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Managing Multi-Ethnic Mauritius

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Abstract - Title: Managing Multi Ethnic Mauritius Multi Ethnic Mauritius management has since long been subject to criticisms. Members of different ethnic groups always blame Government for failure to satisfy their ethnic group requirements. There is often shifting of blames at all levels when things do not work. Forty years have passed since independence and there is the perception that we have failed to build a nation. Most people still put their ethnic identities before their national identities. The few who claim to be Mauritians complain that their demands are rarely met by authorities. In one way or the other the majority of our population is of opinion that leaders are not managing the country effectively. The main aim of this paper is to examine the causes of ethnic tension and ethnic conflict and the extent to which we have been able to manage them. The paper also looks into the management responsibility – more precisely-whether the state really plays its role effectively. The principal observation is that some state stakeholders are not playing their roles effectively. Finally, we come up with a new model of leadership- Global Benchmark Leader - which is required to manage multi ethnic Mauritius thereby leading towards nation building and its consolidation.

Keywords : *Multi Ethnic Mauritius, ethnic groups, ethnic conflict, global benchmark leader and nation building.*

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Managing Multi-Ethnic Mauritius

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Abstract Title : Managing - Multi Ethnic Mauritius
Multi Ethnic Mauritius management has since long been subject to criticisms. Members of different ethnic groups always blame Government for failure to satisfy their ethnic group requirements. There is often shifting of blames at all levels when things do not work. Forty two years have passed since independence and there is the perception that we are still struggling hard to consolidate nation building. Most people still put their ethnic identities before their national identities. The few who claim to be Mauritians complain that their demands are rarely met by authorities. In one way or the other, the majority of our population is of opinion that leaders are facing difficulties to manage the country effectively. The main aim of this paper is to examine the causes of ethnic tension and ethnic conflict and the extent to which we have been able to manage them. The paper also looks into the management responsibility, more precisely as to whether the state really plays its role effectively. For the purpose of this paper, the methodology includes the use of secondary data and observation for the sake of reflection, discussion and analysis of the functioning of the society. The principal observation is that some state stakeholders are not playing their roles effectively. A new model of leadership- Global Benchmarking Leader- is required to manage multi-ethnic Mauritius with the view to consolidate nation building. Finally, a conclusion based on the study is stated.

Keywords : Multi-Ethnic Mauritius, ethnic groups, ethnic conflict, ethnic tension, global benchmarking leader.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mauritius is normally known as the paradise of the Indian Ocean. It is a true multi-ethnic society where each group has its own culture and tradition. In the last three decades, much progress and development have taken place in the country. The rate of economic growth has varied between 3 to 5 percent on an average. Successive governments have often called upon the population to join hands for the sake of economic development. The positive response from the population has been beneficial for the country. However, there is the perception that too much emphasis has been laid on economic growth thereby neglecting the social development. One of the major problems that remains unsolved is the management of the diversity of people by the state. It has been noticed that a few members of the major stakeholders - be they politicians, religious leaders, socio- cultural groups or the private sector - do not play their roles and fulfill their duties in a responsible manner.

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Our multi-ethnic Mauritius is still a very fragile society as far as the social aspect is concerned. Although there is the growing belief that we have been able to develop the sense of 'mauritianism' yet the majority of the population is of opinion that we are facing much difficulties to sustain and consolidate a true Mauritian nation where everyone would put their national identity before the ethnic one.

With modernity and economic development in Mauritius, one would have thought that ethnicity would decrease in importance and eventually vanish. This did not happen. On the contrary, ethnicity is becoming so visible in our country that it is becoming impossible to ignore such a phenomenon. The perception of being discriminated against and feeling of dissatisfaction by any ethnic group may lead to ethnic tension and ultimately ethnic conflict which can impact on the socio-economic stability and development. Therefore, it is high time for all the stakeholders of the state: the government, the private sector, socio-cultural groups, religious leaders and media to think seriously about the effective management of the diverse ethnic groups. Good leadership at all levels is required to manage the country and consolidation of nation building in order to sustain future growth and development.

