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Abstract. In Mauritius, the meeting between Indian worlds and Creole worlds, through the migration of the indentured labour which followed the abolition of slavery in 1834, gave birth to a style of music called 'chutney'. As a result of the African influence on an Indian folk genre, chutney music embodies the transformation of a music for listening into a music for dancing. In this article, the innovations brought into the choreographical dimension of the chutney groups will be taken as a key to understanding the adaptation of Indian rural migrants to a new 'Indian-oceanic' way of life through the experience of diaspora.

Introduction

[1] What the Mauritian is going through at the moment is a gradual (and almost imperceptible) dilution of traditional lifestyle and values, so that Asian communities are brought closer to 'general population'. Certainly in a few generations' time, everybody will be living a more or less Creole lifestyle (Ngcheong-Lum 2003: 56).[1]

[2] In the Indian Ocean, the meeting between Indian and Creole worlds, through the migration of the indentured labor which followed the abolition of slavery in 1834, gave birth to a style of music called 'chutney'. This term, which connotes a 'spicy' music, is also referred to as *chatkar* (flavour, explosive) or *dhamaka* (big sound, explosion). Whereas bhangra music comes from Punjab, the origin of chutney music lies in the rural folk music of Eastern India, namely in the Bhojpuri-speaking regions of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Arrival in Mauritius, cohabitation with the Creole population, working in the sugarcane factory, discovering sega music and the *ségatier* musician completely changed musical perception, practice and technique of composition. While studying the chutney music of Trinidad and Surinam, Peter Manuel (2000), Helen Myers (1998) and Tina Ramnarine (1996) explored the relation between Indian folk music, Guyanese kaseko[2] and Trinidadian calypso, but little is known about chutney as a Mauritian musical expression.

[3] If we examine the historicity of this musical form, we can see that it is linked to three transitional periods in the development of Mauritius as a nation. Firstly, it comes from the introduction of indentured labour of Indian origin into the sugarcane economy and the world of colonial plantations (1834-1884). Secondly, it has to do with the industrialization of the rural sector and the experimentation of the system of '*l'usine aux champs*' (the factory in the fields). Thirdly, it is linked to the redeployment of a new schema of migration towards the Western countries which especially affected the youth, aggravating the frustrations of an entire generation.

[4] As a result of the African influence on an Indian folk genre,[3] chutney music embodies the transformation of a music for listening into a music for dancing. In this regard, the innovations

[1] The population of Mauritius is composed of the following. 68% of people are of Indian origin: 51% Hindus, largely subdivided along various ethnic and regional lines (Hindi speaking and Tamil speaking) and 17% Muslims. Chinese are 1% (mainly from Hakka culture with some Cantonese speakers). Finally, 30% is considered 'general population' whose common denominator is some adhesion, active or simply symbolic, to Christianity.

[2] Kaseko is a Guyanese dance whose name comes from the French language *casser le corps* (breaking the body).

[3] On this music, see O'Henry (1988) and Servan-Schreiber (1999, 2003).

brought into the choreographical dimension of the chutney groups will be taken as a key to understanding the adaptation of Indian rural migrants to a new 'Indian-oceanic' way of life through the experience of diaspora. Creole and creolization in the Mauritian context are distinct from their West Indian counterparts. In Mauritius, 'the political nature of the term Creole suggests several things. First, that the category is still in the process of ethnogenesis and that existing interpretations of Creole-ness and Creole identity are being reviewed; second, that Mauritians are moving away from strictly cultural definitions of group identity, and third, that the Creole category is culturally open' (Boswell 2003: 21). In this context, Creoles are specifically those with ancestors from Africa, not any other communities that also came to settle. Creolization firstly refers to the African influence in musical genres, but also more generally to musical mutations stemming from contacts between distinct cultures.

The circulation of musical forms and the discovery of sega

[5]   Mauritian chutney music had a life of its own well before its Caribbean cousin, despite its delayed official recognition. Caribbean, especially zouk and reggae influence, is only a recent aspect of the Indian-oceanic process of contact and exchange. The origins of Mauritian chutney go back to the first settlements that came up around the plantations, at a time when Indian communities had just begun to arrive in the Caribbean.

[6]   Sugar cane plantation slaves used to dance 'during night feasts far from the colonist house on the rhythm of the Malagassy salega and the Mozambican tschiéga or chéga' (Ballgobin & Antoine 2003: 76). Contrary to many assumptions that sega was despised by the population of Indian origin, the rural community of the so-called 'back country', that is to say the parts of land near the sugarcane plantations where the indentured labour first settled, was deeply concerned by this music. The Mauritian musicologist and renowned teacher of Indian classical music Iswarduth Nundlall (1984: 47), coming himself from the Indian urban elite, took the trouble to define sega as 'the expression of Creole genius' in his analysis of Mauritian music. He explained how interesting the discovery of sega was as a dancing rhythm and a technique of improvisation. He evaluated similarities with the *nayaki* and *gayaki*, Indian musical styles, notwithstanding the fact that in sega, not only the melodies, but the lyrics also are improvised. Far from relating it to the Creole sense of idleness or indecency, as did the European travellers of the 19th century, he saw in this music 'the aptitude of a population to live in the present moment'. Though its initial use was a form of protest song and complaint of slavery, nowadays the *raison d'être* of sega, is also to *met la faya* (to make

people dance). This was the basis of its success inside and outside the Creole world. For Iswarduth Nundlall, this was a music so lively that no one can listen without taking part. This appreciation was fully shared by the Indian professional musical field: 'We like sega', comments Ravin Sowamber (2003), leader of the Bhojpuri Baja Baje Boys, 'because we speak the language and we understand the lyrics, but it's also for the dance'.

