

From Cuisine to Ceremony in Mauritius: A Sociological Study of Cultural Preservation in the Bhojpuri Diaspora

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ABSTRACT

This in-depth study thoroughly investigates the long-term presence of significant elements of cultural identity within the Bhojpuri community residing in Mauritius. The study scrutinises key cultural practices related to food, dancing, music, clothing, religious festivals, and rituals. By conducting a detailed examination of these intricate activities, the research provides unique perspectives on how they foster cultural preservation, social cohesion in the face of variability, and the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations. Significant uncertainties persist regarding further sociocultural aspects that also reinforce the unique cultural legacy of this ethnic group after enduring decades of transformation. The study finds that the community's firm adherence to traditional North Indian customs, Bhojpuri dance and music, and traditional attire reflects a deeply ingrained cultural habitus. Rituals and festivals such as Durga Puja and Diwali reinforce collective identity and community solidarity. The participation of younger generations in these cultural practices underscores the community's resilience in maintaining its heritage, despite the challenges of living in a multicultural diasporic setting. The research employs a qualitative methodology, combining in-depth interviews, quasi-participant observation, and archival research to capture the lived experiences of the Bhojpuri community. The primary objectives are to analyse the inter-generational transmission of cultural practices and examine the influence of internal factors like cultural contact and external factors such as market forces and globalisation on maintaining traditional practices. This study emphasises the role of cultural activities in sustaining the socio-cultural fabric of migrant populations while adapting to shifting societal dynamics.

Keywords: Bhojpuri community, Mauritius, Cultural identity, Social cohesion, Socio-cultural, Migrant

INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity forms the foundation of social cohesion and community solidarity, particularly for migrant populations navigating complex multicultural environments. For diasporic communities, the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions are not just markers of identity but also mechanisms for coping with displacement, social alienation, and cultural hybridity. Migrants and their descendants often engage in the continuous negotiation of their cultural heritage to maintain a sense of belonging while adapting to the host country's norms and values (Hall, 1990; Brah, 1996). In this context, the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius, with its roots in the indentured labour system of the 19th century, provides a unique case study of the persistence and adaptation of cultural practices over time. Despite being geographically distant from their Indian homeland and facing many external pressures—including modernisation, economic globalisation, and cultural exchanges—the Bhojpuri people have sustained a distinct cultural identity across generations. This endurance of cultural practices amid such changes poses essential questions about how migrant communities negotiate cultural preservation and adaptation.

The Bhojpuri community, whose ancestors migrated from the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to Mauritius between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, has successfully maintained key elements of their North Indian heritage. Initially brought as indentured labourers to work on sugar plantations, the Bhojpuri migrants were part of a larger wave of labour migration that profoundly shaped the demographic and cultural landscape of Mauritius (Teelock, 1998). Over time, this community managed to preserve a wide array of traditional cultural practices, including forms of music (like Bhojpuri folk songs) (such as chutney music),

dance, clothing (traditional sarees and dhotis), and cuisine (North Indian vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes). Most importantly, festivals and religious rituals, particularly Durga Puja and Diwali, have become central in maintaining a sense of collective identity, enabling the Bhojpuri community to preserve their unique cultural markers while coexisting in the multicultural and multi-ethnic Mauritian society (Carter & Ng Foong Kwong, 2009).

The persistence of these cultural practices is not accidental; instead, it results from deliberate efforts by the Bhojpuri community to transmit their cultural heritage from one generation to the next. The concept of *inter-generational transmission* of culture is critical to understanding how migrant communities sustain their identity. Scholars argue that cultural practices are continuously negotiated and reinvented across generations, adapting to changing contexts while retaining core values (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Appadurai, 1996). This transmission of cultural expertise occurs through various means, such as family rituals, communal gatherings, religious festivals, and education. However, the degree to which these practices are preserved or modified depends on a complex interplay of internal and external factors.

Internally, the Bhojpuri community relies on family structures, community institutions, and social networks to maintain its traditions. Festivals such as Durga Puja and Diwali are not just religious events but act as *cultural reservoirs* where generations come together, passing on traditional songs, dances, and rituals. However, external factors such as *cultural contact* with other ethnic groups in Mauritius, including Creoles, Chinese, and Franco-Mauritians, have influenced the evolution of Bhojpuri practices. The island's multicultural fabric necessitates cultural adaptations, leading to what scholars describe as a "creolisation" of cultures, where traditional practices are modified or hybridised through interaction with other cultural groups (Eriksen, 1999). This cultural contact enriches the Bhojpuri heritage but challenges its purity and continuity, raising concerns about cultural dilution or assimilation over time.

