'Shishu Bodh', Parts I, II, III (1935) for students studying Hindi. Dr Jagatguru Shiv Govind published 'Swastya Shiksha' (1935), the first magazine for children. From 1943 to 1944, Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal published 'Laghu Vyakaran', 'Vyavhar Prakash', 'Saboor Raja' - short stories - for school children and 'Adyapak Sahchar' - selected writings of Basdeo Bissoondoyal, Vol I - for teachers. Professor Ramprakash published several books for the teaching of Hindi at primary level (1958). In 1959, Part II of Professor Ramprakash's books were published and taught up to Standard VI. (Second World Hindi Conference, Smarika 1976, pp 39-40).

#### INSTITUTIONS PROMOTING HINDI IN THE MAURITIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

In 1903, Messrs. Khemlall Guru Prasad Daljitlall and Rajmohan Gopaljee, amongst others, proposed the foundation of the Arya Samaj. In 1910, it was established in Port Louis. Then onwards, for almost three decades - 1910 to 1937 - many institutions were established to promote Hindi Language and Indian Culture. In 1911, 'Mauritius Arya Patrika' was published by the Arya Samaj. Besides, public examinations in Hindi started to be organised, too. For

the first time, the following examinations were organised by the same Socio-Cultural Organisation: 'Parichay' (1956), 'Madhyama' (1963) and 'Uttama' (1966).

In 1920, the 'Arya Pratinidhi Sabha' and the 'Geeta Mandali' were set. Their primary objective was the enhanced spiritual development of their devotees. They started an indepth study of the 'Bhagavad Gita'. Specific verses were selected, read and explained in details with their relevance in the devotees' daily life. Simultaneously, examinations were held in Hindi related to the parts already covered.

In 1925, the 'Hindu Maha Sabha' was founded. This institution, too, furthered the teachings of the 'Gita', while adding verses from the Ramayana. It conducted its own examinations.

In 1926, 'Tilak Maha Vidyalaya' was founded in Montagne Longue. Afterwards, it was renamed the 'Hindi Pracharini Sabha' and was registered in 1935. At that time, 'Durga', a hand-written newspaper was published by Surya Prasad Mungur Bhagat. In 1963, the 'Hindi Sahitya Sammelan' Examinations were held for the first time in Mauritius by the Hindi Pracharini Sabha.

In 1930, the 'Arya Ravived Pracharini Sabha' was founded. From 1973, it started organising examinations ranging from 'Hindi Ratna' to 'Acharya' Level. These were done in association with the 'Vardha Institute' of India.

On 12 December 1961, the 'Mauritius Lekhak Sangh' was founded. This Organisation gave another boost to the reading and writing of Hindi. Annual Competitions were organised in Essay Writing, Poetry Writing etc. in Hindi. In 1965, this Association started publishing 'Bal Sakha', a fortnightly magazine for children.

In 1963, Somduth Buckhory established the 'Hindi Parishad' in Port Louis. In 1969, 'Anurag', a quarterly magazine of this Parishad, was published for the first time.

All these institutions emerged with the aim of propagating and strengthening Hindi in Mauritius. Many of them are still contributing in their own way towards this noble objective.

#### STRENGTHENING INDIAN EDUCATION IN MAURITIUS: LANDMARKS

In 1935, the Centenary celebration of Indian immigrants in Mauritius by the Hindi Pracharini Sabha, helped in uniting the Indian community. They became more conscious of their rights.

In 1941, Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal organised the first 'Exhibition of Hindi Books' in Port Louis. He was assisted by the Hindi Pracharini Sabha in this endeavour. This familiarised the Indians further with Hindi books and sensitised them again about the importance of Hindi Language in the society in general and in their homes in particular. During the same year, Professor Bissoondoyal protested energetically against the Ward Commission, which prescribed the ban of Hindi Language. It resulted in the continued teaching of Hindi in the Primary Schools.

In 1943, Professor Basdeo Bissoondoyal organised the 'Jan Andolan'. It gathered more than 60,000 Indians from the different ethnic groups, who participated in a 'Mahayaj' in Port Louis. This gathering, the first of its kind, left a great impact on the History of Mauritius. The Indians in Mauritius laid the foundation for the independence of the island.

In 1947, the Bissoondoyal Brothers started another movement. It aimed at giving another boost in education. It collected thousands of signatures which resulted in the opening of 300 'baithkas' – Community Schools. The Movement trained 800 voluntary teachers enabling people of Indian origin to sign so as to get voting rights. In 1948, the New Constitution was amended and the Indian community got its right to vote.