[7]   As underlined by Stéphane Dorin (2005) in his sociological study of jazz in Calcutta, the role of places where musical forms could circulate has to be taken into account. While the plantation system and the camp mode of habitation were long considered by the historians of indentured labour as harmful to the development of musical expression, not only did they allow for the perpetuation of musical habits, they also favoured innovations. Suchita Ramdin (2006), a well-known scholar on Bhojpuri music, herself having shared the culture of a tea estate in her childhood, considers that the camp was more favourable to the development of Indian popular music than later the village settlements, which were open to so many external influences.

[8]   Very early, as attested to by historical and literary sources, mutual musical discoveries took place. In Mauritius, where family histories are often shrouded in silence, and sound recordings from the past also a rarity, literature fills the gap in some measure. Access to literary documentation thus remains an important window to shared cultural practices. Inside the plantations, all the newly freed labour had not left. Places like maisons *de maîtres* (the masters' houses), wherein some former slaves were still working as domestic help (especially Malagasy people), were acting as *relais* (medium) of musical discovery, as in the Caribbean.[4] The shops of the Chinese traders, where everyone met, also provided opportunities for exchange.[5] According to testimonies, leisure and more specifically drinking habits during evening hours would bring people together. In their isolated situation, the young indentured were pleased to share musical evenings and to be admitted in the sega circles. So doing, they entered new cultural universes. Mentions of their musical discoveries can be found in Deepchand Beeharry's novel *That Others Might Live:* 'Like most men who had

[4] See the film *Biguine* by Guy Deslauriers, in which we can see the circulation of musical forms in Saint-Pierre, Martinique, between European and Creole worlds.

[5] 'Most of the men inside the Chinese shops were immigrants while the rest were Creoles of African origin' (Beeharry 1976: 52).

nobody waiting for them at home, Manish spent his evenings with other workers. A few Creoles and quite a lot of Malgaches. They lived mostly on the outskirts of the town, and could be seen, in the evening, at nightfall, sitting in their yards or in the verandah of nearby shops singing or dancing the sega' (Beeharry 1976: 240). In the *maison de maître* of a White colon, where he is working as a cook, a Creole man named Tatave introduces the coolie Manish to the sega tradition:

> - On week-ends, both young men and women meet under the coconut trees and dance. But we do not, like the Whites when they dance, hold each other's hands or wrists. No, we stand about one foot from each other and dance to the beats of the *ravanne*.
> - I am sorry, I do not know what is a *ravanne*. I know of the ten headed opponent of Rama who was called Ravana.
> - No, this *ravanne* is a musical instrument, large and round in shape. You know, of course, what is a tambour, a *dholak*, well, *ravanne* is a sort of *dholak* with one side only, but it has no body at all, like the *dholak*. Man, why don't you come? I'll get any girl to teach you how to *bouger bouger*.
> - What's that?
> - *Bouger* means shake, you shake your waist backward and forward too.
> - Do you think people will object?
> - *Pas tracas*! No worry! At a sega party, people dance, drink, enjoy themselves. They let themselves go. Who cares for colour or race? When the *ravanne* heats up you forget everything and you let yourself go. *Cause cause en bas en bas* (Beeharry 1976: 181).

[9]   Later on, another Creole friend named Paulo will initiate him to the sega performance:

> All the time Manish had been there watching the dancers turn and twist their bodies to the sound of the *ravanne* and the drums. He learnt to love the sega, ever since the evening he had been together with the young cook to the party. After all, he said to himself, I have seen something like it at home. Santhal tribal people and even village folk dance it to, perhaps, different instruments. So during the evenings, when Paulo was free, they would both go down to Les Casernes, where almost everyday sega parties were held. Then, it became a regular habit (Beeharry 1976: 241).

[10] In addition to the improvised evenings of sega performance, other places played an important part in musical discovery. The Creole bash created an important opportunity:

> You have to attend a Creole wedding to understand the intensity with which this community devotes itself to merrymaking. After the cake has been cut and everybody serves a slice, the bride and bridegroom open the ball with a Viennese waltz. Afterwards all kinds of music are played, with sega being the most popular. Every one joins in the fun, children dance with their grandparents, and many try to have a dance with the bride (NgCheong-Lum 2003: 91).

[11]   Ravin Sowamber described his own discovery of sega:

> When we are invited to a Creole wedding, we do not say, 'we are Hindu, we do not dance the sega'. Since my father was a tailor, he made me a good suit, so that I would look elegant at a Creole wedding. We are born here, and we grew up with descendants of African slaves, so why should we ignore each other? (Sowamber 2003).