The main aim of this paper is to examine the causes of ethnic tension and ethnic conflict and the extent to which we have been able to manage them. The paper also looks into the management responsibility- more precisely-whether the state really plays its role effectively. For the purpose of this paper, the methodology includes the use of secondary data and observation for the sake of reflection, discussion and analysis of functioning of the society.

The first part of this paper will deal with an overview of the ethnic composition of the Mauritian society. Then, a brief literature on ethnicity, causes of ethnic tensions and ethnic conflict will follow. In the second part, we shall discuss the state policies dealing with ethnic management of the society. Finally, a conclusion based on the paper will be stated.

II. MAURITIUS: THE MAKING OF A MULTI ETHNIC SOCIETY

The Republic of Mauritian consists of the island Mauritius, Rodrigues, St.Brandon and Agalega. In this study, Mauritius is used to mean the island of Mauritius only. The term mauritian will be used to refer to anyone of Mauritian nationality. Mauritius is made up of four

main 'ethnic groups' namely: Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Chinese. Non of these groups has a homogenous population. Although the term 'Hindu' is used to refer to those descended from Northern India (Benedict Burton, 1961), in this essay the word 'Hindu' would mean to refer to the follower of any sect or branch of Hinduism. Consequently, the Tamils, Telegus, Marathis, and the Gujaratis will all be included under the 'Hindu Community'. The term 'Indians' will also be used to mean the 'Hindus'.

The term 'Muslims' will mean a follower of 'Islam' (Benedict Burton, 1961). Under the 'Muslim

Community' we shall include all other followers of the Islam religion. The 'Creole community' is also a heterogeneous one. It includes the Franco Mauritians, Mulattoes and the Afro-Mauritians. The term 'Creole' will be used to refer to any member of the Christian religion. The term 'Chinese' refers to any mauritian of Chinese birth or descent. In Mauritius, it has been found that many descendants of the Chinese population have embraced the Christians religion and are referred to as 'Creole-sinois' who forms part of the 'creole community'. Table 1 gives us an idea of the composition of the population.

Table 1: Population of Mauritian for the year 1972 and 2000.

Religion	Year 1972		Year 2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
Hindus	421,705	51	584,983	51.2
Muslims	136,996	16.6	195,393	17.1
Creole	258,393	31.3	344,967	30.2
Chinese	5,701	0.7	8,149	0.7
Other	3,404	0.4	9,031	0.8
Total	826,199	100	1,143,069	100

Source : CSO, Port Louis (census 1972 and 2000).

From the above table, we find the percentage of population of the different ethnic groups over the last three decades remained fairly constant. Hindus which represented 51% of the total population in 1972, have rather the same percentage according to the 2000 census that is 51.2%. The Creole population has slightly decreased from 31.3% in 1972 to 30.2% in 2000 while the Muslim population has slightly increased from 16.6% in 1972 to 17.2% in 2000. The Chinese population, although increased in numbers, has remained the same in terms of percentage of the total population.

Mauritius is therefore a multi-ethnic society where we have different ethnic groups living generally in peace, harmony and stability. However, each ethnic group has its own specificities in terms of language, culture and religion. For instance, the Muslim community has its particular dress, food (briani), language, norms, values and belief system. The same are for Christians, Chinese and Hindus.

All communities are condemned to live in the same territory sharing the same social and political institutions. This has led Mauritians to develop certain shared characteristics which make social life and social relationships possible. Some of the common features of the Mauritians society are common language (Creole, English and French), common food (Kentucky Fried Chicken and dhol puri), common dress (wearing of American Jeans and T-Shirts) and common values (educational achievement, parliamentary democracy and good governance).

These commonalities have contributed much for the peaceful coexistence of the various ethnic

groups. Moreover, the tolerant nature of the population plus their mutual understanding, cooperation and common work ethnics have led Mauritius to gain enormous amount of progress in the last three decades.

