

# A Socio-Linguistic Analysis Of The Creolisation Of Hindi And Bhojpuri Languages In Mauritius.

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## ABSTRACT

Mauritius is located at a crucial junction between Africa and Asia, facilitating connections to Europe from Asia. During the colonial era, the Cape of Good Hope was a significant commercial route. The creolisation of Indian languages in Mauritius is a multifaceted socio-linguistic phenomenon shaped by historical migration, colonial governance, and cultural assimilation. The introduction of Indian indentured labourers in the 19th century introduced languages such as Bhojpuri, Hindi, Tamil, and other Indian languages into the Mauritian linguistic landscape. Throughout the centuries, these languages amalgamated with Creole, French, and English, the island's predominant languages, yielding hybrid forms affected by African, European, and Indian linguistic components. This creolisation signifies both linguistic and cultural adaptability, as Indian-origin communities navigated the preservation of ancestral identity and assimilation into Mauritian society. Currently, the creolised forms of these languages display streamlined syntax, blended vocabulary, and phonetic modifications, fostering a distinct Mauritian linguistic identity. This process demonstrates how language functions as a dynamic symbol of cultural amalgamation, highlighting the tenacity and adaptability of diasporic people within a multicultural society.

**Keywords:** Creole, Indentured labour, Migration, Mauritius, Socio linguistics, Indian Languages.

## Introduction

Migration is usually defined as a geographical movement of people involving a change from their usual place of residence. In a layman's language, the word 'migration' refers to the movements of the people from one place to another. According to Demographic Dictionary, "migration is a form of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographical unit and another, generally involving a change in residence from the place of origin or place of departure to the place of destination or place of arrival." Such migration is called permanent migration, and should be distinguished from other forms of movement, which do not involve a permanent change of residence. Everett Lee, a well-known demographer, defines migration broadly "as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence". No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary and involuntary nature of the act. Migration, according to Eisenstadt, refers to "the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition usually involves abandoning one social-setting and entering another and different one." Mangalam also stresses the permanent shifting of people in his definition and considers migration as a relatively permanent moving away of a collectivity, called the migrants, from one geographical location to another.

The major reason of voluntary migration is economic. In most of the developing countries, low agricultural income, agricultural unemployment and underemployment are the major factors pushing the migrants towards areas with greater job opportunities. Even the pressure of population resulting in a high man-land ratio has been widely recognised as one of the important causes of poverty and rural outmigration. Thus, almost all studies indicate that most of the migrants have moved in search of better economic opportunities. The most important economic factors that motivate migration may be termed as 'Push Factors' and 'Pull Factors'. In other words, it is to see whether people migrate because of the compelling circumstances at the place of origin which pushed them out, or whether they are lured by the attractive conditions in the new

place.

### Push Factor

The push factors are those that compel or force a person, due to various reasons, to leave that place and go to some other place. For example, adverse economic conditions caused by poverty, low productivity, unemployment, exhaustion of natural resources and natural calamities may compel people to leave their native place in search of better economic opportunities.

### Pull Factors

Pull factors refer to those factors which attract the migrants to an area, such as, opportunities for better employment, higher wages, better working conditions and better amenities of life, etc.

### Arrival of Europeans in Mauritius

After the expansion of Turkish Ottoman Empire in 1453, silk road and the routes which led to India was blocked for Europeans because of the invasion of Constantinople. This event was known as **Fall of Constantinople** in history. They were unable to trade with India and China.

So, they initiated step to find the sea route. This crucial step was initiated by the voyageurs of Spain and Portugal. In 1498, Vasco Da Gama discovered the sea route of India. This route went through Cape of Good Hope. After some times, Mauritius which is a tiny island of this major sea route, was the main halt for all Europeans because of the availability of fresh water and foods.

Mauritius which is situated at the strategically important location of the trade route from Europe to Asia via Africa. While traveling to India, the Portuguese explored the sea route for India. However, with plans to trade in East India, the Dutch, French, and British would come next. After reaching the Cape of Good Hope, ships would stop at the islands before continuing to the Indies by the more sheltered inner route, which ran between Madagascar and Africa. Because Mauritius' harbour was safer than the coast of Réunion, Mauritius' Port Louis—also known as "stella clavisque maris indici," or the star and the key to the Indian Ocean—became a highly sought-after and contested port. For the upliftment of this region France had constructed forts, official buildings and ports. The island, which held a crucial position for controlling the trade with Asia, was a French royal colony from 1766 until 1790. Founded at Port-Louis, the police department had a sizable workforce and generated a vast amount of writing, of which five registers maintained a partial record. These remarkable records bear witness to the increasing bureaucratization of the police profession during the colonial era. These impacts are still visible after the long period.