[12]   A third crucial place for the circulation of musical forms was the fancy fair. The fancy fair, as a charity fair, took place in the courtyard of churches and was regularly organized by every parish on Sundays. It included a meal of *briani*,[6] beer drinking, a clothing market, games, and sega music performances. The greatest *ségatiers* like Ti-Frère, Serge Lebrasse, Gérard Louis, Michel Legris, started on the platform of fancy fairs. These spaces were not closed, but open to non-Christians. Many an indentured labourer, and later on, many Indo-Mauritians, even non-converted Tamil people would attend these specific events of Mauritian sociability.

The path of the musician and the stakes of chutney music

[13]   In the reconstitution of the history of chutney music, the study of the musician's path and his life story enables us to perceive the contradictory concerns and challenges he faced: displaying an 'Indian' inheritance inscribed in a folk tradition, and at the same time, showing his 'modernity' and belonging to a Creole environment, as well as showing to the Mauritian society as a whole that his music was meant for all Mauritians, and provided as satisfying an incentive for moving bodies and dancing as Creole music.

[14]   As the journalist Sedley Assonne deplored in his biography of the *ségatier* Gérard Louis, practically no attention is given in Mauritius to the personal history of the singer: 'in Mauritius, people are satisfied with listening to a tune. Nobody cares to know where the singer comes from' (Assonne 2004: 15). My study of the 300 singers who collectively constitute the field of chutney music reveals that the milieu is fairly homogeneous. From indentured workers established in rural or semi-urban zones, previously linked with sugarcane, most of the Indian hinterland (countryside) people were re-oriented towards the textile industry as factory-workers, or became vegetable-growers, grocers, customers, stretcher-bearers.

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[6] Mauritian pronunciation for *biriani*.

[15] Through his social status and education, the chutney singer shares common characteristics with other Indian Ocean musicians. Like the Creole *ségatier*, he often starts in a religious surrounding and succeeds through a TV or radio contest. He is not a full-time artist, he has another job, and tries his best to save time for his music. Yet, he maintains a specific personality, owing to his extremely diversified sources of inspiration: his inheritance includes the Indian medieval mystical tradition, the latest Bollywood film music, African rhythm, the classical-light 19th century European music through operettas and waltzes, modern disco and pop, from Europe and America.

[16] Similar to the European composer studied by Pierre-Michel Menger (2001) or the flamenco musician Lucas Carmona filmed by Michael Meert, the chutney singer follows his family's (father, uncle) hereditary tradition. He begins in a temple by singing religious hymns, *bhajans* and *kirtans*, and/or performs on the occasion of the *gamat*, the Saturday night musical event linked to the wedding reception, inside *la tente mariage* (green tent or wedding tent). He quite often wishes to get instruction in vocal Hindustani music, and therefore seeks out the help of a teacher. He takes part in numerous, not to say endless contests, not only at a national or international level, but also among the chutney singers themselves.[7] His greatest ambition: to be allowed to play in Mauritian hotels for tourists, like the Creole *ségatier*, and to be invited on European stages. As the Malagasy musician studied by Julien Mallet (2008), he sings devotional songs in the temples, plays pop music on stage and provides musical wedding entertainment; he also performes in numerous social functions (house-warming, birthdays, political meetings, trade union meetings, and so on). Yet, because he is not as famous as the Creole musician, he has to constantly negotiate, even more arduously than the *ségatier*, his participation in stage concerts and his insertion into the World Music networks.

[17] Here are the lyrics of some of them:

> I live in Rivière des Créoles, near Mahébourg. I was born in a very poor family of labourers, sugar-cane field workers. My grandfather was a musician. He would play (the) violin. I used to love music, and I also loved the kavis, the poets, the bhajans, the kirtans, and the folk songs of the coolies. I started singing at around. Now I have a troupe of dancing girls. When our ancestors came, when we arrived in Mauritius, we discovered the sega music. We like the sega music of Serge Lebrasse and Ti-frère, because it has two common traits with our music. It tells about ancient times and the ancestors, but it also talks about change and a possible new world. We also include *chule*, whistlings, because it is the Mauritian style... (Sewpaul 2006).

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[7] Including the most famous Bhojpuri Bahaar (song contest) on TV, very similar to the Trinidadian Bhojpuri Bahaar.

> I was born in 1941. I created the Dhamaka group. My ancestors came from Bihar, 150 years ago. My father was a barber, he would play harmonium and banjo. My mother would sing traditional wedding songs in Bhojpuri. I started by learning *cantiques*. I belong to Arya Samaj [a religious reform movement], but the sega rhythm is essential to me (Nuckcheddy 2006).

> My father was a charcoal-burner in Brisée-Verdière. Where did my family come from? From Africa? From Mozambique? From Madagascar? I do not know. When I was born, in 1943, we were too poor to go to school. But the *baithka* [Indian education system] was free, and I wanted to learn. I bought a *bal shiksha* [an alphabet] for two rupees. I learned the Hindi alphabet. Slowly slowly I learned the letters. I took lessons in vocal Hindustani music with a Pandit of Chemin Grenier and I became a chutney singer (Lagare 2006).

