



SPEECH

**His Excellency Mr Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K.,
President of the Republic of Mauritius**

**EVENT: LAUNCH OF BOOK “THE MANDHVI
CONNECTION: IN SEARCH OF MY (1824–2024)”**

VENUE: LA SCALA, CAUDAN ARTS CENTRE

DATE: 12 JUNE 2025

TIME: 19:30 HOURS

Protocol

Mr Cassam Uteem G.C.S.K., Former President of the Republic

Mr Raouf Bundhun G.O.S.K., Former Vice President of the Republic

His Excellency Mr Anurag Srivastava, Indian High Commissioner to Mauritius

Professor Goolam Mohamedbhai, G.O.S.K.

Distinguished Guests

All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Dear Friends,

Good evening and thank you for inviting me to this very special occasion.

It is indeed an honour and an immense pleasure to be here tonight for the launch of “The Mandhvi Connection: In Search of My Roots” – 1824-2024, authored by Professor Goolam Mohamedbhai.

We have all listened with great attention and interest to Professor Goolam Mohamedbhai, who has shared with us the genesis of the Bohra Community route from Mandhvi, India to Port Louis, Mauritius via Lamu, Kenya and how the Bohra family of Mauritius is spread across the world.

I had the privilege of being provided with an advance copy of the book.

I must apologize that I have not been able to complete my reading of the book, but from what I have read so far, I have been able to grasp the gist of this fascinating account of the Bohra family roots;

its various itineraries, its settlements, its trials and tribulations, and how all these have been woven together by the hands of a master craftsman into an exceptional piece of literary artwork – The Mandhvi Connection.

I do not want to repeat whatever has already been said by the author, nor do I intend to dwell on the contents of the book itself.

I would rather invite you to make your own discovery and enjoy reading the book.

I assure you that it will be a most enjoyable experience.

Overview of the Book

Ladies and gentlemen,

From what I have heard and read so far, the picture that emerges in my mind is that of a book about: Human Connections and their significance.

As you will come across in Chapter I, there is an opening quotation:

“Everything in life is connected, and everything is connected to family”.

(Lemn Sissay, British poet and former Chancellor, university of Manchester).

I shall therefore say a few words on the theme of connection – human connections - which underpin the story of Bohra community in Mauritius.

I hope my few remarks will explain my presence in today’s function and also serve as an invitation for you to acquire and to read the book.

First my connection with Prof Goolam Mohammedbhai:

Goolam and I share a long connection.

We have both served the University of Mauritius – he as Vice-Chancellor and me, as Dean of the Faculty. We had very cordial professional relations for many years.

Later, when I became Minister of Education in 2005, we met again when the Mauritius Academy of Sciences was launched.

Thereafter we went on our own ways.

After many years, we met at a Conference organized by the Institution of Engineers, Mauritius on Tuesday 4th March 2025.

It is on this occasion that Goolam requested a meeting and mentioned that he was completing a book.

The Mandhvi Connection: The Bohra Community

In my opinion, it would be a book on an engineering or on a science topic in view of Goolam's academic track record of Engineering Studies.

Little did I know that the book will be a detailed historical account of the Bohra Community in Mauritius.

He came to my Office on 2nd April 2025.

When he explained to me the purpose of his visit, it was a revelation for me.

I was amazed to learn that a professional with a scientific background had written a book which has historical, sociological, anthropological and autobiographical perspectives, all combined in one.

Twelve years of travel, meticulous research, interviews, documentation and writing and re-writing: A remarkable literacy tour de force.

I was briefed about the overall content of the book and its significance as “a devoir de mémoire” for the Bohra Community.

On this occasion, I would also like to recognize the contribution of Patricia *Romero*, the researcher who recorded all the interviews of Goolam's mother.

And Cynthis Salvadori, who provided support and encouragement for Goolam to go ahead and write the book.

Books as repositories of Knowledge and Humanity

Books are repositories of knowledge and knowledge that is shared enriches and bonds humanity. Knowledge acts as a bridge for mutual understanding, tolerance, peace and harmony.

Family bonds and ties are essential for stable community life and societies.

As you will learn, when you read the book, this is a book about human connections - more specifically about the Bohra community.

It connects the members of the Bohra community – those who are alive, with those who have departed.

But this book also transcends the Bohra Community and its connections and builds a bridge with the broader human community- Humanity.

In the words of the author, every family has a story to tell.

But many such stories remain untold.

It requires a trigger, an inspiration, and loads of commitment.

We need to pay a special tribute to Goolam's mother, who played a catalytic role in the realization of this beautiful project. She provided very useful background information, and I quote:-

“Although she was then 70, she had a remarkable memory and vividly recalled her life and the people of Lamu for nearly 50 years earlier. As I listened to those interviews, an amazing story of my family started to emerge ...”

And the story was transformed into the wonderful book – “The Mandhvi Connection”, which is being launched this evening.

A tribute to Women and Humanity

In all civilizations, women symbolize culture and play a vital role in the transmission of culture.

This book is also a tribute to all women of the world, as custodians of culture.

The Mandhvi Connection is a precious contribution not only to the Bohra Community but also to humanity at large.

Closing Remarks

I commend Goolam for this laudable and noble initiative – a literary milestone.

This book was completed on 10 June 2024, on the occasion of the 79th birthday of Goolam and 10 June 2025 was Goolam’s 80th birthday.

I congratulate Goolam for having offered this literacy treasure to us and also wish him, a bit belatedly, many happy returns of the day.

Be blessed and be healthy and happy.