Another significant external factor influencing the Bhojpuri community's cultural preservation is *globalisation*. The forces of globalisation have brought about increased exposure to global markets, media, and consumer culture, which can disrupt traditional ways of life. With the influx of global cultural symbols, such as Western clothing, music, and food, younger generations often face balancing their ancestral heritage with contemporary global trends. The *commodification of culture*—where traditional symbols are commercialised for tourism or entertainment—poses further challenges to authentic cultural preservation (Appadurai, 1996). Yet, the Bhojpuri community has shown remarkable resilience by adapting to these external pressures without entirely abandoning its cultural roots. For instance, while many young people embrace global music and fashion, they still participate in Bhojpuri festivals and observe traditional rituals, demonstrating the dynamic and fluid nature of cultural identity in a globalised world (Eriksen, 2004).

Moreover, the impact of the *market economy* has played a pivotal role in shaping cultural practices. Economic imperatives have influenced cultural behaviour as Mauritius transformed from an agrarian economy to a service-oriented one, primarily driven by tourism and offshore finance. Festivals that were once purely religious or communal are now marketed as tourist attractions, leading to shifts in how cultural practices are organised and performed. The commodification of Bhojpuri festivals for the sake of tourism raises questions about the authenticity of these practices in their modern form and whether they continue to serve their original cultural functions (Teelock, 1998). At the same time, the economic benefits derived from these events can reinforce cultural continuity by providing communities with the financial means to organise large-scale cultural gatherings and promote their heritage.

This study seeks to explore the intricate processes involved in the inter-generational transmission of Bhojpuri cultural practices in Mauritius and to analyse the internal and external factors that influence the preservation of these traditions. Specifically, the research investigates how cultural practices related to food, music, dance, clothing, and religious rituals have been maintained, adapted, or transformed.

The cultural identity of migrant communities, particularly those in diasporic settings, has been the subject of extensive academic inquiry. This section reviews the key literature on preserving cultural identity among diasporic populations, explicitly focusing on the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius. The review is organised

around three major themes: the intergenerational transmission of culture, the impact of cultural contact and globalisation, and the role of festivals and rituals in sustaining collective identity.

The preservation of cultural identity within migrant communities, particularly diasporic groups, has long been a focus of academic interest. In the case of the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius, several cultural practices—such as festivals, music, dance, clothing, and religious rituals—have been maintained across generations despite the challenges posed by globalisation, modernisation, and cultural contact. However, a detailed analysis of how these cultural practices are transmitted and adapted over time, especially in the context of younger generations, is needed. One of the core arguments of this research is that intergenerational transmission of Bhojpuri cultural practices is not a simple process of continuity but rather a dynamic and negotiated practice. While scholars like Bhatia and Ram (2009) emphasise the resilience of cultural traditions in migrant communities, this study argues that transmitting these practices involves constant negotiation between tradition and modernity, particularly among the younger generations. Influenced by both globalisation and the multicultural nature of Mauritian society, younger members of the Bhojpuri community may engage with their cultural heritage selectively, creating hybrid forms of expression that reflect a blend of traditional and contemporary values.

Furthermore, this research argues that globalisation exerts a dual influence on cultural preservation. On the one hand, globalisation facilitates the transnational connections that sustain cultural practices by linking diasporic communities worldwide (Appadurai, 1996). On the other hand, globalisation brings the forces of commodification and cultural commercialisation, which can dilute the deeper meanings of cultural practices. In Mauritius, for instance, festivals like Durga Puja and Diwali have increasingly been marketed for tourism, raising questions about whether this commercialisation threatens the authenticity of these cultural expressions. This research contends that while the financial incentives tied to the commercialisation of culture can support its sustainability, they may also undermine its intrinsic cultural significance, especially for younger community members.

Despite these observations, there is a clear research gap in understanding the internal dynamics of cultural transmission within the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius. Previous studies have primarily focused on external pressures, such as globalisation and cultural contact, without adequately addressing the internal conflicts between generations regarding the preservation and adaptation of cultural practices. Moreover, the role of tourism and the market economy in shaping these cultural practices has been insufficiently explored in the specific Mauritian context. The lack of research on how younger generations engage with, reinterpret, or possibly reject traditional practices also presents a significant gap in the existing literature. This study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on the agency of younger individuals and their role in the future trajectory of Bhojpuri cultural preservation.

