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The Role Played by Media and Indian Diaspora in Propagating Universal Environmental Health in Mauritius Mr. Mohit Ram Chelak*

Introduction

High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora was established in September 2000 under the Chairmanship of L M Shanghvi, which presented a comprehensive report, which figured out that the Indian Diaspora constitutes 70 percent of the total population of Mauritius. This huge diversity has affected the social, cultural and political identity of Indians in Mauritius. The Prime Minister of Mauritius Navin Ramgoolam of Indian ethnicity became a positive role model in this flow, he is the successor of the first Prime Minister Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, through which diasporic community cherish their roots of brotherhood and communalism, In Mauritius, majority of the Hindus and Muslims migrated from different parts of India – the Northern and Southern part. Most of the population that of Indian origin who had salubrious living condition in India due to the thick forest of then northern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar could easily relate to the Mauritian climate.

They migrated during the indentured period in different colonies for the work of sugar cane plantation as a contract labourer. But, now their descendants are living and have constructed Indo-Mauritian society. For that reason, currently Mauritius known as the “Little India”, because of majority of Indian communities are residing and transforming the Indian identity. Moreover, they are practicing their ancestral cultures, languages, festivals, occasions, etc.; in consequence, Mauritius has become a multicultural society. Albeit, there are also other communities are residing such as Chinese, Caribbean, Francis, etc. Among Indian communities Bihari, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengalis and others are residing there. These kinds of assimilation of communities or exploring various linguistic, culture, and ethnicity are the trajectory of the new identity of community. Moreover, it reflects the cultural differences between Diaspora and its origin country. Conscious of the environmental decay, Indian diaspora in Mauritius were able to transform the society that would leave a legacy behind them for the coming generation.

The role played by media in highlighting the environmental issues in the island nation of Mauritius has gone well with the Indian diaspora and the civil society. Media plays a pioneering role in representation of the culture of Diasporic communities in the host land. Media have good impact for reflecting the culture of one place to another with the help of advance media technologies. Living along with the nature, conserving the marshy land that Indian indenture labourers once tread upon on Mauritius soil, are of the nostalgia feelings that the media carries forward for the generations to come and experience. Media's role helps different communities to understand various cultures, and provides a platform to communities,

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in view of that, they have established various kinds of ethnic media that is exploring and representing their ethnic identity. Moreover, media is transmitting it across of the world, the consequence of which is that whole world is coming together and sharing cultures. Environmental and cultural issues are dear to every nation.

Media has been constantly allowing its platform to be used by environmental activists mostly the older generation of Indian diaspora in the Mauritius. The new media have enabled real time communication among diasporic community, which was not possible in the past. In the past media was traditional in form that was not too much advanced, accordingly diasporic communities were connected less among community members. However, the advances of new media have given them perception and space for amalgamation as well as visual presentation. Therefore, we can emphasis the communities have been engaged with each other's and giving presence in cyberspace.

Review of Literature

The reviews of literatures have highlighted the different comments and arguments of the account of media and diaspora through the various authors, which, we have dealt on this study.

Tony Bennett (1982) , in "Theories of the Media, Theories of Society" explained, how the media such as print, television, and radio are playing role in the nineteenth and twentieth century for the shaping of social and cultural identities among communities, who are residing in a far away. In addition, how communities have connected to each other is through a media negotiator? As well as they are asking questions, what is the relationship between human culture and media? On the other hand, media has enhanced the elite cultural values. He defined 'outlook' consisting of a number of intersecting themes- the rise of mass culture. Environmental issues that a nation faces has cultural implications.

Douglas M. K. (2005), in his book "Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern" has discussed media and their types like television, film, music and other method of communications media. This media is very helpful in shaping the cultural identities as well as representation of culture and change in the society. Author also discussed critically postmodern theories and most popular as well as an influential forms of current media culture. Another thing about this book is that he criticizes the social, political and cultural aspects of struggle position in the system. In the present age, cultural aspect is very effective in bridging the gap between distant and postmodern era through the help of media extension. Over the years media has been a champion of propagating the natural causes that affects the environment.

Asha Kasbekar Richard (2006), in the book "Pop Culture India! Media, Arts, and Lifestyle" has focused on the rise of modern India in the age of pop culture in the world. It was enlightened in 1980s, when censorship and economy were liberalised. As a result, music, movies, mass media, consumerism, and spiritual practices were increased. Accordingly, many countries such as Fiji, Mauritius and others were also entertained surprisingly. Moreover, author has also discussed the change in Hindu

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nationalism in this book. Because of this, there are many Bollywood movies and documentaries for the cultural assimilation in many nations. This is called the pop culture of India through the media and communication technologies. Finally, currently all cultures are assimilated within one place and their impact is the changes of the human lifestyles. This may have environmental influence too. Indian population of UP and Bihar who had lived in the midst of nature had to be in Mauritius a sea locked land.

Conceptual Framework

The Indian culture is a very old culture in nature but when the culture migrated in different parts of the world about thousand years back then the study regarding Indian culture became very interesting and complex too. In fact, some Indians migrated to get something “better” in those host lands. So, naturally they carried away their social values, norms, traditions, religions, languages and many things, and those migrated people always try to be connected with their home country: socially, culturally, politically and economically. Now their groups are called the Diasporic group. In addition, they have closely connected with their home culture through the new media. It facilitates the diasporic communities to share their cultures across of the world. This has only happened through the development of the new media (i.e. internet). By the internet, technologies are in a position to share their interest and social issues, cultural identity among near and dear persons, which may be visual, textual, and sound-able representation and identity to their home country. The presentation of the various components of one's identity can be described as the exhibition of culture. “Exhibitions are discrete events which articulate objects, texts, visual representations, reconstructions and sounds to create an intricate and bounded representational system.” Through the exhibiting of culture, one can express herself and create clear visual links to a particular culture. It allows her to unite and give meaning to the individual components (Crilley, 2011).