III. ETHNICITY

There is no universal definition of the term 'Ethnicity'. Thomas Eriksen (1993) uses the term to refer to the aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as culturally distinctive. On the other hand, Steve Fenton (1999) regards ethnicity as comprising ancestry, culture and language of an ethnic group. For Ralph Premdas (1993) Ethnicity refers to the collective consciousness of ethnic group and also to the bases of affinity which means that a group has common language, religion, customs and traditions. All the writers seem to lay emphasis on the commonness of culture in their definitions of ethnicity. Although, different groups have their own culture yet social life has been made possible in Mauritius due to the fact that we have developed certain shared values and belief systems enabling members of different groups to live, work, interact and enjoy leisure time in peace and harmony. Under many circumstances groups forget their differences and come together. During cyclones and natural disasters all group members behave as good patriots and true Mauritians. Sometimes, to preserve their vested interest, groups join hands as was the case in the midst 1990s when mauritians of hindu and muslim faiths together supported the preservation of the oriental languages for ranking purpose at Certificate of Primary Education

Examination level in schools. During the same periods, all members of the creole community fought for the maintenance of the 50% reserved seats for their children in the confessional schools mainly managed by the catholic church.

During the 1970s, we have noted an increase in the numbers of scholarly publications on ethnicity. The falling of the wall of Berlin wall in 1989 and the end of the cold war, giving rise to the breakdown of the Soviet Union have contributed enormously for the growth of ethnic concern among the world population. Through the mass media people all over the world have watched the major bloody ethnic violence in Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, Northern Ireland, and in the Arabian countries. Such visual images of violence aroused the dormant ethnic concerns of the population in many multi-ethnic societies. Mauritius has not been spared. Since the 1968 ethnic violence, Mauritians have been living peacefully until the mid-1990s when ethnic concerns seemed to have reappeared among the ethnic groups. Given that people from the lower classes were already facing socio-economic problems, the ethnic revivalism that cropped up aggravated the social fabric of the country. The perception, which is true to a large extent true, was that a larger percentage of the members the creole community was unable to meet the two ends. The poverty of the population took an ethnic dimension and the death of the famous creole singer, Kaya, acted as a detonator for the explosion of the already weak social fabric. The ethnic conflict of the February 1999 nearly paralysed the Mauritian society. Since then, the ethnic issue has come to the forefront in our multi-ethnic Mauritius.

IV. ETHNIC CONFLICT

Ethnic conflict simply means conflict between different ethnic groups. Every multi-ethnic society has potential for conflict along various lines of cleavages—social, economic and political. In all countries resources are limited. Different ethnic groups compete among themselves to get the maximum amount of the assets of the country like land, jobs, power and statuses. When certain groups feel that they have not got a fair share of the resources, tensions arise which may lead to violence and disruptions in societies.

Nabith Berri, chief of one militia group in conflict-torn Lebanon, once stated, “when we deal with each other individually, we can be civilised... but when we deal with each other as groups, we are like savage tribes in the Middle Ages” (Indianapolis star (1989) (cited in Social Psychology 2000). The two riots of 1968 and 1999, where different ethnic groups were engaged in violent civil wars, give us reason to believe that the above statement has got a lot of truth.

a) 1968 Ethnic Violence

Some six weeks before the day of Independence in 1968, troubles cropped up between

Creoles and the Muslims in the capital city of the Island. The roots of the tension in 1968, as argued by A.R. Mannick (1979), went back to the election campaign of the previous year. However, according to various newspaper sources, the riot was supposed to be originated at the Venus Cinema of Bell Village, Port-Louis, when two groups of different communities were engaged in a fight. One was the Istamboul group consisting of people of Muslim origin and the other the Texas group of Creole adherents. It all started during the weekend of 20-21 January 1968. The violence was terrible in Port-Louis. Twenty-eight persons were reported murdered. Many people were wounded. Rioters burned more than 400 houses. Such barbarity had never happened before in Mauritius and the violent riot horrified all Mauritians (A.R. Mannick 1979).

The government had no alternative than to impose a state of emergency – ‘Le couvre feu’ – preventing people to circulate after 17 hr 05. Regions like Cite Martial, Trinquar, Plaine Verte and Roche Bois were all gathered by violence and rumours. The violence started to calm down by the end of January 1968, due to British troops and the energetic intervention of the political leaders, (Sources: l’express newspaper of 21 January 1968 to 31 January 1968).