[18]   The Gowry Brothers (twin singers in their 60s) say that 'We wanted to take Bhojpuri music beyond the sugar estates, leave the wedding-tent and go on the stage. We sang in Bhojpuri and in Creole' (Gowry Brothers 2007). For Anilsingh Ramessur (2007), a 40-year-old radio talk show host and singer, 'We sing chutney. By singing chutney, we become international'. Biswanee Deepoa (2007), a 38-year-old female singer, adds 'We put sega rhythm in our composition. If we do not transform our music in the sega style, nobody will listen to our lyrics, nobody will be interested in our music'.

[19]   In the context of migration, the discovery of a different body language and a different attitude towards leisure played a major role. Indian people were perceived as very puritanical, obsessed with saving money to purchase land, and insisting on education as a value. Creole people were perceived as idle and merry-making, but their ability to enjoy life and have fun was also much admired. Progressively, in the musical field, the ability of sega to make people dance was seen as something lacking in Indian folk music. The famous *ségatier* Ti-Frere explains:

> *Ban Endyen madam, ban Endyen dir mwa Vilmen, packe Endyen zot dir: 'Tonton, kan u sega la santé kumsa, nu levé, nu trap zup, nu dansé! Sa li bon lagam, sa, li don la gam pu nu dansé* [A lot of Indian women they tell me: Uncle, when you sing like this, when you sing this rhythm, we stand up, we catch our skirts, and we dance. It creates an atmosphere, it encourages us to dance] (Le Chartier 1993: 24).

[20]   Keeping in mind the historical background of Indian folk music, its differences with sega are vast. In the sega orchestra, instruments form a musical ensemble composed of *ravanne*, *maravanne* and triangle. Sega includes onomatopoeias and *chule* (whistling), to encourage people to

join the dance circle. In the transformation process of the chutney music, the tempo became faster, sega rhythm was easily adopted. The *ravanne* percussion was included. *Chule* were added to encourage the dancers on the stage. Even some new themes similar to those in sega's singers lyrics were incorporated into the chutney inspiration. The choreography question became more delicate because chutney music involves not only writing Indian compositions to a sega rhythm, but also adopting and adapting a type of dance capable of competing with sega performance.

From compromise to innovation: Acquiring a new body language

[21] For the musicians of Indian origin, the question of adaptation to the sega universe implied not only a transformation of melody but also of choreograph**y.** The presence of dancing girls accompanying the groups, as in the sega tradition, became necessary. Yet, Hindu parents would not allow their daughters to perform on stage. They thought it was shameful. 'Previously, many parents did not allow their daughters to sing, not to speak of dance, in public. Even the folk dances were performed only by elderly ladies and married women. Girls were not allowed to dance even in family circles' (Bhagat-Ramyad 2007: 21). Therefore, as explained by Hurry Boodnah (2006), a chutney singer of Petit Sable, 'in the beginning, some Catholic girls used to help the groups by creating and performing choreographies'. Later on, in order to widen the audience to the European and Creole world and gain a prestige that the Indian folk-singing alone did not offer, a complete scenographic reorientation was introduced. The habit of including a troupe of Indian dancing girls began. Yet there were restrictions.

[22] Let us now examine the sega costumes and choreography. The singer is accompanied with dancing girls wearing blouses showing the breasts, showing the belly. Lifting their long skirts they show their thighs and legs**.** 'For a long time, sega was associated with 'suggestive and lascivious' contortions, and as such, it was frowned upon by the Church and the upper rungs of Creolo-Mauritian society' (Ballgobin & Antoine 2003: 77). In sega choreography, the woman dances with a male partner, and, though she never touches him, the gestures simulate a sexual relation.[8]

[23] In Surinam or Trinidad, the chutney dancers have fully adopted the Creole swaying and Creole costume. But Mauritian families of Indian origin are not ready to have such a display of the female body. Even when parents allowed their daughters to perform on stage, it was only until they reached marriageable age. Consequently, once they reached the age of 16 or 17, they stopped

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[8] See the YouTube songs *Séga Diva* and *Kan tambour baté* by Nancy Dérougère, and Ti Frère's *Papitou***.**

performing. Therefore they always remained beginners, with little experience, and hardly possessed the womanly seduction of professional *ségatières* or oriental belly dancers.[9] The fact that they most often belonged to the singers' families added to difficulties because they were not selected according to real professional criteria.

The scenography of the bhojpuri 'bachelorette party' as a prelude to chutney

[24]   In Bhojpuri Indian villages, folk dancers called *laundas* (male transvestites) execute what Edward O'Henry has described as 'the pelvian rotation':

> The *launda* is a female impersonator, dancer and singer, who may dance opposite a male dancer playing a male role. His role is an institutional correlate of *purdah*, that is a role which fits logically with the seclusion of women from public life (there are, however, a few women who dance in formal entertainment groups). The *launda*'s performance ranges from pleasantly sensual to lewd. The *launda* makes a jerky hip dancing. He circles and turns with a gyrating pelvis, often one hand on his hip and the other behind his head. He might also lean back with his bent legs spread and arms in the air, jerk towards his leering, slightly crouched and pelvis-thrusting partner, who with hand at crotch level motions with his upraised thumb. At low caste gatherings, women sometimes cluster near or around the band and dance with other women, or rarely male kin, in this style (O'Henry 1988: 196).