Objectives

This research aims to address these gaps and provide a comprehensive understanding of cultural preservation in the Bhojpuri diaspora in Mauritius. First, the research examines the intergenerational transmission of Bhojpuri cultural practices, focusing on how they are maintained, modified, or abandoned across generations. Second, the study analyses the influence of external factors such as globalisation, cultural contact, and market forces on these practices, specifically focusing on festivals, music, dance, clothing, and religious rituals. Third, it investigates the role of festivals and rituals in reinforcing collective identity and social cohesion within the Bhojpuri community, exploring their importance in maintaining a sense of belonging in a multicultural setting.

Moreover, the study seeks to explore the impact of commercialisation and commodification on the cultural significance of Bhojpuri festivals and rituals, particularly in relation to tourism and the market economy. Finally, it assesses the involvement of younger generations in preserving and transforming these cultural practices, examining their perceptions, participation, and potential shifts in cultural priorities.

In addressing these objectives, this research aims to contribute to broader discussions on cultural resilience within migrant and diasporic communities, offering a nuanced understanding of how the Bhojpuri community

in Mauritius navigates the tensions between cultural preservation, adaptation, and the external pressures of globalisation and modernity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the preservation, adaptation, and transformation of Bhojpuri cultural practices within the diasporic community in Mauritius. The study focused on ethnographic methods to explore how culture was transmitted across generations and how factors such as globalisation, cultural contact, and commercialisation shaped these practices. A combination of in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis was employed to gather a comprehensive dataset.

This study conducted in-depth interviews with quasi-participants from various demographic groups within the Bhojpuri community, ensuring representation from different generations—elders, middle-aged individuals, and younger members. A questionnaire was also used, through which 112 responses were recorded. This allowed for a comparative analysis of how each generation viewed, preserved, and possibly modified cultural practices, such as music, festivals, religious rituals, and clothing. It used purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify key informants with deep knowledge of Bhojpuri culture, including community elders, cultural leaders, festival organisers, and individuals actively preserving traditional practices. It also interviewed younger community members to explore their participation in cultural practices and their perceptions of the relevance of these traditions in a modern, globalised world. The interviews focused on understanding participants' perspectives on cultural transmission, generational shifts in practices, and the influence of external factors such as the media, education, and tourism.

This study was conducted through quasi-participant observation, immersing myself in cultural festivals, rituals, and everyday activities. This method provided firsthand insight into how Bhojpuri cultural practices were performed, celebrated, and transmitted within the community. Significant festivals like Diwali and Durga Puja were observed, and the way these events acted as platforms for reinforcing collective identity and intergenerational cultural exchange was examined. Studies observations also covered informal social gatherings, religious ceremonies, and performances of Bhojpuri music and dance, offering a holistic view of the community's cultural life. It documented behaviours, interactions, and the symbolic meanings embedded in these practices through detailed field notes, paying particular attention to the participation of different generations and the role of younger community members.

In addition to interviews and observations, it conducted document analysis on relevant cultural artefacts, such as festival programs, community newsletters, historical records, and media coverage. This allowed the research to explore how Bhojpuri culture had been represented and commodified for broader consumption, both within Mauritius and internationally. It also analysed government reports and tourism brochures to assess the role of state policies and economic incentives in shaping the preservation and promotion of Bhojpuri festivals and rituals. This helped uncover how globalisation and commercialisation influenced cultural practices, either supporting their continuity or leading to superficial expressions for commercial purposes.

The study analysed the data using a thematic coding approach within a constructivist grounded theory framework, allowing patterns and themes to emerge organically. It explored vital themes such as intergenerational cultural transmission, the effects of globalisation, commercialisation, and the agency of younger generations in-depth. The analysis focused on the complexities and tensions in maintaining cultural heritage within a diasporic setting, particularly in a multicultural and rapidly modernising context like Mauritius. This ethnographic approach gave this study a rich, holistic understanding of Bhojpuri's cultural resilience. The research highlighted how cultural practices were preserved, adapted, or transformed under the influence of internal community dynamics and external forces like globalisation and commercialisation. This methodological approach offered new insights into the ongoing negotiation of cultural identity in the Bhojpuri diaspora and its implications for the future sustainability of cultural heritage.

Data analysis relating to meaningful subjects often has a vast range of domains. This tries to analyse and understand the problem of cultural preservation in the Bhojpuri diaspora by dividing it into mainly four domains.

The Domain of Intergenerational Transmission of Bhojpuri Cultural Practices

One of the core objectives of the research was to examine how cultural practices such as rituals, festivals, music, and dance are transmitted across generations within the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius. The data revealed significant intergenerational differences in the engagement with cultural practices. In general, culture is defined as the way of life of an individual or group; it consists of the transmission of beliefs, values, symbols, and behaviours from one generation to the next. Our daily actions constitute our culture, while the occurrences that transpire naturally and without human intervention constitute our natural environment. Cultural elements are fundamental to human existence. Each individual resides within a distinct cultural community. It determines an individual's nature and what they value most.

