

## Electronic Media and Indian Culture in Mauritius for a better living: A Case of Aaj ke Jawan

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### ABSTRACT

Mauritius' mass media is limited due to its small population (estimated to be 1,288,000 in 2008). Nevertheless, Mauritius has a strong economy and many major media outlets, including print newspapers, radio and television channels. Mauritian media reflects the democratic and pluralistic traditions of Mauritius society. Between 1834 and 1920, half-a-million indentured immigrants, labourers and their families arrived in Mauritius, with 97% of the immigrants coming from India. India and Mauritius have always been culturally alike and the African nation continues to thrive and preserve the Indian Culture today. Every aspect of our social, political, and cultural lives is affected by the media landscape. This research examines and finds that it is critical that we understand electronic media and the Indian Culture in Mauritius for a better living. A content analysis of selected 4 MBC television programs of Aaj ke Jawan was conducted which led to a narrative approach of analysis. Also, the research provides leeway to describe and analyse concepts, themes and ideas of each program. The results indicated that Electronic Media is still the best resource for learning about the past and present Indian Culture for the best living.

**Keywords:** *Indentured Immigrants, Electronic Media, Indian Culture, Labourers, MBC, Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation*

### Introduction

With the stream of time, man produces new wonders, forms communities, develops cultures, and establishes traditions. On the other hand, as time passes, some inventions become dated and unusable. However, we are unable to ignore them because with time, each creation becomes an integral part of our life. We work to protect our legacy, culture, and

traditions. (Stenning, 2016) In fact, the younger generation will need this. In this entire process, media plays a crucial role. The message is delivered to the masses by the media, which serves as both the mouthpiece and the mirror of society. Be it the Bhojpuri Channel or Doordarshan programmes, be it Holi or the Deepavali festival, everywhere mass media plays a role to propagate the Indian Culture in Mauritius.

*“India has close, longstanding relations with Mauritius, an island nation in the Western Indian Ocean, owing to historic, demographic and cultural reasons. A key reason for the special ties is the fact that Indian origin people comprise nearly 70% of the island’s population of 1.2 million (28% Creole, 3% Sino-Mauritian, and 1% Franco-Mauritian)”* (Mauritius, 2022)

India and Mauritius share both bilateral and cultural bonds. It originated mostly since the arrival of Indian Indentured Labourers in Mauritius. Since then, government bodies have been trying hard to preserve and uplift the Indian Culture and heritage on the Island. One of the main ways to keep the Indo-Mauritian aware of their culture and importance is done mainly through the media. Hence, this paper focuses to preserve the Indian Culture in Mauritius through the electronic media, the paper also attempts to suggest ideas to propagate and enhance the relationship between India and Mauritius for a better living.

The national public broadcaster of radio and television is the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. It broadcasts programming in Chinese, Creole, French, and English. (Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, 2022) In contrast to static media (printing), electronic media is broadcast to the wider community. Electronic media can be shared on any electronic device for viewing by audiences. Television, radio, and the vast internet are all examples of electronic media. The use of electronic media has both positive and negative effects. On the other hand, even if it is having a negative impact, it is also educating, educating, and entertaining society. Through the media, people today are becoming aware of their rights, way of life, culture, and traditions. Numerous cultural programs in Mauritius are shown on television to educate the general public. The connection between personal and collective identities and electronic media does not follow a straightforward evolutionary path. Moreover, these cultural programs are being broadcasted and promoted on the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation’s television channels and YouTube.

The island's population is made up of more than 24% Indian immigrants. In the beginning, Indian migrants arrived in Mauritius as "coolies," or indentured laborers, to work in the sugarcane fields. Their lives were no better than those of enslaved people. At the capital city of Port Louis, the UNESCO Heritage Site, Aapravasi Ghat, still marks the former immigration depot where half a million laborers were brought to Mauritius from India. (Fodor's Travel) For more than two centuries, Indian Mauritius has maintained its food, language, culture, and religious beliefs. The largest and oldest Hindu temple on the island was built in 1888. Maheshwarnath Mandir, also known as the Grand Shivala Triolet, was built with no expense spared even at that time. The intricate designs were based on the architecture of temples in eastern India. Despite the longer French ties to the island, Indian influences dominate any other predominant culture in Mauritius. Indian Culture continues to prevail in Mauritius due to the efforts of the residents and government officials.