Mauritius and Réunion were split between Britain and France as they became as major powers in the Indian Ocean and on the Indian subcontinent. Britain gave the French control of Réunion island while annexing Mauritius in 1810. By this point, France had given up on regaining Mauritius and was instead concentrating on its African holdings, leaving a French India a pipe dream. In this way European specially French and British were captured these two major Islands of Indian ocean.

### Arrivals of Indian

After the abolition of Slavery in 1830, Indians were replacing the slaves in the field of plantation in British colonial era. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, millions of Indians moved across the globe under British colonial rule. This migration, largely driven by the demand for labour after the abolition of slavery, saw Indians being sent under indentured labour contracts to work on sugar plantations in colonies like Mauritius, Réunion, South Africa, Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, and Fiji. These indentured<sup>1</sup> labours came from all around India. They were hired from various parts of India, with most of the labourers coming from what is now Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Bengal Presidency, Odisha, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Bombay Presidency provided the remaining labourers. These workers, known as *girmityas*<sup>2</sup>, were primarily drawn from the flood- and drought-affected plains of Bihar and the United Provinces (modern-day Uttar Pradesh) in northern India.

The *girmityas* played a pivotal role in shaping the industrial and plantation economies of these regions, contributing significantly to the process of globalization and the emergence of new societies, cultures, and languages. This study explores the social and cultural experiences of these Bhojpuri-speaking labourers, examining their lives in India and their struggles and adaptations in the colonies.

The Bhojpuri diaspora's cultural life revolves around festivals, which provide opportunities for social gatherings and the strengthening of cultural identity. Important holidays like Chhath Puja, Diwali, and Holi are celebrated with fervour. Celebrated with colourful displays, music, and dance, Holi, the festival of colours, heralds the approach of spring. The inclusive character of Mauritius society is reflected in the fact that Holi has grown beyond its origins to become a well-liked festival among many ethnic groups. While the traditional practices of singing Holi songs (known as Phagwa songs) and playing with coloured powders are preserved, the festival has also incorporated local elements, such as the use of Mauritian Creole in celebrations. Mauritius, illustrating how closely the Bhojpuri population adheres to its traditional customs. Dance and Music: Traditional forms of dance and music have been maintained and modified throughout time, and they are essential components of the Bhojpuri diaspora's cultural expression. Folk music from Bhojpur: Lokgeet, or traditional Bhojpuri songs, are a vital component of the cultural legacy of the diaspora.

These songs are sung during festivals, weddings, and other social gatherings and include topics like love, devotion, and everyday life. Bhojpuri music has blended with regional styles such as sega<sup>3</sup> in Mauritius, resulting in a distinctive blend that appeals to a wider Mauritian audience. This combination preserves the spirit of the original song while adapting Bhojpuri cultural elements to the Mauritian setting. Segal Music and Dance: The incorporation of Bhojpuri rhythms and lyrics into sega, the traditional dance and music of Mauritius, is a clear example of how Bhojpuri culture has influenced Mauritian music. A prominent variation that reflects the creolization of Bhojpuri culture in the Mauritian context is the Segal Bhojpuri, which blends parts of Bhojpuri folk music with the upbeat beats of sega.

It highlights the unique worldview of the *girmityas* and sheds light on their religious, social, and cultural practices in these new environments, offering a nuanced perspective on their impact on the history of migration and cultural exchange. Mauritius is the best example of multi-coloured societies, cultures, languages and religions. The strategic location of this island lured to the European colonizer and the climate of this area forced to arrive indentured labour to this place.

### Origin of Creole

Mauritius was colonised by both French and British leaving colonial languages (French and English), Creole is the spoken language of Mauritians. Indo Mauritian people speak heritage language like Hindi, Bhojpuri, Tami, Gujrati and Urdu. When the person migrates from one place to another place, they carry their cultures, traditions and languages. So, Indian and European have introduced their beliefs in this tiny pearl of Africa. Europeans like French and Britishers were there as a colonizer who ruled there on African and Indian indentured labours. So, there was a communication and cultural gap among colonizers, African slaves and *girmityas*. People from different countries were all thrown together to work as coachmen, dockers, loaders and helpers, carriers, field labourers, skilled artisans, and domestic workers in Mauritius, which caused the country to break. Before long, the adults improvised a Pidgin. Additionally, the first generation of kids transformed this Pidgin into Mauritian Kreol, a whole language. So, a new language evolved at that time which fulfilled the communication breach between colonist and colonizer. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, intense language contact in French colonial contexts gave rise to Creole language. Everyone born in Mauritius and its dependent islands speaks Mauritian Creole as their first or second language. It is the most widely spoken language in the region. Thousands of Mauritians who have left the country, mostly to live in western Europe and Australia, also speak it. It shares strong kinship with Seychelles Creole (see Michaelis and Rosalie, in this volume) and Reunion Creole (see Bollée, in this volume).