Sociologically, there is a connection between the concept of culture and human society. Scholars commonly employ the term 'culture' to comprehend the essence of human society. Every community or group possesses a unique culture, a legacy of accomplishments passed down through generations. Beliefs and values, in addition to social practices, religion, cuisine, music, and art, all contribute to culture. Culture refers to the observance of traditional practices by a group of individuals. Furthermore, the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of culture renders it ambiguous and subjective, resulting in its multifarious interpretations. Nevertheless, numerous scholars and intellectuals have elucidated the significance and definition of culture (Linton, 2010). Walton and Rao (2004, p. 174) also held that culture includes not only arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

The oldest definition by Tylor (1871) may provide some insights into the problem. He opined, 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (p. 1).

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital* refers to the non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means. These include education, intellect, style of speech, dress, or physical appearance. Cultural capital theory explains how the community values Bhojpuri proficiency and engagement in Bhojpuri cultural practices, contributing to social cohesion and identity. Individuals use language as a form of cultural capital to uphold their social standing and cultural heritage.

This variable encompasses a wide range of cultural practices, rituals, traditions, and customs that the Bhojpuri diasporic communities in Mauritius have passed down through generations. This research investigates the transmission of cultural knowledge within families and communities, the function of cultural institutions (such as community centres and temples), and the continuity and adaptation of cultural practices. Religion has a substantial influence on the formation of the socio-cultural identity of Bhojpuri diasporic communities. This study examines the religious beliefs, rituals, festivals, and the function of religious institutions in preserving cultural continuity and promoting collective cohesiveness within the Bhojpuri populations in Mauritius.

The collected data shows that a significant majority of respondents (101 out of 112) consume North Indian food. This suggests a strong inclination towards maintaining culinary traditions within the community. Furthermore, the frequency of consumption indicates that 67 percent of the respondents eat North Indian food regularly, 29 percent often, and 6 percent rarely. Remarkably, no respondents indicated that they do not consume North Indian food.

This research conducted the observations over a series of community events and family gatherings among the Bhojpuri diaspora in Mauritius. These included religious festivals, community feasts, and routine family dinners, providing a comprehensive view of culinary practices and their role in cultural preservation. The primary participants included several Bhojpuri families, with a focus on the Ramdhuny family, who actively engage in traditional culinary practices. This research uses observations across different generational cohorts within families to capture the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

The Ramdhuny family hosted a Diwali celebration where they served an array of traditional dishes like vegetarian biryani, samosas, and sweets like gulab jamun and jalebi. The Ramdhuny family performed a small ritual before eating, offering a portion of the food to the deities, symbolising the religious significance of these culinary practices. During a regular family dinner at their household, the grandmother (Dadi) instructed her grandchildren on how to properly prepare and cook rice, vegetables (pumpkin, saag), dal (lentil soup), and roti (flatbread). She emphasised the traditional techniques and the importance of keeping them. Every Sunday, this family gathers its entire family, including those who live far away (extended family), to have dinner and chat.

Elders (60 plus): Interviews revealed that the older generation (60 plus) remained deeply committed to maintaining traditional practices. They viewed the transmission of cultural rituals such as Durga Puja and Diwali as essential to preserving their cultural identity and ensuring that younger generations understood these traditions' spiritual and communal significance. Elders emphasised how these festivals function as moments of social cohesion and cultural education, reinforcing Bhojpuri's identity in a multicultural environment.

Middle-Aged and Younger Generations: Participants from the younger and middle-aged groups expressed more selective engagement with cultural practices. For example, while they continued participating in major festivals like Diwali, they often reinterpreted these celebrations in more symbolic or secular terms, prioritising the social aspects over religious adherence. The younger generation also noted the challenges of integrating traditional rituals into modern lifestyles, reflecting a shift towards cultural adaptation rather than strict preservation. This highlights the agency of younger generations in shaping their cultural identity while maintaining some connection to their heritage (Bhandari, 2021).

The Domain of Globalisation and Cultural Contact on Traditional Practices

The research also explored how globalisation and external cultural contact have influenced the transformation of traditional Bhojpuri practices. The findings pointed to the hybridisation of culture, particularly among younger generations, as they navigated the tension between cultural continuity and global influences. While the community has maintained key cultural elements, external influences from global music trends and multicultural interactions have led to the evolution and dilution of some practices.