In 1949, Professor Ramprakash came to Mauritius. His mission was to develop a strategy to teach Hindi for at least an hour daily in all primary schools. Accordingly, arrangements were made for the use of textbooks. He also started a 'Teacher's Training College' at Beau-Bassin. From 1951 to 1953, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam was the liaison officer in the Ministry of Education. He made every possible effort to uplift Asian Languages in the society.

### THE MEDIA AND HINDI

The media contributed immensely to disseminate Hindi to a greater extent. A series of One Act Plays were written, theatrical performances were given, newspaper articles were written, Radio Programmes and

Television Shows were organised, all focussing on Hindi.

In 1924, the Triolet Drama Club staged 'Harishchandra', 'Surdas', and 'Savitri-Satyawan'. These plays harbingered the popularity of 'One Act Play' in Hindi in Mauritius. The Pamplémousses Drama Club staged Hindi dramas, namely, 'Leelavati', 'Prem ki Duniya', 'Sharif-Dakoo', amongst others. The Riviere-du-Rempart Drama Group performed 'Feroz Gulnar', 'Chandrawali', and 'Alibaba'. All the performances were very popular among the spectators.

In 1952, Abhimanyu Unnuth founded the 'Ajanta Arts Group'. This drama group staged 'Parivartan' and several other plays. In December of the same year, the Hindi Lekhak Sangh organised a 'Drama Competition'. 'Shararati Bahen' was played by the Goodlands Kala Niketan, 'Parinaam' was performed by the Bon Accueil Ramkrishna Sangh, 'Radha' staged by the Triolet Prabhat Sangh and 'Shikari' was played by the Babu Yuvak Sangh.

The Teacher Training College performed 'Bansuriwala', (1949), 'Kalanka Ki Rekha' and 'Gadha' (1964).

In 1971, the Hindi Parishad staged 'Bebaat Ki Baat' at the Port Louis theatre. Arnova Circle of Port Louis played 'Dhruvswamini' written by Jayshankar Prasad, famous Hindi poet and dramatist.

In 1976, the Mauritius Kala Kendra organised a Drama Competition. On that occasion, 'Kavitingu' of Abhimanyu Unnuth was presented.

On 20th September 1973, the National Drama Competition in Hindi was organised for the first time by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Many highly motivated youngsters were inspired to take part in the competition. The Hindi Language acquired a greater importance as the drama competition was organised at a National level.

In 1909, Manilall Doctor published the 'Hindustani Patrika'. This bilingual newspaper was published in Hindi and English.

In 1911, 'Mauritius Arya Patrika' was published by the Arya Samaj.

Between 1912 and 1940, many newspapers were published. The Oriental Gadget, Mauritius Mittra, Indian Times, Sanatan Dharmak, Jagriti were some of them.

After 1940, 'Aryodaye' was another publication of the

Arya Samaj.

From 1948, Professor Bissoondoyal reinforced further the status of Hindi. 'Zamana', 'Janta', etc. News Paper played a great role in promoting Hindi language and culture, and in raising the political consciousness of Indians in Mauritius.

In 1941, a Radio Station was established at Rose-Hill. From that time, late Pandit Sewshankar, Govind Ritu, Pandit Ramlagan Sharma, amongst others, started programmes in Hindustani. When Geerjanand Umashankar was appointed as the Officer-in-Charge of the Hindustani Section, Hindi songs and other programmes in Hindi were regularly broadcast.

In 1964, with the introduction of television, a daily half-an-hour programme was broadcast in Hindi.

In 1970, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute was founded for the promotion of Asian Languages. In 1976, 1993 and 2018 the World Hindi Conference was held in Mauritius. These conferences gave a remarkable internal impact for the establishment and promotion of the Hindi Language in the country as a whole.

#### PRE-INDEPENDENT OFFICIAL SITUATION OF HINDI

1880. As early as this year, discussions had already started on the teaching of Hindi. According to a published Report, the Indian immigrants desired that along with the English language, their children should be taught their own languages. In 1908, the Stevenson Commission Report emphasized on the teaching of Indian Languages.

In 1924, Kunwar Maharaj Singh arrived in Mauritius from India. He investigated about the conditions of the Indians. In his report, he mentioned that Indian Languages were taught in only one school or two. During his short stay, he stressed that those languages should be taught in many more schools. In fact, the teaching did start in several schools, but it was dispensed in a haphazard way.