One way to understand the impact of the media on our life is to explore the cultural context in which the media operate. Often, culture is narrowly associated with art, the unique forms of creative expression that give pleasure and set standards about what is true, good, and beautiful. Culture, however, can be viewed more broadly as the ways in which people live and represent themselves at particular historical times. This idea of culture encompasses fashion, sports, architecture, education, religion, and science, as well as mass media. Although we can study discrete cultural products, such as novels or songs from various historical periods, cultures keep changing. It includes a sociological values, beliefs, customs, games, technologies, traditions, and institutions. It also encompasses a society's modes of communication: the creation and use of symbol systems that convey information and meaning (e.g., languages, Morse code, motion pictures, and one-zero binary computer codes).

Indian diaspora in Mauritius who have been holding prominent posts in the 19th and 20th century, have made better policies for the environment upkeep of Mauritius.

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Cultural aspect of Diaspora and Media as a reflection on the Environment

Indian diaspora and the media in Mauritius are conscious about their health of the nation. Environmental issues need to be tackled in this island nation. Cultural ethos of the nation that keeps the society closer need to be respected. The concept of culture refers to the particular group or community, who have achieved something and transmitted to generation-to-generation, e.g. language, religion, cuisine, music and arts, social habits, beliefs and values, etc. While the descended peoples follow their ancestral habitual practices then it calls culture. However, there is no standard definition of the culture which can define the perfectly because there are many definitions of the culture. However, many philosophers and scholars have traced the culture definition and meaning.

According to Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1871), who was the English Anthropologist, he defined the culture “ Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.

Television is the most popular medium of communication used to provide information, education and entertainment. The media often shows the outer world the green sandy beach, which has virgin islands around the nation. This electronic device paved a gateway of opportunities to people as the perfect medium of communication. The Mauritius Broadcasting corporation started various satellite channels such as MBC knowledge Channels. Moreover, for the immigrants, channels related to their culture and language was inaugurated like Bhojpuri channel, Telugu Channel, Urdu Channel, Mandarin Channel (which was launched by Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam). Media has been in the forefront in highlighting the environmental causes of Mauritius.

According to Koser (2007), communication revolution has facilitated the mobility of migrants, which has lessened the disparities and promoted the awareness of migrants. The new age of communication technologies systems has changed the ways of communication. When it was not so much advanced, people were practicing traditional medium, which was in a way communication or linear method. In the method there was no feedback options also we do not know about message status, where it has reached and whom. Later then developed the two ways or circular model of the communication. That circular model was introduced new perception of the new medium of communication. Radio, newspapers and other channels are put to use in educating the public on the various themes of environment and its importance.

Universal Environmental Health issues in Mauritius

Mauritius has few issues with environment. Water pollution, soil erosion and preservation of wild life are some of the issues the policy makers should deal along with the population. Now, the whole media technologies (instant messaging, video chat, computer mediated communication, telephone, etc. are working in this aspect

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consequently we are getting direct feedback by family, friend and relatives, who stay in far away. Internet has become a channel in educating the public.

People of Indian origin are in large numbers in Mauritius. Most of the people were belonged from indigenous people who did not know and how they trapped by the colonizers as well as also did not know where they were sending them. Hence, they remember the first arrival day on 2nd November 1934. The 36 labourers were brought to Port Louis from Bihar province that is ported by the 'Apravasi Ghat', from Culcutta. This system never ended until the abolition of slavery. Indians carried along with them the baggage of their memories to Mauritius.

After the end of slavery system most of the Indian communities had come back to India from Mauritius but many of communities were re-engaged with their work. They did not want to come back to India consequently they settled permanently and occupied in jobs. They managed to work with memory of their relative in India. They did not destroy the nature in their adopted country but preserved them for the coming generation.

Conclusion

There is a rich diversity in Mauritius, be it in the aspect of culture or ethnicity, there is a strong presence of Indian, African, European and Chinese ancestry, which shares a culture and values. Such is the country where environment is badly need to protect these people of multi origin. People took part in the festivals, which helped in mutual bonding of their relationships and brotherhood. This was the unique aspect of Indo-Mauritius Culture. Mauritius is known as the "Little India", because of in the presence of many different Indian communities who are residing together with their own social, socio-cultural and religious identities as well as those people are sharing their traditional practical in Mauritius Island. Many in the diaspora in the Mauritius set up the media channels as their enterprise. Indians have been spearheading the causes of nature, environment and the benefit of enjoying salubrious nature in the climate of tropical nation.

People who had migrated from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to Mauritius had planted very many saplings of Indian origin. The indenture labourers while working in the sugarcane plantations way back in 1840s have been protecting the environment for the future generation. However, Mauritius has been dealing with water pollution, soil erosion and preserving the wild life in its water locked land. Indian diaspora and the mass media are constantly dealing with these issues so that problems could be mitigated if not completely eradicated. Indian diaspora has been a reckoning force in the Mauritius doing service along with the mass media in effectively containing the damage done to the nature. In the coming days, where there is a bleak future for the world in terms of environmental disaster, Mauritius, as a member of the United Nations Organization has pivotal role to play in Africa and in the world in the matter of environmental issues.

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