Music and Dance: The data collected through participant observation revealed how Bhojpuri music and dance at festivals had undergone significant changes. For instance, once strictly traditional performances, modern elements such as Western instruments and popular music forms have now been incorporated, reflecting the broader trend of cultural hybridisation driven by global media influences. This hybridisation was more apparent among younger performers, who felt that blending modern and traditional styles made these practices more relevant to their generation.

The survey results offer an overview of the level of consciousness and understanding pertaining to Bhojpuri dance among the Bhojpuri diasporic population residing in Mauritius. Based on the data, marginally higher proportions of the participants (54.50 per cent) indicated that they possessed knowledge about Bhojpuri dance, whereas 45.50 per cent lacked this knowledge. The data suggests that the community has a moderate knowledge of traditional dance forms. 34 per cent of those familiar with Bhojpuri dance recognise Jhumri as the most well-known form of dance. This indicates that Jhumri remains an integral component of the Bhojpuri community's cultural identity in Mauritius. According to respondents, Bedesia has an awareness level of 4 per cent. Despite being part of the cultural repertoire, Bedesia enjoys a different prominence than Jhumri, as indicated by the diminished level of recognition. The names Jat-Jatni, Launda Nach, and Jhajhiya are not well-known among the participants. The community's profound ignorance regarding these dance forms indicates an immense cultural void or deprivation. The substantial proportion (42 per cent) of participants who identified with the 'Other' category, particularly *Geet-Gawai*, suggests that this style of music and dance is integral to the community's cultural practices. By integrating dance and instrumental customs, Geet-Gawai transforms into a comprehensive cultural manifestation that profoundly connects with the populace.

Geet-Gawai is an integral part of Bhojpuri weddings in Mauritius, combining dance, singing, and instrumental music. This cultural performance includes folk songs sung during pre-wedding ceremonies and reflects the social unity and joy of the community. The rhythmic movements of dancers, accompanied by traditional

instruments like the *dholak* and *manjira*, create a vibrant atmosphere. The lyrics and themes often focus on fertility, celebration, and family, closely tied to Bhojpuri cultural values.

The impact of globalisation is seen in the adaptation of certain elements. Traditional Bhojpuri tunes are sometimes mixed with more modern instruments or global music trends, like incorporating guitars or digital beats. While the core elements of Geet-Gawai remain, incorporating new styles showcases the community's resilience and ability to evolve while maintaining cultural roots ([MGIRTI](#)).

About one-third of the respondents (31 per cent) actively listen to Bhojpuri songs. This indicates that a significant portion of the community is directly connected with their musical heritage. Nearly a quarter of the respondents (24 per cent) do not listen to Bhojpuri songs. This suggests that a considerable segment of the community might be disengaged from this aspect of their cultural heritage. At 45 per cent, the largest group needs to be more certain in their listening habits. This indicates a potential openness or passive engagement with Bhojpuri music, dependent on factors like mood, occasion, or social influence. Most respondents (68 per cent) encourage their children to listen to Bhojpuri songs. This highlights a strong intent within the community to pass down their musical heritage to the next generation, reflecting a proactive approach to cultural preservation. About one-third of the respondents (32 per cent) do not encourage their children to listen to Bhojpuri songs. This could be due to several reasons, such as the perceived relevance of Bhojpuri music, generational shifts in musical tastes, or integration into broader cultural influences.

Chutney music is another significant facet of Bhojpuri culture in Mauritius, influenced heavily by Indian and Caribbean music styles. Initially emerging from the Trinidadian Bhojpuri community, it blends Indian classical melodies with calypso, soca, and reggae influences. Chutney music has become popular in Mauritius due to its catchy rhythms and accessible, danceable beats. Chutney songs often focus on themes of love, longing, and social commentary, connecting with both the older and younger generations in Mauritius. Global influences have made the genre more mainstream, with fusion tracks incorporating elements from pop, electronic, and even Bollywood music. This has led to a broader acceptance of Chutney music beyond the Bhojpuri community and raises concerns about its traditional essence's dilution ([MGIRTI](#)).

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence provide useful frameworks for understanding how Bhojpuri dance and music, such as Geet-Gawai and Chutney music, function within the Bhojpuri diaspora in Mauritius. Preserving these practices passed down through generations is a marker of social identity and status, reinforcing Bhojpuri heritage. This form of cultural capital helps maintain a connection to the community's origins, enhancing the cultural value for individuals and families. However, globalisation introduces new forms of dance and music, which may compete with or alter these traditional practices. Simultaneously, communal participation in events like Geet-Gawai or Chutney music performances generates collective effervescence, fostering a shared emotional connection and reinforcing social bonds. This communal experience remains vital, particularly during significant events such as weddings, despite the external pressures of modernisation and global cultural influences.

