When I heard the news of the passing of Devi Venkatasamy, thoughts, visions and memories started crisscrossing my mind. I could see the lady, usually dressed in dark colourful saree, a hand bag hanging from her bent arm, trudging and leaning on the side of the foot forward.

She has been teaching for most part of her active life and as such has directly or indirectly, through her students and students’ students, touched a very large chunk of the Mauritian population. I bet many of my ex class mates must be exchanging their thoughts on this great lady.

Devi’s father ran the New Eton College, only next in demand after Royal Colleges; all his children are well educated. Devi left the Queen Elizabeth College for England for University studies. After a stint at the TTC, she joined the Mauritius Institute of Education.

UNESCO was involved in introducing Social Studies as part of secondary education curriculum. They identified Devi to be part of the team to train teachers. I was among the first batch to take up the challenge.

Devi was an exceptional communicator, speaking and simultaneously putting the words on the blackboard. She was gifted in teaching how to teach. One novel concept that was going to be introduced in secondary classrooms was VALUES. Devi defined values in a simple manner and how acquiring values would be part of studying Geography, History and Economics.

I was enthusiastic because I thought I was part of those, once released in the classrooms, would be agents of change. I am thankful to this icon: class management, even with deprived children, has never been a problem for me.

This Head of the Social Studies Department had to struggle all the time to introduce novelty as human beings are naturally resistant to change. She was not allowed to lead the MIE on the retirement of its Director but transferred to NCCRD where I am told she did a marvellous job.

I am positive that had Devi been given a free hand, there would have been less complaints of indiscipline in our schools.

RIP Devi, the unsung Heroin of our History of Education.

Dawood Auleear.

30 August 2019