In 1934, the Hindi Language was officially taught many Primary schools. In the lapse of only one year, Hindi was already being taught in almost 48 schools. On 15th March 1954, daily Hindi Language teaching started in Primary schools. However, in 1965, out of 157 Government Primary Schools, only 102 were teaching the language with a staff of 118 Hindi teachers for a population 45,206 pupils ranging from

Standards I to VI. In 1948, a special Commission was set up which proposed that Asian Languages teachers should be trained.

Consequently, the Indians made independent efforts to provide themselves with some form of vernacular education. It demarcated itself from the concept of the western education proposed in the schools. The education was imparted in socio-religious associations called 'Baithkas' and 'Madrassas'. In the course of time, the vernacular schools became a complement to Government Schools, rather than being an alternative. Besides, the Independence of India and the emergence of pride among the Indians in general, resulted in an increase in and a better organisation of Vernacular Schools in Mauritius. A greater interest was manifested in the teaching of Indian Languages in conjunction with the growing clamour for a more effective teaching of Indian Language in the Primary Schools. Thus, the first quarter of the 20th Century dates the beginning of the advance made in the teaching of Asian Languages in Mauritius.

#### THE PRESENT STATUS OF HINDI

After the Independence of Mauritius, the Hindi Language has had to overcome many obstacles to have the same prestige owned by any other language in its Education System. The journey from 1968 to 2004 has not been easy. Many educational development plans were contrived, namely, the 1971-1975 National Plan, the 1988-1990 Development Plan and the 1991 Master Plan. But, in none of them the Hindi Language was given any importance.

In 2004, Satyadeo Tengur, syndicate of Primary Educator started a determined struggle for the official recognition of the Hindi Language in Mauritius. It harbingered a new era for Hindi as it acquired the same importance as any other language taught in the country. The situation was metamorphosed. The UNO, too, gave 'Hindi' the status of an International Language. The GOPIO – Global Organization People of Indian Origin was founded and Worldwide Conferences with the motto "Uplifting the Indian Diaspora" were regularly organised.

In the early stages of the Mauritian history, the native Hindus developed the educational institution called the 'Baithkas'. Even nowadays, 'Baithkas' continue to

thrive in many areas of the country and are continuously disseminating 'Hindi' to students of different age-groups, while also providing education in Hindi Literature and Indian Culture in general. Today, more formal instructions are available in Hindi in official schools in Mauritius. Still, the students' enthusiasm and gusto in 'Baithkas' have not slackened. The approach to the study of Hindi has accordingly evolved, and, presently, 'Performing Arts' - 'Singing' and 'Playing of Musical Instruments' - is an integral part of the Curriculum.

The enlarged role of 'Baithkas' evidences that the status of Hindi in Mauritius is an integral part of Hindu Social and Religious Institutions. At every step, Hindus are keenly aware that the survival of their cultural tradition as an enrichment of Mauritian life as a whole, depends upon the vitality of Hindi as the literary vehicle of that tradition. It is, therefore, no accident that a considerable part of Hindi Education in Mauritius is done under the auspices of Cultural Organisations.

At this juncture, the endeavours of the Arya Sabha (Mauritius) should be foregrounded. This Organisation is staunchly devoted to the ceaseless dissemination of Hindi throughout the island. It has been an undisputed leading force in the setting up of courses in standard Hindi for pupils and students throughout the century.

The Hindi Pracharini Sabha (Mauritius) is another leading Organisation. It was initially named 'Tilak Vidhyalaya' and was set up in Montagne Longue in 1926 to be a centre for the systematic teaching of Standard Hindi. Since then and to date, it is successfully spreading Hindi Education by organising and co-ordinating International Examinations in Hindi for students of 'Parichay, Prathama, Madhyama and Uttama'. It is also very active in organising Exhibitions of Hindi books and attracting the affiliation of Primary School Hindi Courses.

The Baithkas are run by the Arya Sabha, Hindi pracharini Sabha, Sanatan Dharma Temples Federation and Hindu Maha Sabha under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Around 900 teachers are involved in this endeavour.