Dress and Attire: In interviews, many participants noted that traditional Bhojpuri attire, such as the sari for women and kurta-pajama for men, had been adapted into everyday life. Younger members often wore these outfits only during festivals or formal events while incorporating Western clothing styles into their daily wardrobes. This shift reflected the broader influence of globalisation on cultural norms, as well as the community's adaptation to modernity. The adherence to traditional attire during significant cultural and religious events underscores the community's effort to maintain and express their cultural identity. Clothing serves as a visual representation of cultural heritage and social belonging (Goffman, 1959). The shift towards Western and fusion attire among the younger generation reflects the community's adaptation to the broader socio-cultural environment of Mauritius. This adaptation illustrates the dynamic nature of cultural practices in diasporic settings, balancing tradition and modernity (Appadurai, 1996).

The high percentage (98 per cent) of individuals who wear traditional dress indicates a solid adherence to cultural norms and practices within the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius. This finding underscores the importance of traditional attire as a critical element of cultural identity and heritage. The 28 per cent of respondents who wear traditional dress regularly at home suggest a daily integration of cultural practices into

their personal lives. This regular use reinforces cultural continuity and familiarity with traditional attire among younger generations. The fact that 66 per cent of respondents reserve traditional dress for special occasions highlights the symbolic significance of such attire. Special occasions likely include religious festivals, cultural events, and other significant communal gatherings where traditional dress marks identity and cultural pride. Traditional dress worn during marriage ceremonies (6 per cent) underscores the role of such attire in significant life events and rituals. Marriage ceremonies, a significant cultural milestone, are occasions where cultural heritage is prominently displayed and celebrated. The absence of respondents indicating community get-togethers or a complete lack of wearing traditional dress suggests that while community events may not specifically necessitate traditional dress, these occasions overlap with the category of special occasions. The zero per cent indicating never wearing traditional dress further emphasises the community's commitment to cultural attire.

The Domain of Festivals and Rituals in Maintaining Collective Identity

A key argument of this research was that religious festivals and rituals play a vital role in reinforcing collective identity and fostering community solidarity within the Bhojpuri diaspora. The findings strongly supported this argument, showing that festivals such as Diwali, Holi, and Durga Puja continued to serve as essential moments of cultural reaffirmation.

Diwali and Durga Puja: During participant observation, this study noted the symbolic power of these festivals in maintaining the community's sense of shared identity despite external pressures from Mauritius' multicultural setting. For example, the rituals performed during Diwali involved entire families, including younger generations, reinforcing the transmission of values such as community, family, and spirituality. These festivals also provided a platform for intergenerational interaction, crucial for the continued transmission of cultural knowledge (Sinha, 2017).

The religious composition of Mauritius reveals the island's rich tapestry of cultural and religious diversity. The dominance of Hinduism and the substantial presence of Christianity and Islam highlight the historical migration patterns and colonial legacies that have shaped the island's demographic and cultural landscape. These religious communities coexist, contributing to Mauritius's reputation as a pluralistic and harmonious society. Religious festivals and practices are crucial in maintaining cultural identity among the Bhojpuri community and other groups. The high percentage of Hindus in the population underscores the importance of festivals like Mahashivratri, Diwali and Durga Puja, which are religious observances and occasions for reinforcing social bonds and cultural continuity.

The relatively small percentage of non-religious individuals suggests that, for most Mauritians, religious identity is intertwined with cultural and social identity. This pervasive religiosity can foster community cohesion but necessitates careful management of interfaith relations to maintain social harmony. As part of this research on preserving socio-cultural practices among the Bhojpuri diaspora in Mauritius, it conducted a series of observations during major religious festivals, including Durga Puja and Diwali. This study conducted these observations to comprehend the community's preservation of its cultural heritage through ritualistic practices and social interactions.

Durga Puja Celebration: During fieldwork, it had the opportunity to observe the Durga Puja celebrations, which provided a rich context for sociological analysis. A nearby Shivalaya (temple) hosted the festival over ten days with great fervour, reflecting the continuity and adaptation of traditional Indian rituals. The Mauritian Bhojpuri community worships the pre-installed idols in the temple, unlike in India where sculptors create idols immersed on the day of Dashami. These idols represent nine goddesses, and daily worship includes morning rituals, evening discourses, and Bhavay Aarti.

The practice of having a girl dress up as a goddess each evening is particularly significant. This ritual embodies a reverence for the feminine divine and facilitates the intergenerational transmission of cultural and religious values. The following communal meal, featuring vegetarian dishes such as biryani, payasam, tomato chutney, gourd vegetable, susu vegetable, rice, dal, halwa, and juice, is a locus of social cohesion. Sharing food reinforces social bonds and collective identity among community members in a communal setting.