After that tragedy, leaders of the main ethnic groups decided to take positive steps to cooperate and work in harmony with the overall aim of developing a unified and integrated society. The following year, in 1969, the then ruling Labour government made a coalition with the opposition Party, Parti Mauricien Sociale Democrates (PMSD), with a view to reduce ethnic tension in the country. After that period, we found that a peaceful coexistence among the population reigned until the early 1990’s. The perception was that economic development achieved by the country was seen as benefitting only a few and causing others to live in a very poor socio-economic condition. The problem of ‘malaise creole’ cropped up but nobody seriously did anything to help the poor to come out of their deprived positions. In the other communities too, people were found in a marginalised economic situation. The social problems affecting the country started to aggravate gradually, culminating finally in a serious violence in early 1999.

b) 1999 Riots

The riots which were at first seen as class based finally degenerated into an ethnic one. In the beginning, protesters vandalised public and private property in various parts of the island (Social Fabric phase II, 1999). People destroyed the various symbols of capitalism and those of the state such as police stations, traffic lights and government vehicles.

Gradually, the majority of the lower income groups of the population who were exasperated by the government and considered themselves as the marginalised joined the riot. The problem of social

exclusion and 'malaise creole' brought other to revolt against the capitalist system. Finally, the whole thing started taking a racial dimension (Sources: l'express newspaper of 21.2.99 to 7.03.99).

The riots finally degenerated into some form of communal attacks between the different ethnic groups. At Caudes and in the north of the country, the fight was between the Hindus and Creoles. Several houses were burnt. The socio-economic and political costs of the riot were tremendous. Following the riot, we could see the establishment of different kinds of state projects with a view to help poor people.

Ralph Premdas (1993), in his study on ethnicity and development in the Fiji Island, has shown that the ramifications of ethnic strife tend to be expressed most tangibly over the long run in the economic sphere. The social environment after the ethnic violence becomes unhealthy for integral human development. People are psychologically affected and they tend to see members of other communities with a sense of hatred. There are also lost of many human lives. Following the 1999 riots, on the economic side, investment was negatively affected. Some businessmen postponed their future projects. The estimated cost of damages was \$50 million as regards the 1999 riots (Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2001). Hundred of shops and stores were looted and the buildings damaged [Social Fabric Phase II, 1999].

c) *Ethnic Tensions*

In a multi ethnic society, one cannot expect all the different groups to live in perfect harmony and stability. Some kinds of ethnic tensions always prevail. Ethnic tensions, if not controlled, might lead to ethnic violence. The role of state is to control the minor tensions and prevent them from developing into conflicts. We shall now consider some areas where ethnic tensions are prevalent.

d) *Education*

Free education in Mauritius has highly contributed towards higher level of literacy and consequently, growth and development. It has permitted many people to climb the social ladder. Through achievement in education many people have got good jobs. However, we cannot deny the fact that the educational system has created a considerable number of drop outs, particularly in deprived areas. Although no data is not collected along ethnic lines on educational performance, it is generally thought that children of Chinese origin are the best performers while those of lower socio economic categories of the Creole group are the worst (Dinan, Nababsing and Mathur, 1999 pg 78). The children of Hindus and Muslims seemed to be found in between, depending on social background and region.

The drop out rate in the education system is the major concern of the people. Each and every year, the

Mauritian primary education system is producing a failure rate of 30-35 %. There is the perception that most of the failures come from the disadvantaged members of the creole ethnic group. Although, Government is doing its best to reduce the wastage rate at school, we find that the amount of drop out is remaining the same. If this situation continues, it will have tremendous negative impact on the society. The Primary Educational institutions should review its traditional assessment system at all levels in primary schools. There is the need for the introduction of both formal and informal assessments. Children will stand a better chance to pass as they will be assessed on various activities throughout the year.

e) *Unequal Distribution of Income*

Money is the root of many problems. When people do not get sufficient amount of money they face many difficulties to cope with everyday lives. According to Social Fabric phase I (1998), many people believe that the distribution of income and wealth has not been uniform across all segments of the population, resulting in discontent and a feeling of social exclusion among those who do not benefited as much as others. The authors of Social Fabric Phase I also argue that in a multi ethnic society, differentiation in incomes, marginalisation and social exclusion are often perceived and interpreted along ethnic lines. They add that such interpretation can give way to ethnic tensions and social conflict. Moreover, if such income earners fall within a particular ethnic group, then ethnic tension is bound to crop up. The introduction of a Minimum Wage has become more than a necessity. Maintaining social peace in the multi -ethnic society is becoming an even greater challenge with modernisation. Therefore, it is high time for the society to review its income distribution.