Most people believe that the word "creole" is derived from the Spanish word "criollo." It appears that Spanish was the source of French créole in the seventeenth century. The first attestation of the term criollo in French is a citation from Spanish, in R. Regnault's 1598 translation of José de Acosta's book under the title of *Histoire naturelle et morale des Indes*. It means "A person of European descent born outside Europe" was the definition of "criollo" in Spanish. It's odd that a language variant that evolved from dialectal French, Creole, was mistakenly called something else. The fact that the same procedure was repeated in other locations where Spanish was not yet known during the same time-period is even weirder. For this reason, the Mascarenes' creole French dialects—Réunion, Mauritius, and Rodriguez—are referred to as creole patois<sup>4</sup>.

### Rationale of the study

In the linguistic history of India, many languages have interacted with each other and originated a new language or dialects. The evolution of these languages and dialects is a consequence of sustained cultural interactions and trade with various nations. India has been shaped by a diverse array of foreign linguistic influences, including Arabic, Bactrian, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Persian, Portuguese, Turkish, and, more broadly, Sanskrit. Each of these languages followed a distinct trajectory of prominence, attaining power and prestige before gradually declining and giving way to others. Throughout this linguistic transformation, these languages engaged in dynamic exchanges with India's indigenous tongues, facilitating the transfer of phonetic elements, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and idiomatic expressions. In some instances, these interactions even contributed to the formation of entirely new languages. (Chaudhary, 2008). In the given background, the proposed study is an attempt to understand the development of creole as a language and creolization of Indian languages in Mauritius. It will also attempt to understand how new dialects and pidgin languages are formed can be gained by looking into creolization. Creolization affects customs, religious beliefs, and interpersonal relationships in addition to language. Examining this process can help us understand how multicultural communities adapt and operate.

A more comprehensive picture of language creation processes worldwide can be obtained by examining the variations in creolization throughout Indian regions. By studying this topic researchers can gain a deeper appreciation of how languages adapt, evolve, and influence cultural identity in diverse multilingual settings.

### Methodology

This study uses a multidisciplinary method to investigate the creolization of Indian diaspora in Mauritius by fusing sociological viewpoints with historical analysis. The approach incorporates linguistic and historical

analysis: The history of Indian migration to Mauritius is traced using secondary sources and archival research, with an emphasis on the indentured labour system and its socioeconomic effects.

Sociological Viewpoints: The integration and adaptation of the Indian diaspora in Mauritius are examined using sociological theories of migration, diaspora, and cultural identity.

Examining how community groups, traditional celebrations, and educational programs contribute to the preservation of Indian history is part of this. With these preservations of the Indian culture and language they adopted locals' language with ancestral languages.

### Discussion

As per Sarita Boodhoo (2023), there are many creole and French words which are using in Bhojpuri and vice versa. '*Mon fine ale kot mo mamou*' which is creole sentence it means I went to my mamou. In this sentence mamou is Bhojpuri word. Mamou is actually the metrnal uncle. Another senstence *Mon dada fine dire moi* – *My grandfather told me* again in this sentence dada is Hindi word, which means paternal grand father. Creole is not only a confluence on Bhojpuri and Hindi but it also includes many words from other Indian languges. Mame (Tamil) is used in sega. In a same way in Mauritiens use Creole and French words in French. As per Boodhoo's book *Geet Gawai*, The Mauritian Bhojpuri Songs *Geet Gawai* was inscribed on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the UNESCO on 1 December 2016. Ananda Devi, a well-known francophone Mauritian writer has written a book **Pagli** in French. In this book one can easily find the essence of Indian culture in creole French. A significant portion of the Mauritian population frequently communicates in Creole today. In rural, the Hindu demographic and the elder generation predominantly communicate in Bhojpuri. Most individuals of Indian descent currently continue to speak Bhojpuri. Continuous European supremacy has significantly influenced Bhojpuri in Mauritius through Creole. Nonetheless, the Bhojpuri that reached Mauritius had already been significantly impacted by indigenous languages. No language in the world has remained unaltered by foreign vocabulary. This assertion is also applicable to our Bhojpuri language. The degree of Creole's effect can be recognized.

"Français" signifies "He speaks French."

"Madamwa" se bol de – signifies "Please inform madam" (Ramdeen, 2004.35).