Number of registered Baithkas as at 2022:

Zone 1 - 85

Zone 2 - 115

Zone 3 - 110

Zone 4 - 45

Total = 355

(Sources: Ministry of Education and Scientific Research)

Nowadays, Hindi is being taught in all Mauritian Government Primary and Secondary Schools. The 298 Primary Schools in Mauritius and Rodrigues offer Hindi Language up to CPE Level. (Source: MES)

Both Public and Private Secondary Schools offer Hindi in Public Examinations. There are as under:

around 60 State Secondary Schools

around 70 Private Secondary Schools under PSEA

5 Mahatma Gandhi Secondary Schools

1 Rabindranath Tagore Secondary School

1 Secondary Schools in Rodrigues

It is noteworthy that new subjects have been introduced in the school Curriculum. Some examples are 'Sociology', 'Design and Technology', and ICT amongst others. They are supposed to conform to the job requirements of modern Mauritius. Still, a considerable number of students continue to offer Hindi in Public Examinations and its present situation in our schools and colleges is more than satisfactory.

There were other major developments in the teaching of Hindi in the Island. But, the most encouraging one of its history was the agreement reached, in 1969, between the Rt. Honourable Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius and the Government of India. It stipulated, amongst others, to set up an institution for the further development of Asian languages in the country. Consequently, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) was formally founded in 1970 and sited at Moka, close to the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Institute of Education.

Presently, the MGI has several Schools. School of Indian Studies focus essentially on the teaching of Asian Languages. This Institute, in collaboration with the University of Mauritius, is the only one to provide undertake Under-graduate, Post-graduate and Research Studies in Hindi and other Asian Languages. Since 2007, the World Hindi Secretariat is also very active in the promotion of Hindi in Mauritius.

Another noteworthy aspect is the gradual increase in the number of Hindi writers. The pioneers are Abhimanu Unnuth, Ramdev Dhurundher, Indradev

Bholah, Dhanraj Shambhu, Dr Veersen Jugasingh, Dr Hemraj Soondar, Raj Heeramun and many others. The list is really very long. Works have been produced in all literary genre, namely, Plays, Novels, Short Stories, Poems and Essays. Their writings are now considered as References and they have become the role models of the younger generation of Hindi Writers.

Another laudable effort was done to enhance and upgrade Asian Languages in Mauritius. The Ministry of Arts and Culture started to organise the National Drama Competition. Many College students evidenced great enthusiasm and participated massively in the competition. This Ministry made the Competition a yearly feature and in it is still being organised with greater enthusiasm all Asian languages.

Additionally, Asian Languages started to be taught at the Tertiary Level, too. The Mauritius Institute of Education and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute started Teacher Training Programmes for primary and Secondary Educators. 'BEd Online' and the 'Post Graduate Certificate in Education' Programmes are being run in the Asian Languages with the view to educate teachers further in their teaching pedagogy. On the other hand, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute is also responsible for the preparation of both the Primary and Secondary National School Curriculum and Multimedia Materials for Asian languages.

Publications in Asian Languages is yet another boost. Today more than ever, many Organisations like The Arya Sabha, the Hindi Pracharini Sabha, the Hindi Lekhak Sangh, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, the Indradhanush Sanskritic Parishad and the Hindi Speaking Union are regularly publishing News Letters, Magazines and Journals, namely, 'Aryoday', 'Pankaj', 'Baal Sakha', 'Vasant', 'Rimjhim', 'Indradhanush', 'Suman' and others. On top of these, many literary competitions are organised by these organisations during which pupils and students of various schools and colleges get supplementary opportunities to display their linguistic talents. Apart from these, many attempts were also made to set up a daily newspaper in Hindi in Mauritius. In 2002, 'Jan Vaanee', a Weekly, was published, but its lifespan was short.

There is one area in the Mauritian life, where Hindi exercises a massive impact. It is indisputably the Hindi cinema. Current Indian films in standard Hindi are very widely screened nation-wide and they attract large

crowds in cities and villages alike. Besides, Hindi films and serials from India are shown daily on television channels of both public and private Audio-Visual Centres. Surprisingly enough, they provide entertainment even to those who do not understand the language. Over and above, daily interesting and informative Hindi programmes are broadcast. Consequently, television, radio and particularly the cinema are all powerful agents for increasing and sustaining the influence of Hindi in Mauritius. Hindi films attract such a wide paraphernalia of viewers that the popular Hindi songs are translated, transliterated and printed in some French-speaking newspapers of Mauritius.

