



SPEECH

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

**EVENT: LAUNCH OF BIOGRAPHY OF MR. RAOUF
BUNDHUN**

VENUE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER OF PORT LOUIS

DATE: 04 OCTOBER 2025

TIME: 15:00 HOURS

Protocol

Dr. the Honourable Arvin Boolell, GOSK, Minister of Agro-Industry, Food Security, Blue Economy and Fisheries

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament

Respected Mr. Raouf Bundhun, OSK, Former Vice President of the Republic

Excellencies,

Esteemed family members and friends of Mr. Raouf Bundhun

Distinguished Guests

Dear Friends,

Introduction

Bon après-midi, good afternoon, As-Salaam Alaykum to you all.

C'est avec un profond honneur et une grande joie que je vous remercie de m'avoir invité et de m'offrir l'opportunité de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour honorer et célébrer la vie et le parcours exemplaire de Raouf Bundhun à travers le lancement de la publication : *Mémoires – Parcours d'une vie au service de la nation*

Raouf Bundhun: Un aîné (an elder brother), un ami, un mentor et un Mauricien authentique de par sa culture, ses valeurs, sa personnalité, son caractère et sa philosophie politique et sociale profondément alignée avec le concept fondateur de notre vivre ensemble- l'Unité dans la Diversité.

With your permission, I shall make my address in English.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Honouring the legacy and achievements of a man of the calibre of Mr. Raouf Bundhun, or as I call him, Bhai Raouf or Excellency Mr. Vice-President, whenever we meet - is not an easy task.

I have listened with great attention to the insightful reflections of previous speakers, and we have been provided by some glimpses of life and achievements of Raouf Bundhun.

Congratulations and Recognitions

Let me start by congratulating Mr. Louckmaan Lallmahomed for taking the laudable initiative of writing the fascinating account of the important events in the life of Mr. Raouf Bundhun, a person closely associated with the Independence of Mauritius and its transformation into a modern, forward looking, developing nation.

You have added yet another name to the list of illustrious Mauritians that future generation will recall and remember with pride.

I want to also recognize Mr. Yvan Martial, who in his typical sharp, analytical, thought-provoking style, has penned the preface.

A special mention to Former President Cassam Uteem, whose speech on the occasion of the launch of the French version of the biography “On the Wings of Destiny” - ‘TAQDIR’, on 22nd August 2017 has been reproduced to keep alive the remarkable journey of, as he puts it:

“Cet enfant d’une famille modeste de l’Amaury, petit village perdu dans le nord du pays, qui sut forger son destin- son taqdir pour atteindre le sommet de l’état”.

Congratulations to each and everyone connected with this publication.

Last but not the least, my gratitude to the person without whose willingness, patience and perseverance to share with the present and

future generations his life experiences, this book would not have been possible.

Reflections

It is not my intention to give you a detailed and elaborate presentation of the content of the book that will be launched.

I want you to experience the joy of discovering the different facets of the incredible and fascinating story of a boy from a little-known village –Amaury – to the sumptuous State House at Le Reduit.

I would personally like to share a few of my own thoughts to mark this moment of recognition. And I hope that what I say will whet your appetite to read the book.

I first learned about this biography, *Mémoires – Parcours d’une vie au service de la nation*, when Bhai Raouf visited me at the State House on 19 May 2025 and gifted me a copy.

I thank Bhai Raouf for this graceful gesture.

I have not known the childhood and the adolescent days of Raouf, but we share some striking.

We both come from large families with modest social and economic backgrounds.

We both had our Primary schooling in village schools. He went to a Government Primary school in a village- l’école du Gouvernement Camp Macon- in Belle Vue Maurel; I went to the Roches Noires and Mapou Government Primary schools.

He went to school bare-footed; so did I.

I was inspired, like Raouf Bundhun, by dedicated teachers who saw my potential beyond my modest beginning, and who encouraged my parents to allow me to study further.

Both our mothers believed that education is the most powerful tool to transform our destinies.

Both mothers went out to knock on the doors of family members to support our educational journeys.

For his secondary schooling, Raouf went to St Andrews School in Rose Hill; so did I. Coincidence or TAQDIR?

We were both exposed to youth clubs and social/civic activities before we made a jump in the political arena.

We have both served the country in Parliament and in different public offices-MP, Mayor, Minister- before being vested with the highest offices of the State-he as Vice President and me as President of the Republic.

We both share our love for books, Indian music and song. As Acting President, he carried this spirit forward, hosting ghazals and spiritual poem recitals at State House to keep the cultural vibrancy of our nation alive.

New and Complex challenges

The title of “observateurs politiques” has been bestowed upon both of us- with one difference. Raouf is still on call whereas I have taken a sabbatical.

But today, we continue to share our concerns on the new and complex challenges - the rise of Artificial Intelligence and online dangers for our youth, erosion of family and human values, the existential threat of climate change, the scourge of drugs, and global conflicts that deepen divides and threaten peace.

I would like to refer to Bhai Raouf’s words during an interview that he gave to Le Défi in 2017, and I quote:

“Maybe this is a price that we are paying for our industrialisation and development. It is said that everything comes with a price. But do we have to voluntarily jump into chaos and confusion?

All is not lost yet, but there isn't much time. We must by all means save whatever can be saved and prepare the ground to prevent further decadence. Only a return to values can save the world.”

(source: Raouf Bundhun: “With the advent of independence, people of my generation felt a lot for the building of a new nation” | Defimedia)

So many intersections between our two lives.

But there is more to it.

My wife Brinda had the good fortune of being a student of Raouf and this beautiful teacher-student relationship continues to be a living testimony of an enduring relationship based on mutual respect.

I can go on to tell you more about Raouf and the multi-faceted life, achievements and encounters with events and people that came in his way.

Mauricianism and Nation-building

But perhaps the most remarkable facet of Bhai Raouf, as beautifully portrayed in this book, is his lifelong quest for Mauricianism and his firm conviction in unity in diversity, in multiculturalism, tolerance, and inter-religious sharing.

(Source: Page 12)

As early as 1983, when he was President of the Muslim Youth Federation, he broke new ground by inviting Père Henri Souchon from

l'Église Immaculée to address young people of all faiths, and he spoke on the values of Mauricianism and interreligious harmony.

Though this did not please everyone at the time, it was a pioneering step that reflected his belief in the formula, and I quote:

“Cinq petits poissons dans un bocal” - the five communities of Mauritius living side by side in mutual respect.

I learn that it is this experience that shaped Bhai Raouf's outlook on the need for unity in diversity and a shared national identity.

There is much more that you will come to know about Raouf and his vision for Mauritius when you will read the book that will be launched today.

I invite you all to read the book and experience the joy of rediscovering for yourself Raouf - “ene morisen examplaire, visionaire et surtout ene patriote engagé”.

Conclusion

I extend my warmest wishes once again to Bhai Raouf and his family.

I wish him continued good health, fulfillment, and the satisfaction of knowing that his legacy will inspire generations to come.

I hope that this book will serve as a source of inspiration for generations to come.

Merci et bonne continuation.