f) *Ethnicised Division of Labour*

S.Furnival (1942) (cited in the Enigma of Ethnicity, 1993) argues that one of the fundamental features of the so-called plural society is that there is a division of labour across racial lines in the economic sphere. Benedict Burton (1961), A.R. Mannick (1979), and Thomas Eriksen (1990) have also observed that the division labour is related to ethnicity. According to them, Hindus are mostly found in the agricultural sector and as public servants, Muslims are either rich merchants or labourers while Creoles are mostly domestic servants, fishermen and artisans. Benedict Burton (1965) and A. R. Mannick (1979) argue that while there is a tendency for certain occupations to be associated with certain ethnic categories, no occupation is exclusively confined to members of a single ethnic category. Benedict Burton (1965) remarked that even where occupations were confined to members of a single ethnic category, it was found that it was not the ethnic category per se which was the relevant factor in giving access to certain jobs but something less comprehensive such as kin ties,

friendship networks or economic association. In our country, this is true as regards the private sector and sometimes the semi-governmental sector. For instance, in the Sugar Industry, Franco Mauritians recruit new managers and supervisors mainly from members of their relatives and friends.

In the civil service, access to jobs is based on educational qualifications. The Public Service Commission and Disciplined Forces Service Commission are responsible for the recruitment of people based on meritocracy. However, A.R. Mannick (1979) remarked that even in the public service some people were kept out of some departments and promotions were either delayed or prevented for others. The writer referred to such happenings within the Hindu Community based on caste system. Anyway, even today there is the perception that in the Civil Service, recruitment and promotion for certain jobs are sometimes based on ethnicity, identity politics and religious basis rather than on meritocracy. In May 2009, one Member of Parliament (MP) from the ruling party was accused of holding communal language while addressing to members from his community in a private meeting. According to the media, it has been reported that the MP drew the attention of his group members that in a recent recruitment in the health sector, very little number of his group members were able to secure jobs. This gives the public the perception that recruitment is done on ethnic lines.

However, since the last decade there have been considerable changes in the labour market. Given the rapid economic growth and industrialization, many jobs have been created. Nowadays, we can find computer analysts, engineers, doctors, lawyers and businessmen from all the classes and ethnic groups. Consequently, many people irrespective of their ethnic identities have been able to climb the social ladders.

g) Language

Different ethnic groups have different languages or dialects. S.Furnival (1942) (cited in the Enigma of Ethnicity, 1993) states that one of the chief criteria of a plural society is that each group holds its own language, ideas and values. According to Thomas Eriksen (1990) some 15 languages are spoken in Mauritius. However, he adds that the language conventionally spoken by the large majority of mauritians is creole. Benedict Burton (1961 & 1965), A.R. Mannick (1979) and Thomas Eriksen (1990) observed that creole is the lingua franca in the island of Mauritius.

Benedict Burton (1965) claims that creole is a unifying cultural feature of Mauritius. This lingua franca has its merit to be considered as a unifying feature because nearly everyone speaks it. However, Dinan, Nababsing and Mathur (1999) (cited in Crawford Young, 1999) point out that the attempt in 1982 to promote creole as a national language met with hostile reactions

from very diverse quarters, which made the government realize that it would be safer to adopt a flexible policy giving importance to several languages.

The language issue is a very sensitive one. It is important at this stage to show as to how such an issue may cause problems to social relations. The Bank Note issue in the 1990's is taken to explain the importance attached to languages by ethnic groups. Under the Hindu community, the Tamils perceived that their rights were being challenged when the government issued new bank notes where the Tamils scripts were classified under the Hindu script. Tamils went on protest for several days forcing the government to remove those new bank notes from circulation and to redress the situation by putting the tamil scripts above the hindu script as was the case originally. The results were the withdrawal of the bank notes from circulation which cost the government a loss of about Rs 55 million and the governor of the Central Bank had to resign.