[25]   Their bodily movements differ greatly from the sega dancing approach. Nevertheless, a spirit of fusion is created through the dancing tradition transmitted by women in the wedding ritual context, which provides a basis for a new tropical pattern. During the *Mati Kora* (a wedding ritual consisting of digging the earth and bringing it back home as an auspicious token), women go outside and pick up a bit of dirt to put near the vedic altar, then they sing and dance performing a downward gesture, a movement considered to be the origin of chutney dance style in Trinidad (Ramnarine 1996). According to Peter Manuel,

> Caribbean chutney choreography itself is essentially an Indian folk style, with perhaps greater emphasis on pelvic rotation. The conventions surrounding it, however, are a mixture of traditional Indian and contemporary Creole. In some respects, they appear to be a contextualization of Indian wedding dance customs (Manuel 2000: 174).

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[9] See the YouTube song *Dhobi de classe* by Jean-Claude Gaspard.

[26]   In Mauritius, added to the *Mati Kora* body language, another kind of dancing contributed to the elaboration of modern group choreography: the performing of *git gawai*. This is done before the celebration of the wedding at the bride's place as well as the bridegroom's place, corresponding to the bachelor's party and the bachelorette party. During this entertainment, women have 'their spicy rendering' (Boodhoo 1993, 1999). Being considered highly erotic, transgressive and provocative, it is performed by married women, and forbidden to male public and children. The name of the dance is *jhumar*, from 'to swing, to oscillate'. The body movement is an oriental double sway with the right hip, then with the left hip.
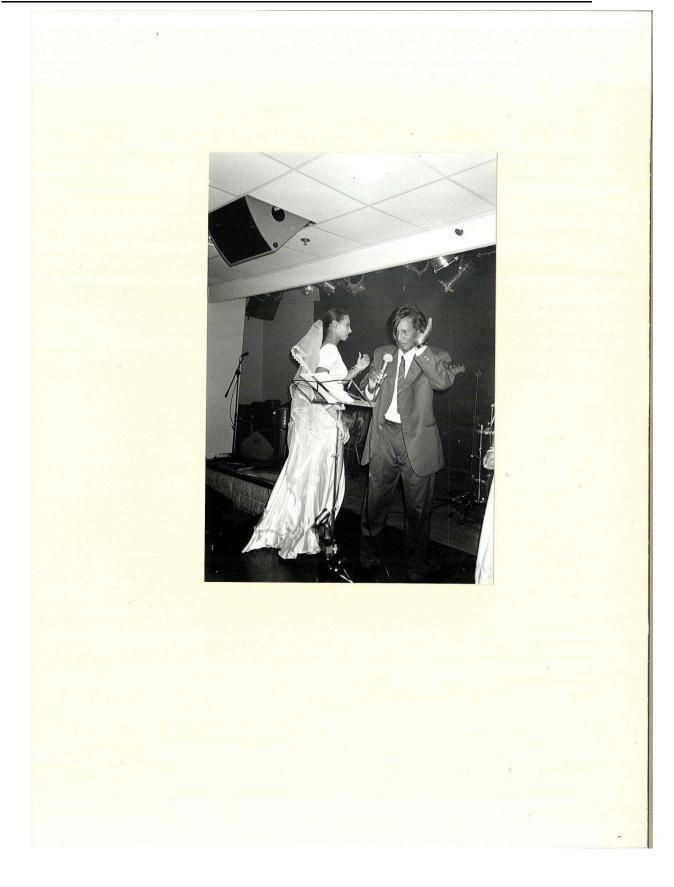
The reinvention of folklore and folk dance choreography

[27]   Except for this specific *jhumar* choreography, the Bhojpuri traditional folk dance of the villages is perceived as somewhat rudimentary and never attained the fame of the *garbho* dance in Gujarat or bhang*ra* in the Punjab. In the context of migration, the reinvention of folklore and the re-creation of dance choreography become both a stake and an important facet of cultural activity.

[28]   The costume is not as erotically attractive as the *ségatières* blouse, but becomes a compromise between rural Indian style and more voluptuous solutions. In the same way as people travel to Bombay before a wedding in order to purchase the bride's, bridegroom's and wedding party's wardrobe, 'shopping travels' to Bombay are organized to provide stage costumes which hardly look like those of the 'ancestral land'. Colours are sometimes chosen to better match the Creole ambiance. Indian skirts or saris may be exchanged for boleros and sega skirts.

[29]   The choreography becomes a mixture of more sophisticated 'village folk' dance, Bollywood gesture, and sega scenography. A new 'folk village style' results, which is partly traditional, partly Creole. Since the dancing girls are not allowed to lift up their skirts, they lift their muslin veils. And they dance rotating around the singer, like in seg**a.** The result was very successful. The reception both in the press and among the public was very enthusiastic. The 'mixture of Indian folk steps and sega dance' was lauded as a 'renaissance' (Legrand 2005).