These observations underscore the role of religious festivals in maintaining cultural heritage within the Bhojpuri diasporic community. Adapting rituals to the local context while preserving core elements highlights the community's resilience and commitment to cultural continuity. This celebration of Durga Puja in Mauritius exemplifies how diasporic groups negotiate their identities and sustain socio-cultural diversity in a multicultural environment.

Diwali Celebration: Preparations for Diwali among the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius begin two to three days before the festival. Observations revealed that similar to Indian customs, people thoroughly cleaned their homes, signifying the removal of negativity and the welcoming of prosperity. Various community federations, including the Sanatan Dharma Temple Federation, organise their programs, indicating a solid community structure and collaborative spirit.

During the research period, attended a Ramayan Paath organised by the **Sanatan Dharma Temple Federation**, which included prominent figures such as the Prime Minister. This event, featuring speeches in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and Creole, exemplified the linguistic diversity and inclusivity within the community. The presence of leaders from different religions, including Islam, Christianity, and Confucianism, highlighted the pluralistic nature of Mauritian society and the Bhojpuri community's integrative approach. On Diwali day, the Hindu community engaged in traditional practices such as lighting diyas and decorating their homes with lights. Accompanying the *Ramdhuny family*, observed the distribution of sweets to friends and relatives, including Muslim families, indicating strong inter-communal bonds and the inclusive nature of the celebrations. The family performed a puja in the evening, followed by a communal dinner, reinforcing familial and social ties.

The Arya Samaj also played a significant role in the Diwali celebrations, organising events such as bhajans and educational sessions about the festival's significance. I attended a meeting led by *Dr. O. Narain Gangoo, President of the Hindi Speaking Union in Mauritius*, where the discussions linked the teachings of the Ramayana with the principles of Dayanand Saraswati. The session highlighted the importance of lighting diyas, with participation from all generations, showcasing the transmission of cultural and religious values across age groups.

These observations indicate that Diwali celebrations among the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius are a vital means of preserving cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion. The active participation of community federations and the inclusive nature of the celebrations illustrate how cultural practices are maintained and adapted within a multicultural context. The blending of traditional rituals with modern communal activities reflects the dynamic nature of cultural preservation. Furthermore, the involvement of multiple generations in these activities underscores the role of intergenerational transmission in sustaining cultural identity.

Collective Identity: By employing the observation method, these findings provide a nuanced understanding of how religious festivals like Diwali serve as a conduit for cultural continuity and social integration within the Bhojpuri diaspora. This sociological perspective highlights the significance of community engagement, intercommunal relationships, and the role of cultural institutions in maintaining the socio-cultural fabric of the Bhojpuri community in Mauritius.

The preparation of unique dishes during festivals is an integral part of Bhojpuri's cultural heritage in Mauritius. From the survey responses, it is evident that food plays a significant role in these celebrations. Traditional dishes such as khichri, laddoo, puri, kachori, roath, souji, gulab jamun, rasgulla, and biryani are commonly prepared during festivals like Diwali and Holi. These dishes symbolise the cultural identity of the Bhojpuri community and serve as a medium for intergenerational transmission of culinary knowledge. The sharing of food during communal meals enhances social bonds and reflects the collective spirit of the community. The Bhojpuri community in Mauritius celebrates a wide array of Hindu festivals similar to those in India. The survey responses indicate that major festivals include Mahashivratri, Diwali, Navratri, Holi, and Durga Puja. These festivals are religious observances and reinforce cultural continuity and community solidarity. The celebrations involve various rituals, public gatherings, and community events, which are crucial for maintaining the socio-cultural fabric of the Bhojpuri diaspora.

Festivals are celebrated at home and in communal spaces such as temples and community centres. For instance, Diwali is celebrated with the lighting of diyas, preparation of sweets, and performing pujas at home, while significant gatherings might occur in temples or Shivalayas. Maha Shivratri is often celebrated with grand public events at places like Grand Bassin (Ganga Talao), reflecting the communal nature of the festival. These practices demonstrate the adaptability of traditional rituals within the diasporic context and the importance of religious and cultural institutions in preserving cultural heritage. The involvement of family and community is a crucial aspect of festival celebrations. Respondents indicated that festivals are often celebrated with family members at home and with the community in temples. Activities such as performing Yagya, distributing sweets, and participating in communal meals foster a sense of belonging and reinforce social ties. Community federations also play a significant role in organising events, highlighting the collective effort to sustain cultural traditions.