The above issue shows clearly the importance attached to symbols. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (SSR), the father of the nation, always used the "do not touch" concept when referring to language and religion issues. For him, nobody should touch the language and religion of the other. To live in a multi-ethnic society, people should develop cultural relativism. Therefore, one should be cautious when dealing with symbols, language and religious issue in multi-ethnic societies. It might be the father of the nation wanted to warn people in a subtle manner to think carefully before dealing on those issues as any unintelligent use might provoke social upheavals leading to ethnic conflicts thereby affecting peace, stability and social harmony which are important factors for growth and development.

h) Religion

In Mauritius, ethnic groups are also known as "communities" which are tightly knit. An individual's name easily identifies his or her ethnic and religious background. There is a strong correlation between religious affiliation and ethnicity. Citizens of Indian ethnicity are usually Hindus or Muslims. Citizens of Chinese ancestry usually practice Buddhism and Catholicism. Creoles and citizens of European-descent are usually Catholic (Country Report on Human Rights Practices, 2001). In fact, Religion is one of the main markers of Ethnicity.

The four main religions of the world are present in our country. The Christians population and the different sects and denominations form part of the Christian religion. All Muslims follow the Islamic religion while Hindus follow Hinduism. Buddhism has as adherents the Chinese population. Dinan, Nababsing and Mathur (1999) (cited in Crawford Young, 1999) argue that Mauritians are religious minded people and this has helped to build a climate of tolerance and brotherhood. Such tolerant nature is a sine qua non for

the survival of the cultural diversity in the island. All religions together with the diverse sects and cults work towards one goal - the maintenance of peace and stability.

On the other hand, A.R. Mannick (1979) argues that religious faith in the Mauritian society is important for, to a certain extent, they influence politics. Many religious leaders have close connections with politicians. During election, it has been noticed that politicians claim legitimacy and supports from their respectively ethnic groups. Once elected, they have to serve both the country and their respective religious groups. A few influential members of the religious institutions have often been accused of using religion for their self interests and those of their close relatives. Through negotiations and lobbies they try to get commercial permits, jobs and promotions.

Nevertheless, the religious institution has contributed enormously in the maintenance of peace and stability and in the organisation of common fronts for the sake of the country. During the riots of 1999, we have noticed as to how the representatives of different religious groups pleaded for non violence for the benefit of the country.

Religion is a major weapon contributing towards tolerance, harmony and social development thereby sustaining economic development. However, the misuse of religion often leads to fanaticism and fundamentalism which may in turn cause barriers to be erected between different religious groups. Consequently, misunderstanding crops up and tensions arise between groups which may lead to ethnic violence thereby affecting development. In recent years, it has been noticed that socio-cultural groups are engaging too much in politics. This creates tensions among the population when there is the perception that one ethnic group is benefiting more than the other. Such tensions might culminate in unnecessary violence in our multi-ethnic society.

i) Politics

Benedict Burton (1965) has observed that it is in a political context that ethnic consideration become significant. He adds that politicians appeal for support on ethnic or religious grounds. Religions, Language and ethnic origins of the people in Mauritius can serve as symbols of allegiance in a political context. Geertz (1973) also recognises that sentiments of the kind, which he calls primordial (ethnic bonds), may be manipulated by politicians, who can in a new democratic system, appeal to 'people like us' defined along lines of cultural, religious and other cleavages. During electoral campaigns in Mauritius, it has been observed that politicians ask for votes from their particular ethnic members.

From his study of the multi ethnic Fijian Society, Ralph Premdas (1993) argues that development plans

and strategies must be designed in contemplation of the interest of communal constituencies regardless of whether such claims tends to increase costs, protract solutions, and involve "irrational and wasteful allocation of social resources". He states that in the multi-ethnic societies, policies which win legitimacy must engage and incorporate divergent communal claims.