## **Review of literature**

The study reveals some similar areas of studies or research that have been conducted before when it comes to Indian Culture and Electronic Media in Mauritius. Indians in new worlds: Mauritius and Trinidad, (Eriksen) The Indian Diaspora in Mauritius and Trinidad, as well as their connection to nation-building in the two poly-ethnic societies, are the primary topics of this paper. A second study, Development of electronic media in Mauritius, (UKEssays, 2017) shows the historical perspective of electronic media. The study also reveals the need for electronic media in student's life and its impact. (Khedo, Suntoo, Sheik Mohammad, & Mocktoolah, 2013) examined the Impact of online social networking on Youth in Mauritius, the study shows how Mauritian youths are using online social networking on a large scale and their behavior and lifestyle. Another study reveals the preservation of the Indian diasporas' ancestral culture, languages, and identity in Mauritius as well as their participation in Mauritian society's broader socio-cultural, political, and economic spheres. These results are appropriate to the contemporary study as they focus on the Indian culture and electronic media in Mauritius, also putting much relevance to how they contribute to Mauritian society.

## **The objectives of the study are to:**

- Examine the various ways how Aaj ke jawaan cultural program promotes Indian Culture
- Create awareness among the youth of Mauritius for a better living in the society.
- Investigate measures or implementations taken by media houses to preserve Indian Culture to the public.

## **Methodology**

The research constitutes a qualitative descriptive and narrative methodology evaluating the extent to which Aaj ke Jawan program contributes to preserving Indian Culture. The researcher finds content analysis suitable for this study whereby themes, concepts and ideas have been given much importance. These mentioned elements have been presented thoroughly in the study. In addition, a telephonic interview between the researcher and the producer of the program was conducted, with a set of seven questions, which was possible through WhatsApp. A purposive sample of 4 Aaj ke Jawan programs' episodes has been selected as per the researcher's convenience, firstly, *History of Mauritius*, secondly, *Thai Poosam Cavadee*, *International Yoga Day* and lastly *Bansuri Artist (Flute)*.

## Findings and discussions

Based on the findings, the researcher found the followings which are discussed below.

<b>Episodes' Date of Aaj ke Jawan Program</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018</li> <li>2. 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019</li> <li>3. 26<sup>th</sup> July 2019</li> <li>4. 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018</li> </ol>		
<b>Concept</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Idea</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. History of Mauritius</li> <li>2. ThaiPoosam Cavadee</li> <li>3. International Yoga Day</li> <li>4. Flute/Bansuri Artist</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Independence of Mauritius</li> <li>2. Bharatnatyam Dance</li> <li>3. Yoga for a better living</li> <li>4. Music through Bansuri</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of actors to depict past incidents</li> <li>2. Engage youth to participate in activities</li> <li>3. Yoga practices and benefits</li> <li>4. Flute and its importance</li> </ol>

Aaj ke Jawan program was first broadcast on the MBC Bhojpuri channel. Produced and presented by Mr. Rajesh Kumar Odoye in September 2016, Aaj ke Jawan program targets the mass population of Mauritius through the electronic medium. "There were a lot of programs for everyone, but at that particular time, MBC didn't have a program for youth as such..." said the host of the program through a telephonic interview. The emergence of societal evils started to propagate its wings in Mauritian society within youngsters, Aaj ke Jawan program comes with an aim to give youngsters a platform and a chance to display their talents through audio and visual media tools rather than getting involved in over usage of mobiles or any bad conduct.

History of Mauritius is one of the episodes of Aaj ke Jawan program which focused on the occasion of the 50th Independence Day of Mauritius. The episode depicts the arrival of indentured labourers on the Island. The use of actors, props and location in the episode, brought together the Holy Scripture Ramayana, showing the traditions, Indian culture, language and clothes. It shows how the Indian immigrants, dressed in sarees and kurtas, used to sit and eat together, in mind to settle a bhaitka. In today's context, the establishment of bhaitka in every region of the island shows unity and especially a place where people learn and share lessons based on Holy Scriptures. (Revival of Baitkas in Mauritius) This episode represents the legacy left by the ancestors. Lok Geet in the Bhojpuri language, the use of Indian instruments like Dholak and the simplicity of these people clearly show their practice to establish a peaceful society.