Figure 1. Picture of Sona Noyan with a dancing girl of his troupe rotating around him
(© Catherine Servan-Schreiber)

[30]   In the era of globalized musical forms, this specific chutney phenomenon is not isolated. In Africa, new 'stage' choreographies are created in a similar fashion. Sarah Andrieu (2008) has shown the discovery and re-appropriation of new choreographic forms, new aesthetics and new ways of using local customs in Burkina Faso, while Elina Djebbari (2008) has analyzed how the Mali national Ballet had been recomposing traditional elements.

The role of 'cultural brokers' and 'identity entrepreneurs'

[31]   In the process of re-creation of folklore and creolization, the central figure of the musical arranger must be emphasized. On each cover of a chutney band's LP, the name of a musical arranger, be it Henriot Figaro, José Mathieu or Claro Bignioux, appears. Several encounters with Henriot Figaro, in the recording studio of Rose-Hill, helped me to comprehend his influence. Acting also as a go-between, he is one of the rare musicians I encountered during my fieldwork who really earns a living with his music. He plays the keyboard, guitar and percussions. Living in Cité Kennedy, at Quatre Bornes, Henriot Figaro had an Indian ancestor, a coach driver from Pondicherry married to a Creole woman. As the name suggests, everyone is addicted to music in the Figaro family, but in a rather European or Creole style. Henriot Figaro's father used to play the banjo, with a double bass. But this leading figure is not the only arranger. Often, people of similar Creole origin play many roles - such as Jean-René Bastien, Pascal Eddy, Yannick Voltrin, Sylvio Lynx, Samuel Paul, Gérard Louis, Desiré Saramandif – and this is true as well for Indo-Mauritians, like Ravin Sowamber or Nand Ramdin.

[32]   At another level, cultural entrepreneurs, also considered as 'diasporic leaders' or 'community leaders' (on these notions, see Carsignol 2009), *i.e.* renowned personalities such as Sarita Boodhoo or Suchita Ramdin, use the reinterpretation and rescuing of tradition as a creative process that in turn influences choreography.[10] While creating informal or official programmes on the stages of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and the Mauritius Bhojpuri Institute, they play a major role in Mauritian sociability. Coming from the urban elite, very familiar with the contemporary Indian scene through their professions or militant vocations, they are involved in the reinvention of folklore and 'glamourization' of stern Bhojpuri choreography, rethinking both costumes and body motions. A first step occurred in the 1980s when the Seva Shivir Movement and the Mauritius Bhojpuri Institute,

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10 On the use of transforming the folk patrimony or the musical tradition as a creative process, see Sara Le Menestrel (2010).

launched by Sarita Boodhoo, reasserted the value of the patrimony of Bhojpuri songs that were inherited from 'an ancestral culture' (Boodhoo 1999). The *Sit-Basant* Hindi-Bhojpuri play was rewritten, for instance*.* It was followed by regular programmes at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, such as *Parampara* by Suchita Ramdin and Nand Ramdin. Gilles Tarabout (2003) has shown the role of cultural entrepreneurs from Kerala who, in the same way, use folk dance or folk theatre patrimonies in order to inspire their own creation. Their aims go beyond mere patrimonalization. Folk arts become also a source of inspiration, combining 'primitivist freshness' and 'the assertion of an originality' (Tarabout 2003: 48). Focusing on Kerala as well, Christine Guillebaud (2008a, 2008b) has shown how the performance scenography of folk village orchestras has changed by being brought on stage or under the impulse of the folk music industry.

Amizer santer danser (enjoy, sing and dance): Adopting Creole values

[33]   As stressed by Peter Manuel (2000: 172) for the Caribbean zone**,** 'what is dramatically new about modern chutney is not its style but its flouting of the social inhibitions that were previously restricted to dance, and its re-contextualization of a form of public culture enjoyed and performed by men and women together'. He recalls that in the beginning:

> Chutney-style dancing was done largely by lower-class women in the sexually segregated context of the wedding and other domestic rituals. Owing to the migratory experience, and through the chutney expression, the dancing practice has been changed from a private confidential feminine custom into an open, public stage performance (Manuel 2000: 171).

[34]   Like most dances in India, chutney is not primarily a couple's dance. Two dancers come informally and gyrate near each other on the dance floor and typically part without ceremony or conversation. Yet, in Mauritius, its introduction has changed the relation to dancing in couples, much before the mediatization of Bollywood choreographies. The evolution from the *gamat* (wedding entertainment music) style to a more modern and spicy style, the equivalent of Caribbean chutney, has followed several steps. Around 1994, new musical groups appeared: Bhojpuri Boys, Bhojpuri Lovers, Bhojpuri Kings, Bhojpuri Melodies, Bhojpuri Baja Baje Boys, Massala Chutnee, Mix Chutnee... Their coloured costumes, their dancing girls and the sound of their fusion melodies struck all audiences.