V. STATE POLICIES DEALING WITH ETHNIC MANAGEMENT

The Constitution of Mauritius provides certain guarantees to the different ethnic groups so that the latter live and work in peace and harmony thereby contributing for the progress of the country. The section II of our Constitution provides for the freedom and rights of all the people. The latter are free, amongst others, to voice out their opinions, to join any religious group and to form associations. The section 16 of the constitution stipulates that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of colour, race, creed or place of origins. We find that members of the different ethnic groups enjoy considerable amount of freedom and rights.

a) Best loser system (BLS)

The fathers of our Constitution have designed the best loser system with a view to enable each ethnic group to be fairly represented in the National Assembly. In a multi ethnic society as ours, it is of utmost importance that each community feels that at least some of its members get a ticket for the parliament. Our best loser system allows eight candidates, who failed to get elected, to join the National Assembly. Mathur (1991) argues that the best loser system promotes and encourages communalism which is detrimental to nation building. However, the World Bank Report (1997) gives a different view by arguing that the best loser system, by ensuring representation of each ethnic group in parliament, has contributed to the social cohesion in Mauritius. Actually in the country, the government is having contacts with different stakeholders to go for electoral reforms. Through the media, the population has been informed that the new electoral system will do away with the best loser system. There will be the introduction of the proportional representation system. Given the weak and fragile multi-ethnic Mauritius, the state should think seriously before embarking on an electoral system without the best loser system. Many people still believe that the BLS guarantees representation all the ethnic groups in Parliament. Therefore, as the BLS acts as a factor for social cohesion, there is a need to maintain it so long till an alternative that can ensure the representativeness of all ethnic groups in Parliament is found. The BLS, as a constitutional provision, acts positively on the psyche of the minorities who feel secure.

b) Religious subsidies

Religious subsidies are forms of financial grants that are given to the religious institutions. Each year, the Minister of Finance makes a provision for such grants. The amount of subsidies given to the religious groups depends upon the number of adherents they have. The grant is given on a per capita basis. The grant is given so that the different religions meet their cost of administration. Recently, there has been a debate in the country as to whether religious subsidies should be maintained. The perception is that the funds are not utilized in a proper manner by some groups. Given that the public constantly questions the management of the religious funds, stakeholders have a duty to show more transparency because it public money that have been allocated to them. Regarding the granting of funds, it should be maintained as it has been noticed that certain religious institutions make effective use of the money to alleviate poverty and combat social problems.

c) Public and disciplined forces service commission

The Public and Disciplined Forces Service Commissions are responsible for the recruitment and promotion of public officers. The commission is also responsible for taking disciplinary action against public officers who commit irresponsible acts. Dinan, Nababsing and Mathur (1999) state that the President in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition appoint the Chairman and the members of the Board of Commission. The composition of the latter is ethnically based thus providing a sense of security to job seekers from ethnic minorities. The Commission has recently been in the fore front as the population has been questioning as to whether recruitment is really done on the basis of qualification and experience or on ethnic basis. Many Mauritians are of opinion that the commission should show more transparency for instance publish the names and qualifications of potential and selected candidates so that comparisons may be made. It is a fact that many members of the creole community have perception that their group members are underrepresented in the public sector. To clear misunderstandings, recruitment done should transparent. The government has recently set up the Public Service Tribunal, where grievances and complaints made by applicants are dealt with, to ensure transparency and initiating necessary actions against any injustice done.

d) Cultural centres

Soon after the 1999 violent confrontations, the Government took steps to foster unity. Several cultural centres that have been built in Mauritius. The main idea behind the establishment of these cultural centres has been the desire of the government and the different religious associations to reinforce cultural identity and to strengthen solidarity among members of the ethnic groups. The various cultural centres are listed below.

1. African Cultural centre – basically for the Creole community.
2. Islamic Cultural Centre – basically for the Muslim community.
3. Tamil Cultural Centre, Telegu Cultural Centre, Marathi Cultural Centre for the Hindu population and
4. Chinese Cultural Centre – for the Chinese population.

The various cultural centres have as one of their main objectives, the preservation and promotion of arts and culture of their ethnic groups. The government usually provides financial support for the administration and management of these centres. The latter also receive foreign and material assistance.

Above all these centres, there is the Mauritian Cultural Centre created in 2001 with main aim to promote Mauritian culture and developing a plural Mauritian culture identity through the following ways:

- i. The organisation of lectures, seminars, workshops, exhibition and other activities to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of Mauritian culture.
- ii. The establishment of link with organisations engaged in similar activities locally and internationally and
- iii. The collaboration with other cultural centres both at national and international levels.