Thaiposam Cavadee is a festival that is celebrated by the Tamil community in Mauritius to pay tribute to Lord Muruga. The South Indian touch and traditions are vastly prominent during the days of fasting in the community. Here, the television program comes with an idea to demonstrate the South Indian culture through Bharatnatyam dance. The episode consists of different artists who demonstrate their skills through this form of dance. This episode aims at explaining the origin of Bharatnatyam as a form of art and how youth are

engaged in the activities. The main artist of the program highlights the opportunity of studying in India and starting his academy in Mauritius to propagate the teachings of India through dance. The outfits worn and musical instruments used by the artists in the particular episode are eye-opening.

Yoga is known for its incredible health benefits. International Yoga Day is celebrated on the 21st of June each year. Produced in 2019, Aaj ke Jawan emphasizes broadcasting a special program on the occasion of International Yoga Day. The host, along with the artists present in the contemporary episode demonstrated the Surya Namaskar, Chakrasana, Ardha Uttanasana and Pavanamuktasana to name a few. The episode highlights the importance of Yoga in our daily lives for a better life as well as its origin. It cannot be denied that Yoga has been originated from India and many disciples of Yoga are propagating the lessons worldwide including in Mauritius. The episode shows how this practice from ancient India has now become a part of our lives. (Yoga, 2023)

Originating from the Indian Subcontinent, the bansuri has a great role to play when it comes to the musical field. Unlike the traditional music of Mauritius, which is the Sega, bansuri comes in the category of Indian culture and ancient history. Music is another theme that Aaj ke Jawan program puts forward. This time, Mr Odoye tries to represent music through flute also known as bansuri. The episode talks about the artist, Mr. Vighnesh Gukhool, who bought flutes in India from Subhash Thakur (Pranam Flutes by Subhash). The latter mentions his interest in watching Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, which has influenced his choice to learn flute. As such, this particular episode reveals the use of visual tools to demonstrate the making of the flute and the practice of the instrument. The young artist also sends a message at the end of the episode, to the youngsters of Mauritius that instead of being indulged in negative paths of life, better to commit themselves to learning music.

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

Despite adding to what is already known, this study has some limitations too. The programs were viewed and analysed through YouTube as per the researcher's convenience due to travel constraints. The area of the study consists of Mauritius and Indian culture. The researcher also suggests that more studies should be conducted. Hence, in order to broaden the scope of this topic, a strong message must be conveyed for a better living.

### **Conclusion**

India is a nation that is known for its diverse culture. A collection of minors, distinct cultures is referred to as the culture of India. The arrival of Indian indentured labourers in Mauritius has led to forming a new way of life that today's people practice. Indian culture in Mauritius has always been given much value and indeed electronic media has contributed to that cause. This study aims at connecting the roots of Indo-Mauritians and making them blend into preserving the Indian Culture left by our ancestors. For that, the researcher has taken 4 episodes of Aaj ke Jawan programs divided into themes, concepts and ideas, which have been discussed prior. The episodes describe the involvement of Indian clothes, lifestyle, instruments and demonstration of those props and skills. Undoubtedly, this unveils the richness of the Indian culture portrayed by Mauritians who are thriving hard to present and preserve it.

Furthermore, much emphasis has been given to the Bhojpuri language. Each episode was broadcasted in the Bhojpuri language. Both the host and the invitee were seen conversing in that particular language. This indicates the amount of dedication towards preserving the Bhojpuri language as a medium of communication in Mauritius.

This has enabled the researcher to draw a conclusion that electronic media has a positive impact on the society and youths of Mauritius. These episodes show how the youth along with the elderly people of Mauritius are engaging themselves in cultural activities. Also, the program has successfully created awareness among the youngsters as per the participation level. On the other hand, there are several programs that are being broadcasted to achieve the same cause. It cannot be denied that the Government of Mauritius is working hand in hand with the MBC to broadcast the heritage of the Indian indentured labourers on their channels.

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