

The 45th Anniversary of the National Council of Indian Culture (N.C.I.C)

What and who were responsible for the founding of the National Council of Indian Culture? The two former Presidents of the organization, Messrs Bislam Gopie and Hans Hanoomansingh, as well as the incumbent President, Mr. Deokinanan Sharma, have spoken many times at different fora and written on several occasions in the past on its founding and history. Every time they spoke or wrote they gave a peek into the history and status of the organization in respect of the time when each served in office. I am aware that reference has been made before of what and who were responsible for the founding of the N.C.I.C, but here I would like to go a bit further in detail.

Narsaloo Ramaya is a household name in the cultural landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. He is a musical icon and a living legend: Trinidad and Tobago's first Indian violinist; co-founder and former leader of the famous *Naya Zamana Orchestra*; and co-founder and former and leader of the popular *Triveni Orchestra*. He informed me that the first leader of the said Naya Zamana Orchestra, Nazeer Mohammed, had gotten ill sometime in the 1960's with a rare disease. Local doctors were unable to diagnose his illness and provide the necessary medical care. His family was therefore advised to take him abroad for diagnosis and treatment.

But Nazeer Mohammed and his family were too poor and did not have the means for him to be taken abroad for medical treatment. So his family and dear friends and members of the Naya Zamana Orchestra

decided to launch a fund to assist. But the sum raised by them was a mere fraction of what was needed. So Mr. Ramaya took it upon himself and wrote a letter to Mr. Bisram Gopie, a religious, cultural and social worker of San Fernando, soliciting a donation for his cause.

Subsequent to writing, Mr. Ramaya and Mr. Gopie met and discussed not only the question of the donation, but also the need for an organization to look after the welfare of artistes and the promotion of their art form, as well as the propagation of Indian culture in all its facets. And so they invited artistes, promoters, leaders from different communities, activists and significant others to a meeting on the 19th July, 1964. This historical meeting took place at Ghandi Ashram College, Todd Street, San Fernando and birth was there given to the *National Council of Indian Music and Drama* – the name being proposed by Professor B. Bhattacharya, and accepted by the assembly. It is important to note that more than one hundred persons attended that meeting. Something new had just taken place, the atmosphere was charged with excitement, interest was high and passion was great. It was a history-making event and a great day for Indian artistes and their culture.

The organization so formed was to facilitate amongst others its two main objectives as originally enunciated by Ramaya and Gopie, being: (1) to look after the welfare of artistes; and (2) the promotion of Indian culture. An executive (their names I shall forego to mention here because they have been mentioned many times before) was duly elected and charged with the responsibility of working with all artistes and others and taking the new organization forward.

During its embryonic stage the organization had quite a lot of problems which stymied its work and progress. For instance, one of its own executive members, a well known cultural promoter always sought to organize and promote cultural events and competitions, prior to the declared events of the Council as a means of sabotaging the latter's work. Despite this, the organization worked assiduously and managed to achieve quite a lot.

After giving selfless service for many years and as the work became more complex and difficult, President Bisram Gopie passed on the baton of voluntary cultural work in Trinidad and Tobago to the indomitable and indefatigable Hans Hanoomansingh. Some years later the organization introduced a new constitution and changed its name to the National Council of Indian Culture, embracing a broader vision for Indian culture.

This piece is done to highlight the reasons and events leading to the formation of the National Council of Indian Culture. The architect who engineered the move was the foremost violin virtuoso, whose phenomenal contribution to the cultural landscape has been indelibly recorded in the annals of Indian cultural history. His monumental work will live on more many years to come.

Congratulations to the N.C.I.C on its 45th Anniversary and to the 2009 inductees onto its Hall of Pioneers.

Richard Ramlakhansingh

N.C.I.C Trustee &

Member of the Hall of Pioneers Committee

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF INDIAN CULTURE IN THE CARIBBEAN

Firmly established as the leading East Indian cultural organization in Trinidad and Tobago since 1964, the N.C.I.C. sought to extend its work and create closer ties between the descendants of East Indians throughout the Caribbean. As early as 1968 cultural ties were established with Guyana, which like our island, possesses a large East Indian population. Suriname, also possessing a large East Indian population, produces its own art forms which are widely accepted in our country and also has binding ties with us. But the Council has gone further as it has facilitated regular exchange visits between Trinidad and Tobago and various other Caribbean territories sharing in the Indian Diaspora. Consequently, Indian songs, music and dance were introduced in a number of islands.