These centres are contribution much for the preservation of the different cultures. In multi ethnic Mauritius the maintenance of the diverse cultural values guarantee partly the maintenance of peace and harmony.

e) Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

The private sector has also become more committed to the social development of the country after the 1999 riot. Since that episode, it has been noticed that the private sector has developed social policies and programmes to look after the vulnerable members of the society. Many big companies have their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) programmes which are beneficial for both employees and the public. With the 2009 budget, CSR has become mandatory. Private businesses have to contribute 2% of their profit to a fund which will be used for social development of the society. Some private were reluctant to do so. Many people questioned as to why the private sector was not willing to cooperate for the social welfare of all the population and some even asked as to whether they did not have their own hidden agenda as to whom they helped with their CSR programmes. However, the authority has some control over the CSR programmes of the private sector.

f) *The fishermen welfare fund*

The Fishermen Welfare Fund (2000) has been established to provide and promote socio economic welfare for mostly the poorer section of the population. It looks, particularly, at the welfare of the fishermen and their families. Given that most fishermen come from poorer section of Creole and Hindu communities, the trust fund is of utmost importance to them. The government of Mauritius seems to be very concerned about socio economic disadvantaged situation of the poor people. However, some persons are of the opinion that the government is indirectly helping the disadvantaged members of a particular community more than others.

g) *National Human Rights Commission*

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was set up by an Act of parliament namely the protection of Human Rights Act 1998. The basic objective of the Act is to better protect the human rights and freedom referred to in the chapter II of the constitution. Some of the rights and freedom are as follows: freedom of the association, freedom to voice out one's opinion, freedom of the movement and freedom of the press.

Any person who feels being discriminated against on the basis of colour, creed, race, religion, language or place of origin may seize the NHRC to inquire into the matter. Such an Act is a guarantee for the fundamental rights and freedom of the members of any ethnic group.

h) *The 2008 Equal Opportunity Act*

This act has been welcome positively by each and everyone in the country. During the presentation of the Equal Opportunity Bill in the National Assembly, The Prime Minister, Dr Navin Ramgoolam, showed his commitment to level the playing ground for all Mauritians. Anyone who deserves to get a job or a service will get it out of merit and qualifications. The government of the day has been praised for their willingness to build a just and fair society where all the citizens will have equal rights and opportunities to succeed and prosper.

The question that arises now is how far the act will be implemented in a transparent manner by all stakeholders of the society. Some people are skeptical as to whether they will all get the same opportunity regarding access to educational facilities, access to jobs and promotions. Others are posing the question as to whether the words like discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping will really not be considered when distributing scarce resources to the population. To put the Equal Opportunity Act into practice, it is believed that there should be the right person in the right place to make and take decisions for the benefit of all Mauritians.

i) *Leaders and not managers*

Given that our society is evolving with new policies and programs, it is high time for the state to have effective leaders at the head of the various departments and institutions. A high powered committee should be established where representatives of government, private sector and the civil society will meet and regularly review the achievement of the responsible heads of the various institutions. Ministers, Executive Directors, Responsible Chief Officers, Religious and Socio-cultural heads should be accountable to the society by working in a transparent way without any form of discrimination or causing prejudice to any members of the society. The responsible officers should be guided by a code of ethics. Training should be provided regularly to update their leadership and managerial skills. The concept of Global Benchmarking should be applied where leaders should benchmark their leadership skills with peers and also with international leaders to improve their own way performance. To manage a multi-ethnic, we need effective leaders, that is 'global benchmarking leaders', at all levels and in all of the institutions of the society. In this way, we can achieve good governance in all sectors.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Multi-ethnic societies have to be managed properly. The state should do its maximum to prevent ethnic tensions from arising because such tensions may degenerate into conflicts which can be harmful for the peace and development of the society. In this paper, I have described and discussed ethnic tensions and conflicts undergone by our multi-ethnic Mauritius. The different policies undertaken by the society have been examined and the need for global benchmarking in leadership to manage multi-ethnic Mauritius has been stated. In the fast developing Mauritian society, the population is in urgent need of effective leaders who can ensure the management of the multi ethnic society in a just, fair and transparent manner and be proactive in decision making thereby avoiding unnecessary ethnic tensions which might result in ethnic conflict devastating all the socio economic progress and development as in the years 1968 and 1999.

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