[35]   In 1995, the musical show entitled *Traditional Odyssey* confirmed the public emergence of the chutney style. Under the impulse of the Mauritius Bhojpuri Institute and the French cultural centre Charles Baudelaire, a musical programme combining jazz, sega, Tamil music, Sufi *qawwali* songs,

Bhojpuri folk music (*jhumars*) and devotional music brought together Linley Marthe, Menwar, Gilles Renne, Philippe Sellam, Kasseven Cunden, Momo Manancourt, Meera Mohun and the group of traditional Bhojpuri female singers of Vallée des Prêtres. Tamil instruments (*morlons*) and North Indian percussions (*dholak*, drums) partnered with jazz instruments and European brass instruments.

[36]   Sega borrowings and reinvention of Bhojpuri folklore led to adopting, yet changing, the Creole values of entertainment. Specific Creole expressions linked to the field of leisure were translated, though in a more prudish fashion, to Hindi and Bhojpuri. *Bouge-bouger, bouger les reins* (come on, move your butt) became *kamar dolna* (move your waist). The Creole credo *Amizer santer danser* was often quoted in the chutney lyrics.

[37]   The chutney singer understands that public dancing is an essential part of Indian merriment. The tent singer (*chanteur la tente*) hence insists on the fact that his performance is able to create an atmosphere that inspires people to dance.[11] The song *Hum ta nachila* (We dance) from the album *Mauritian Chutney*, by Anilsingh Ramessur and Kavita Mundhill, demonstrates this change of mentality:

> *Disco mein, gamat mein, ham nachila, Piknik mein, party mein, la tente mein, ham nachila* [In the night club, in the wedding party, in the picnic, in the party, in the wedding tent, we dance] / Sometimes it's a party, sometimes it's a wedding party / One plays *lota*, one plays *chimta* / Some dance to disco, some to chutney / We dance, we dance! / Let's dance, let's dance![12]

[38] Women are progressively allowed to dance in public, even encouraged. Many chutney songs like *Natcho béti* or *Nac ré béti* (Dance my daughter) by Pokhun or others like *Nac meri jan* (Dance my beloved) express this new permissivity, and this changing attitude towards dance. We can see it as well in Hurry Boodnah's *Bhojpuri Pop Séga*:

> *Man bhar nach goria, jee bhaarke nach / Sab koyi tora dekhke / Kamaria dolaye / Sab koyi tora dekhke* (Dance as long as you wish my pretty / For when they see you / They will all move their waist like you do).

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[11] Exactly as in Surinam, where chutney singer Kries Ramkhelawan claims 'Indian chutney dance can get people to dance just as well as soca dance does' (Servan-Schreiber 2010).

[12] The *lota* (small round pot of brass or copper) and the *chimta* (tongs) are used as percussions.

Women's emancipation through chutney

[39] Indeed, the topic of the emancipation of rural woman of Indian origin came to inspire many chutney lyrics. This is a new development. For more than a century, chutney music was devoted to the commemoration of the story of migration and indentured labour, describing either the ship (as in 'Slowly slowly the waves moves'), or the crossing of the dark waters (as in *'Kala pani* [Black water]'). The *bideshiya* (the one who expatriates) was the central figure of this migration saga. Numerous songs would celebrate the coolie working in the sugarcane field, showing him as a victim or as a hero. The antagonism with the colonial world and the White man as a figure of hatred were the background of most of the songs. Like in 'Bhojpuri *kavita*' by Rishideo Rambally (a singer from Petite Rivière): 'From India and Africa, slaves and coolies have been brought together / They sweat and bled together / Even when the UK were beating them, they remained strong'. Nowadays, other causes supply themes to chutney music: mainly, women's empowerment. The woman is no longer a miserable housewife, abandoned by an adventurous migrant. She has to face the problem of male alcoholism, absenteeism and violence. But the songs also show her as seductive, as questioning her situation and speaking openly. This trend of chutney music is reflected in the song *'Dhall pakayli*' by Anilsingh Ramessur and Kavita Mundhill: 'I work all day long at the factory / I cook rice and dhall-puris / While you remain idle / Enjoying yourself / Going to the movies'. In *Shadi Karke* (After marriage), Biswanee Deepoa sings: 'When the husband comes back home/ The wife says: do not leave the house / Do the housework / Don't waste time / Clean up the house / Go and get some water / Bake a cake / Clean up the garage / And no badinage!'

[40] The new migration policy, applied after the recent European legislation on sugar production, allowed the young Mauritian girl to migrate by herself, no longer risking blame for traveling *akeli* (alone) abroad, as reflected in the songs 'La France' and 'New Departure (*Naya Sirey*)' by the Bhojpuri Boys. In the YouTube video of '*Naya Sirey*', the girl's fiancé remains alone on the sea-shore, while the parents wave their handkerchiefs, as the plane which is taking her to France, for 'a new beginning', flies in the sky.