#### HINDI AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: AN ANALYSIS

One of the basic aims of Education is to inculcate the right attitudes to the youngsters. It is only then that they will be able to play an effective role in the life of the nation. The Hindi Language, being an integral part of the Department of Humanities, represents a body of knowledge which influences and acts as a catalyst to crystallise an individual's philosophy about life. The study of Hindi lay a solid foundation for the social, cultural and ethical values which are vital for good citizenship. It also helps to broaden and deepen the learner's knowledge and understanding of his physical and social environments. In Mauritius, the Hindi books for the Primary and Secondary Levels are prepared by the MGI, with the help of Ministry of Education and PSEA.

Hindi is taught as a Second Language in the Mauritian schools. The Primary School Curriculum is as follows:

##### Standard I

Pronunciation of some Letters of the Alphabet

Learning of Words through pictures

Learning of Short Sentences through pictures

Colouring, Matching and a little of Drawing

##### Standard II

Pronunciation of all Letters of the Alphabet

Short paragraphs on specific topics for Reading

Formation of Words, Short Poems and a few Songs

Colouring, Matching and very little of Drawing

Standard III

Twenty-five Lessons

Short passages and some Poems

Grammar

Reinforcement work on Alphabet (completed in Standards I & II)

The work-load is gradually increased from Standard IV onwards, with the addition of lengthier passages and Grammatical Exercises.

Standard IV

Short Comprehension passages and questions

Grammar Exercises (with increased level of difficulty)

Poems

Word and Sentence Building

Standard V

Lengthier Comprehension passages and Higher-Order Questions

Grammar exercises

Poems

Word and Sentence Building

Cloze Test

Standard VI

Passages based on different topics

Grammar Work

Cloze Test

Picture Composition

An analysis of the Primary School Hindi Curriculum evinces that there is lack of creative self-expression among learners. Young learners create symbols and develop images according to their age and norms. The process of creative self-expression is, first and foremost, a sensuous experience. Therefore, the Hindi syllabus should include more drawings. Instead of discovering words through the pictures - (Standards I-III) – learners should be given opportunities to understand words, through their own drawings. This method fosters maturity, self-confidence, self-esteem, analytical thinking, appreciation and respect for the environment. Dramas and One-Act plays are not included. These help in the holistic development involving cognition, aesthetic and expressive skills.

Hindi learners do have a strong inclination towards culture. Therefore, verses from any Hindi Scripture or Moral Short Stories based on religious beliefs, should be gradually introduced according to their respective levels, aiming to instil the right attitudes relevant to the training and development of social obligations and responsibilities.

The Secondary School Hindi Syllabus also has some shortcomings. It is too examination-oriented. Thus, the emotional and psychological aspects, though visible in the curriculum, is far from being a concern in the classroom. Here, also, learning is focused essentially on the memorisation of events, names and facts, simply for the scoring high marks in the examinations. There is no emphasis on the creative and aesthetic aspects of education.

Hindi helps to shape beliefs and moral values. Before 2018 Hindi Syllabus for Lower Secondary seem to be Xerox copies for the last two decades. There are very few passages enabling students to reflect on the various instances of life. The content of some passages are even obsolete and insipid. When read, analysed, interpreted and explained, they hardly reflect the realities of modern society. Moreover, the passages are lengthy and burdensome for students to read and understand. These passages perpetuate the traditional classroom with clichés like: “Do your own work!”, “Don’t disturb anyone!” etc. they do not reflect teaching of the Technological Age, when individualised instruction was already a trend in the Sixties. This is one of the main reasons why some Private Colleges are unsatisfied with these text books and opt for alternatives.

In the Forms IV and V Syllabus there are Two Papers. Paper 1 focusses on Essay Writing, Dialogue Writing, Report and Speech Writing, while Paper 2 emphasises on Translation and Comprehension Exercise. This syllabus was introduced in the 80’s. the only noticeable change is the introduction of Speech and Report Writing done in the year 2000.

This syllabus is not pertinent to modern students. They do not shape their individual personalities to gain identity among their equals and in the society. A syllabus should enable students to discover, develop and further their special abilities in all areas of learning. The modern Hindi syllabus should include more opportunities for increased interactions and group

work, namely. Drama, Debates, Project Work, amongst others, are some activities which foster co-operation and collaboration as these have been acknowledged as variable tools in all areas of human experience. Moreover, added audio-visual programmes should be used in Teaching and Learning. They are thought-provoking and students discover by themselves and for themselves how to be creative citizens.

The Higher School Examinations syllabus is as under:

Paper 2 - Reading and Writing (Comprehension Exercise)

Paper 3 - Essay Writing

Paper 4 - Poetry, Novel, Story (Indian writers)

Paper 5 - Translation.