The Council was also invited to participate in the first Caribbean Song and Music Festival held in Gosier, in the French Island of Guadeloupe. In the last fifteen years the Council has in fact established strong cultural ties with the French Islands of Guadeloupe, and Martinique and cultural exchanges are made on a regular basis. Jamaica is also now firmly established in this regard and artistes from that island come every year to the Divali Nagar.

Indian Arrival Day is now celebrated in St. Vincent and the Council has sent a group of singers, dancers, and musicians to these celebrations which drew tremendous praise from the Prime Minister of that island. Grenada is now celebrating Phagwa and Indian Arrival Day. Again the Council participated in these events and sent artistes and materials to promote them. St. Lucia, with a thirst for Indian culture, has also joined the wave sweeping across the region and has sought our assistance. The Council has, of course, willingly extended its hands in friendship.

It is therefore with great anticipation that the Council looks to the future which promises further strengthening of the bonds between us and our brethren throughout the region.

Bob Ramroop
N.C.I.C. Trustee.

Preface

This is the fifth year that the National Council of Indian Culture (N.C.I.C) takes pride through its project, “*The Hall of Pioneers*” to recognize the citizens of East Indian ancestry who have made significant contributions to the growth, development and sustenance of our country, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

East Indians have for one hundred and sixty-four years played many important roles in the national community. Their hard work and sacrifice have influenced the younger generation. Their children and grandchildren who embraced the opportunities created by them have excelled in the various professions and fields of endeavour. It is our hope that the youths will use the lives of these trailblazers as role models so that they too would continue and advance the nation building process.

This effort by the N.C.I.C to highlight and record the achievements of these heroes and pioneers through the Hall of Pioneers project is but a small token of our appreciation and gratitude for their legacy. It is also a fulfillment of one of the many objectives of the N.C.I.C. which is working assiduously to have a permanent facility to house this project.

The N.C.I.C is a non-profit volunteer organization. I hereby express my thanks to the members of this year’s Hall of Pioneers committee – Mr. Deokinanan Sharma; Mr. Richard Ramlakhansingh; Mr.

Brahma Beharrysingh; Mrs. Vijanti Solomon; Dr. Jerome Teelucksingh – and also to the N.C.I.C Executive members, for their co-operation and support.

Indrawatee Outar

Chairman, Hall of Pioneers Committee,
2nd Assistant Secretary, N.C.I.C
2009/07/10

Inductees for 2009

Professor H.S. Adesh

Mr. Jang Bahadoorsingh

Mrs. Phoolbasia Charran

Mr. Justice Ralph Narine

Rev. Dr. Roy G. Neehall

Pt. Doon Pandit

Mr. Manny Ramjohn

Mr. James Ramsawak

Swami Satchidananda

Mr. Kung Beharry Singh

BIODATA OF INDUCTEES

Compiled by

Dr. Jerome Teelucksingh

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following persons for obtaining information and pictures on the personalities to be honoured in 2009. Firstly, Rekha Sawh for researching and providing the information on Manny Ramjohn and Phoolbasia Charran; Ganesh Bahadoorsingh for providing information on Jang Bahadoorsingh; and Richard Ramlakhansingh for providing the biographical information on James Ramsawak. The oral histories provided by friends and relatives of the honourees also assisted greatly in this project.

The Biodata of Professor H.S. Adesh written by Km. Devika Putkoo, Smt. Surabhi Goberdhan and Km. Poonam Ali was of great help to our effort and thanks must be given to Km. Devika Putkoo for allowing us to utilize this work and for providing us with a picture of the great man.

