In this year of the 175th Anniversary of the arrival of Indians in Guyana, Harry Hergash, president of the University of Guyana Guild of Graduates, Ontario, and a member of the Canada Guyana Forum, has just released in Guyana and in Toronto a publication titled “A Collection of Indian-Guyanese Words and Phrases and Their Meanings”.

He points out that historians now refer to the language of the majority of the Indian immigrants who came to Guyana (then British Guiana) to work on the sugar plantations during the period 1838 to 1917 as Bhojpuri. However, Bhojpuri was one of many Hindi dialects that were spoken by these north Indians and their descendants, and they called their language Hindustani.

Hergash believes that language is an integral part of a people’s culture and this aspect of cultural preservation is the main reason for the book. According to him, Guyanese Hindustani is now almost extinct as a spoken language and his publication is intended...
to provide a record of the many words and phrases used by the immigrants and their descendants.

Harry Hergash, a former science teacher in Guyana and retired senior manager of the Ontario Public Service, holds degrees from the University of Guyana and the University of Windsor, Ontario. He was taught Hindi by his parents and later studied the language under the tutorship of Mrs Ratna Dixit, Indian Cultural Council Representative to Guyana in the 1960s. In putting together this collection, he has relied on his personal knowledge and also the knowledge of his ninety-three year old father, a speaker of Guyanese Hindustani, as well as a few other members of a now fast depleting generation of Indian-Guyanese to provide the meanings of the words and phrases.

In a commentary on the book, Dr. Frank Birbalsingh, Professor Emeritus of English, York University, states "Hergash's text, including its commentary and lexicon, is a valuable service of linguistic retrieval that enhances the records of Guyana's linguistic legacy". And Dr. Harry Persaud, Cultural Anthropologist and poet, notes "...we come to know the construct of a culture and its reality by its language usage. Harry Hergash's work is a fascinating compilation... Without such valiant attempts to revive this important aspect of history, it could be lost forever. I absolutely enjoyed reading his transcript and I was very delighted at the flood tide of memories it brought me".

In Guyana, the book is available for sale at Austin's Book Services, 190 Church Street, Georgetown.

"The book is available in Canada at Charlie's West Indian Food Mart, 3057 Hurontario St, Mississauga, Ontario, Tel. 905-896-3663 or from the author, Tel. 416-626-2897."