Consequently, French, English, and Creole lexicons were assimilated into the Bhojpuri language of Mauritius. Currently, numerous Creole terms have amalgamated with Bhojpuri, rendering it challenging to discern the boundary between Bhojpuri and Creole vocabulary. A single Bhojpuri sentence may contain two or three Creole words concurrently. Nonetheless, designating these words as Bhojpuri would be inaccurate. In Creole, "mange" denotes "food," however in Bhojpuri, "mange" does not signify food; the term "lalabua" is employed instead. Likewise, several terms, despite their French or Creole origins, have seamlessly integrated into Bhojpuri and formed an essential component of the language. The Bhojpuri spoken in Mauritius today markedly diverges from that spoken a century ago. The language has experienced significant alteration due to the infusion of foreign vocabulary. In the quotidian life of Mauritius, individuals encounter three languages: French, Creole, and Bhojpuri.

French and Creole have exerted some influence on Bhojpuri; conversely, Bhojpuri has significantly impacted both Creole and French. Bhojpuri has assimilated new lexicon and phrases from various languages, integrating them into its vocabulary (ibid).

**Some original French words used in creole and Bhojpuri<sup>5</sup>**

Original Word	Creole	Bhojpur i	English
<b>Joli</b>	Joli	Joli	Beautiful
<b>Bu</b>	Bu	Turu	Grass
<b>Ramé</b>	Ramé	Seema	Road

<b>La boutique</b>	La boutique	Butik	Shop
<b>Allumette</b>	Jalmes	Jalmese	Matchstick
<b>L'espoir</b>	L'espair	Lakas	Lantern
<b>Marché</b>	Ramé	Ramse	Market
<b>Martelé</b>	Martelé	Martole	Hammer
<b>Banané</b>	Banané	Banan	Banana
<b>Affaire</b>	Affaire	Afair	Matter/Case

### Conclusion

Migration has significantly influenced the development of civilizations, economics, and cultures worldwide, with Mauritius exemplifying this tendency. The historical migrations of Europeans and Indians to Mauritius have fostered the emergence of a distinctive multicultural society. The interaction between migration and economic prospects has influenced population movements, with push and pull influences directing migratory



trends. Adverse economic situations compelled many to abandon their homelands, while the allure of improved living standards, career prospects, and socio-political stability drew people to new locations. The Europeans' entrance in Mauritius was primarily motivated by strategic trade interests, given the island's critical location on the road to Asia. The colonial legacies of the French and British significantly shaped the island's governance, infrastructure, and socio-cultural structure over time. The subsequent influx of Indian indentured laborers after the abolition of slavery enhanced Mauritius's demographic and cultural diversity. The immigrants, predominantly from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, introduced their languages, traditions, and practices, which have since amalgamated with existing influences to establish a unique Mauritian culture. The creolization process in Mauritius illustrates the dynamic character of language change. The interplay of French, English, Bhojpuri, and various Indian languages resulted in Mauritian Creole, a linguistic conduit that enabled communication among disparate ethnic groups. The Bhojpuri-speaking diaspora, despite experiencing linguistic changes, has successfully preserved essential elements of its cultural heritage through music, dance, and religious festivals. The incorporation of Creole and French lexicon into Bhojpuri, and vice versa, exemplifies the reciprocal effect of migrant and host cultures.

Comprehending the evolution of Creole and the linguistic changes among the Indian diaspora in Mauritius offers significant insights into the overarching dynamics of migration, adaption, and identity construction. Language, as a vital indicator of cultural identity, persists in its evolution as societies engage and assimilate within their social contexts. The endurance of Indian linguistic and cultural traditions, coupled with the incorporation of local influences, underscores the durability and adaptability of migratory groups. Mauritius exemplifies multiculturalism, illustrating how migration promotes cultural interaction, social cohesiveness, and linguistic innovation. The examination of migratory patterns, creolization, and linguistic adaptation in Mauritius provides an intricate understanding of the complexity of migration and its enduring effects on cultural landscapes. Examining these historical and sociolinguistic changes enhances our understanding of how migration influences identities and communities in a progressively interconnected globe.

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<sup>1</sup>Indenture was a system of contract labour under which individuals were recruited in their home countries to serve as migrant workers abroad, usually for a term of three to five years

<sup>2</sup>*Girmitya* is the corrupt form/mispronunciation and demotic form of the word 'agreement' that Indian labourers signed before voyage, and a *Girmitya* going under this agreement was called a *Girmitya* by uneducated Indians.

<sup>3</sup> a popular music and dance genre in Mauritius that combines music, storytelling, and dance

<sup>4</sup> The name 'Patois' was originally used to refer to non-standard or non-literary regional dialects of French peasants in France.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Suchita Ramdeen, "Sanskrit Manjari" *Vishu Vyapani Bhojpuri*, 2004.