Figure 2. *Thela-Theli* by Vinod Sewduth and his dancing girls wearing sega costumes (courtesy of Vinod Sewduth)

Conclusion

[41]   As underlined by Rajend Mesthrie (1992) in his study on *Language in Indenture: A Socio-linguistic History of Bhojpuri-Hindi in South-Africa*, 'symbolic attachment to Indian languages in term of watching films, performing prayers, listening to music and songs are aspects much underestimated in the study of migration and diaspora'. Yet, this statement immediately brings to mind Peter Manual's (2000: 2) question about the paradoxical role of music in the Caribbean migratory context: 'the chutney vogue is profoundly and dynamically contradictory, reflecting at once the revival and the dilution of Indo-Caribbean culture. But it serves also a new national culture'. Indeed, how to forget the influence of the musical field in the debate on 'Creole future or modernized Indianity' (Hookoomsing 2000: 203)?

[42]   Whereas sega performance, including musical instruments costumes and choreography, is usually presented as nourished in part by Indian aesthetics,[13] a different approach was emphasized

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[13] Some Mauritian scholars or musicians consider the *ravanne* as a South Indian drum. Some also say that the costume of the *ségatières* is inspired by an Indian clothing, and that the choreography borrows from Indian folk village dances.

here. As far as leisure culture is concerned, Indian communities' diasporic experiences lead to different patterns. In the United States, the Muslim youth of South Asian origin does not appear particularly reluctant to share the quest of happiness and entertainment (fun) of the American society; but it does so with an 'elective attitude' (Mohammad-Arif 2000: 111). The notion of shared leisure implies, for instance, the celebration of common festivals, such as Thanksgiving and Halloween. In the Caribbean chutney culture, the use of English is more developed. The body language, choreographies and lyrics are much more sexually liberated as well.

[43]   In the case of the Mauritian musical evolution, transformations continually occur, revealing the influence of reggae, zouk, Bollywood bhangra, raï and Latina dances (Goreau-Ponceaud & Servan-Schreiber forthcoming). Reggae has left its imprint on sega concert scenography. Some female sega dancers take the posture of reggae feminine choirs, wearing long straight skirts, and high turbans like rasta women. They move about in a chorus line in a much sterner manner than previously. With globalization, all the musical networks, that usually converge in festivals, are in full mutation. A new 'Ragga indiz' style appears. Among the chutney singers, the connections with the Caribbean world, which were first strictly woven through Indian diaspora networks, have changed. They focus more on Afro-Caribbean networks.

[44]   In Mauritius, the popularity of Creole sega, now considered to be a national music, remains superior to any other. The transformation of the Indian folk style, beyond choreographical and musical fields, has not only changed its relationship with the wider Mauritian society, but also the inter-community dynamic within the South Asian diaspora itself. As an expression of hybridized culture and identity, chutney symbolizes communal de-compartmentalization in Mauritius, leading to a celebration of Mauritian pluralism *per se*. It reveals the transversal nature of the relationship between hitherto distinctly defined, separate, Indian and Creole communities. More generally, this turn towards new sources of inspiration demonstrates the cultural autonomy of the Indian diaspora vis-à-vis the centre. It reveals the creativity of musicians in the diaspora, and underlines the role of music and dance as genres most likely to reflect social mutations, and as being themselves agents of further transformation.

[45]   As Monique Desroches points out,

Musical phenomena in societies in diaspora cannot be understood in the same way as in traditional sedentary societies. Migration, voluntary or forced, sets off mechanisms of adjustment within both migrant and host communities. More importantly, distancing over space and time transforms social, cultural and

religious values, leading migrants to define themselves in relation to their current social context quite as much as their origins (Desroches 2003: 216).

[46]On questions of identity expression, and especially of cultural creation in diaspora, chutney throws new light on modes of artistic production and on the transformation of cultural heritage in migratory situations. It especially shows the ever more distant links between music as practiced in the 'source country' (India) and in Mauritius, in contrast with the ever closer contact and relationship amongst neighbouring diasporic communities (within the West Indies, the Indian Ocean, etc.) Hence, the study of chutney can afford new insights into the study of diaspora, overly centred on 'vertical' relationships of diasporic communities with their states of origin or adoption, neglecting the equally important recognition of 'horizontal' relations between diasporic communities (Ma Mung 2005).

[47]In the Mauritian musical field, the spirit of competition cannot but recall the competition between Hindus and Creoles in Surinam as studied by Maurits Hassankhan (1997). But much more than this is involved. As a result of the creolization of musical forms and perceptions, a feeling of distance from the country of origin pervades, as well as a sentiment of a shared Mauritian identity. As put by Ramesh (a 63-year-old cosmetics salesman), 'when we go back to India, we are very pleased. Our heart is touched. But very quickly, when we look at Indian people, we realize we are different. They are stiff, they do not know how to *bouze-bouzer* (move). We know how to move our hips and bottoms. We are Mauritians' (Ramesh 2007). The progressive replacement of the term chutney by 'sega Bollywood' shows the recognition of the creolization process, and legitimates two influences: an ancient one, from Africa, and a new one, from India. Even though it may be adopted for commercial purposes, in the perspective of being granted a 'World Music label' so to speak, it reveals a deep change. Though keeping its own specificity and historicity, chutney music is undergoing an evolution which now takes it beyond the island of Mauritius. The islands of the Indian Ocean produce various types of music; in order to understand their dynamics and future transformations, it is now necessary to gather and compare information on how cultural industries and forms from African, Creole, or Indian networks circulate.[14]

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