Although younger participants expressed some disengagement from traditional rituals, they still recognised these festivals as essential to preserving Bhojpuri culture and their sense of belonging within the community. For many, festivals acted as a cultural anchor, even if their participation was more social than religious (Kumar, 2019). This underscores the resilience of cultural traditions in maintaining collective identity, even in a diasporic and globalised context.

The Domain of Tourism and Commercialisation of Bhojpuri Cultural Practices

The influence of tourism and commercialisation was another critical objective of the study, particularly in relation to how these external forces have shaped the performance and representation of Bhojpuri cultural practices.

Commercialisation of Festivals: The influence of tourism and commercialisation on Bhojpuri cultural practices in Mauritius is a complex dynamic where economic opportunities often intersect with concerns over cultural authenticity. Festivals such as Diwali and Durga Puja, integral to the Bhojpuri community, have increasingly become commercialised, with significant involvement from the Mauritian government and the private sector. This commercialisation is driven by efforts to promote these cultural events as attractions for local and international tourists, boosting tourism and contributing to the local economy. According to the *Mauritius Cultural Report* (2021), brochures and media coverage emphasise these festivals' grand spectacle, including elaborate decorations, performances, and public events. While these developments have provided financial support and expanded the visibility of Bhojpuri culture on a global stage, many community elders feel that these events' spiritual and cultural essence is being diluted. The transformation of these festivals into public spectacles risks turning intimate community rituals into commodified experiences designed for external consumption.

Tourism Impact: The impact of tourism is particularly evident in the organisation of Durga Puja, which has seen a shift in focus towards creating visually appealing and extravagant events aimed at attracting tourists. Research by Roy and Devi (2020) highlighted that elders in the Bhojpuri community expressed concerns that cultural commodification has led to prioritising tourist-friendly activities, such as large public parades and performances, at the expense of traditional practices. For instance, the sacred and personal nature of rituals performed during Durga Puja is sometimes overshadowed by the grandeur designed to capture international attention. This process, referred to as "spectacularisation," raises questions about the authenticity of these practices in their modern form, as they increasingly cater to external audiences rather than serving the needs of the local community. Commercialising these festivals aligns with broader trends observed in many global cultures, where tourism drives the modification of traditional practices to fit marketable formats (Roy & Devi, 2020).

Despite these challenges, commercialisation has also opened up avenues for cultural preservation through financial investment and increased interest in Bhojpuri cultural practices. Tourism has provided a platform for promoting Bhojpuri music, dance, and festivals internationally, and these practices have, in turn, gained more visibility on the global stage. The challenge remains to balance economic interests with cultural preservation, ensuring that the commercialisation of festivals does not entirely erode the traditional values and practices that define the Bhojpuri identity in Mauritius.

CONCLUSION

The research comprehensively explores the Bhojpuri diaspora in Mauritius, focusing on the intergenerational transmission of cultural practices, the impact of globalisation, and the influence of tourism and commercialisation. Bhojpuri cultural traditions, particularly festivals like Diwali and Durga Puja, music, dance, and attire, remain central to the community's identity. Elders are pivotal in transmitting traditional knowledge, ensuring cultural continuity through practices such as Geet-Gawai and traditional culinary customs. These customs foster social cohesion and a deep sense of cultural pride, especially during major religious and life events like weddings and festivals.

However, the research also highlights the effects of globalisation, which have led to the hybridisation of cultural practices, especially among younger generations. Integrating modern elements, such as Western musical instruments and contemporary attire, into traditional celebrations reflects a negotiation between maintaining heritage and adapting to external influences. This illustrates the dynamic nature of Bhojpuri culture, which evolves while preserving the core elements of its identity.

Tourism and commercialisation have further impacted the representation of Bhojpuri culture. Festivals, particularly Diwali and Durga Puja, are increasingly promoted as public spectacles, attracting tourists and economic opportunities. While this enhances visibility and financial support, it raises concerns about the potential dilution of the festivals' cultural authenticity. Elders, in particular, express unease about transforming intimate community rituals into commodified experiences for external consumption.

Additionally, the community's adherence to traditional dress during religious and cultural events underscores the symbolic significance of attire in expressing cultural identity. Despite gradually incorporating Western styles, traditional clothing plays a central role in major cultural celebrations, reflecting the community's enduring commitment to preserving its heritage.

In conclusion, the festivals and rituals of the Bhojpuri diaspora in Mauritius serve as essential conduits for reinforcing collective identity and fostering community solidarity. Despite the pressures of globalisation and commercialisation, the community's engagement with these cultural practices remains resilient. The adaptability of these rituals within the context of external influences and internal generational shifts signifies the dynamic nature of cultural preservation within the Bhojpuri diaspora, ensuring its continuity in a multicultural and globalised setting.

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