The H.S.C. Hindi syllabus discloses that the majority of text-books are from India writers: Poetry (Modern and Medieval), Téis Hindi Kahaniyan, and Novel. These text-books are, indeed, very interesting. But, it would also be good, if not better, if our Curriculum Designers include more texts-books of Mauritian writers. Their literary works are very rich and profound, besides being very conversant and relevant to our students. They will have a clearer and deeper insight of the Mauritian society: its philosophy, politics, economics and general welfare. The acquired ideas, concepts and skills will ease their adaptation to changing socio-economic and political realities of the country. The learners will, in turn, make positive contributions in the further development of the society. They will develop self-reliance, familial-belonging, national solidarity and international welfare.

The New Hindi Curriculum for Primary and Secondary although provides fully for the educational objectives such as fostering national unity, providing knowledge, skills and expertise for collective solidarity and character formation for individual talents personalities. But it will take some time to adapt with the new curriculum for both teachers and students in Mauritius. In sum, the present situation clearly displays unprecedented changes and pressures. Life appears to be more and more difficult and is likely to intensify further. The problems are rife particularly within the family circle, which is being constantly sieged by scourges like the drug-addiction, suicide, rapes, crimes of different orders and various magnitudes. Therefore, our capacity to survive depends on our capacity to

work imaginatively and creatively. We will continue to face issues that even the best planning cannot predict. Hence, each new generation should learn to live with unforeseen circumstances and accept them as inevitable. The best that educationists at large can do is to equip the youngsters comprehensively.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY & REFERENCES

- Alladin - Economic Miracle in the Indian Ocean, EOI - 1993  
 Brajnath Madhab Bajpayee-Pandit Bissoondoyal Jeewan Aur Krittwa, Chanakya Press Patna -1967  
 Somduth Bhukory-Ek Mauritius Vasi Ki Hindi Yatra, Sasta Sahitya Mandal Prakashan, Delhi - 1984.  
 Somduth Bhukory-Hindi in Mauritius, The Royal Printing, 10 Arsenal Street, Port Louis Mauritius - 1968  
 Bissoondoyal S. - Concise History of Mauritius, Bharatya Vidya Bhawan Bombay - 1995.  
 Bunwaree S. S. - Mauritian Education in a global Economy EOI Pub -1994.  
 Mooneshwarlall Chintamunee - Hindi Ke Adhar Stambha, Published by Mauritius Hindi Lekhak Sandh -1976.  
 Gian Dhunookchand-Indian Culture in Mauritius of Perspective Unix Printing Ltd Mauritius - 1998.  
 Duvivier A. - Revue Historique et Littéraire de l'Ile Maurice - 1841  
 Goordyal B.R. - The Historical Basis of Mauritian Education, Mauritius - 1969  
 Hazareesing K. - Mauritius Ke Bhartiyan Ka Itihas, MGI Moka - 1976  
 Jha J.C. - Indentured Indian Migration (1835-1917), Reprinted from Journal of Indian History vol XIV, part II no. 145 - Aug 1970  
 Juggernaut S. - Education and Development in Mauritius. An International Perspective.  
 Mohunlall Mohit - Arya Sabha Mauritius Ka Itihas Printing House, Ajmer-1973  
 Dharmendra Prasad - Hindi Mahasagar ka Moti - Pustakagar Publisher Delhi-1993  
 Prithipaul M.D. - History of Education in Mauritius (1735-1889) Imprimerie Idéal-1976  
 Ganga Ram G. - Mauritius Vigat Ardh Shatika Itihas Hindi Book Centre Delhi -1979  
 Ramdoyal, R D - The development of Education in Mauritius (1771-1976) MIE Publisher -1977  
 Roy Jaynarayan - Mauritius Mein Hindi Bhasha ka Sanshipt Itihas - Hindi Pracharini Sabha Mauritius - 1970  
 Kailash Kumari Sahay - Pravasi Bhartiyan Ki Hindi Seva, Aliram Publication Delhi - 1994  
 August Toussaint - History of Mauritius, Macmillan Education Co.Ltd, London - 1997

### Other Sources:

- Education Cards 2004 - Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research.  
 Glover Report 1978, Commission on post primary and secondary education; The Road Ahead M.O.E and S.R.  
 Master Plan on Education for the year 2000/1991 Ministry of Education and Scientific Research.