Information from D.H. Singh's two books – *Doon Pandit: His Life and Times 1900-1958* and *Pandits and Politics: The socio-political factors leading to the formation of the Divine Life Society between 1956-1962* was used for the biographies of Doon Pandit and Swami Satchidananda respectively, and have certainly enriched the compilation of this brochure. Deokinanan Sharma, President of the NCIC, also provided a summary of Doon Pandit's life.

Thanks to Jennifer Ramsaran, Secretary of the NCIC, for all her hard work, particularly for assisting in the scanning of photographs and typing of some of the biographies.

Thanks must also be given to Brahma Beharrysingh, executive member of the NCIC, who assisted with the proofreading, and edited this brochure, bringing it to its final form.

Lastly, the NCIC's "Hall of Pioneers Committee" is also grateful to those family members who agreed to allow their relatives to be honoured.

Dr. Jerome Teelucksingh



Professor H.S. Adesh (1936 –)

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Professor Hari Shanker Adesh's lifelong dedication to the fields of Hindi Literature, Indian Music, Philosophy, Religion, Education and Culture and his commitment to social service has made him a man of great international repute and a household name here in Trinidad and Tobago. Born on the 7th August, 1936, in India to a family of scholars, it was perhaps no surprise that he would become a scholar himself, holding various Master's Degrees and becoming a world renowned author, poet, musicologist, artiste, philosopher and editor in his own right.

His exemplary performance and career achievements began in India as an All India Artiste, Music Composer and Performer, Poet, Author, Orator and Social worker. He left Srinagar, Kasmir (India) in 1966 and began his duties as a Cultural Representative I.C.C.R., Government of India in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and worked in that position for ten years. He is the founder and life-director of the *Bharatiya Vidya Sansthaan* of Trinidad and Tobago (Institute of Indian Knowledge) with branches in many other countries. He also founded the *Shri Adesh Ashram* which was inaugurated on the 21st February 1978 and serves as the headquarters of BVS T&T.

He was appointed Principal of *Ashram College* before moving to Canada. There he was appointed Minister of Religion where he expanded his work in establishing *Bharatiya Vidya Sansthaan* Canada on the 7th February, 1981 and *Vidya Mandir*, Toronto on 4th August, 1985, as Spiritual Preceptor. He worked in the

Scarborough board of education for several years. He also became Minister of Religion in the U.S.A. and founded *Antar Raashtreeya Bharatiya Vidya Sansthaan* U.S.A. in 1978 and *AHINSA Inc. (Antar Raashtreeya Hindu Samaj)* in 1998.

As an author, he has written and published over 170 books in Hindi, English and Urdu and has gained the prestigious title of *Mahaakavi* (Author of Epics) for his works *Anuraag*, *Shakuntalaa*, *Maharani Damayantee* and *Nirvan* (a poetical story of Lord Buddha). He has also been awarded the title of *Raashtra Kavi* (National Poet comparable to Poet Laureate) and *Vishwa Kavi* (Universal Poet). He is the only author to date who has produced seven *Saptashatee* (books of 700 couplets) in Hindi Literature.

In the field of Classical Indian Music he bears the titles *Sangeetaachaarya* and *Naad-VidyaVaaridhi* (Ocean of Knowledge of Music). He has composed over 5,500 lyrics and songs, producing 120 audio cassettes, several CDs and LPs, some dedicated to the Sitar and Santoor (an instrument of 100 strings). He has also authored many bilingual Hindi and Music texts up to the Master's Level. He is an international performing artiste of radio, television and stage.

As an educator he introduced the systematic and academic method of teaching Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu from beginners to Bachelor's Level in Trinidad and Tobago, U.S.A., Canada and many parts of the western hemisphere. He is also considered a Guru of authentic Classical Indian Music who introduced and thought Indian Music (Vocal, Sitar, Tabla, violin and Flute) from Sa,Re, Ga, Ma to Master's Level and introduced

Santoor, Jaltarang, Pakhawaj, Sarangee, Veena and Kathak dance up to Senior Diploma Level. Training over 40,000 students over the past 36 years he is thus responsible for the production of numerous performing artistes and language teachers. He is also a playwright who has directed many of his dramas staged in grand auditoriums in India, Trinidad, U.S.A. and Canada.

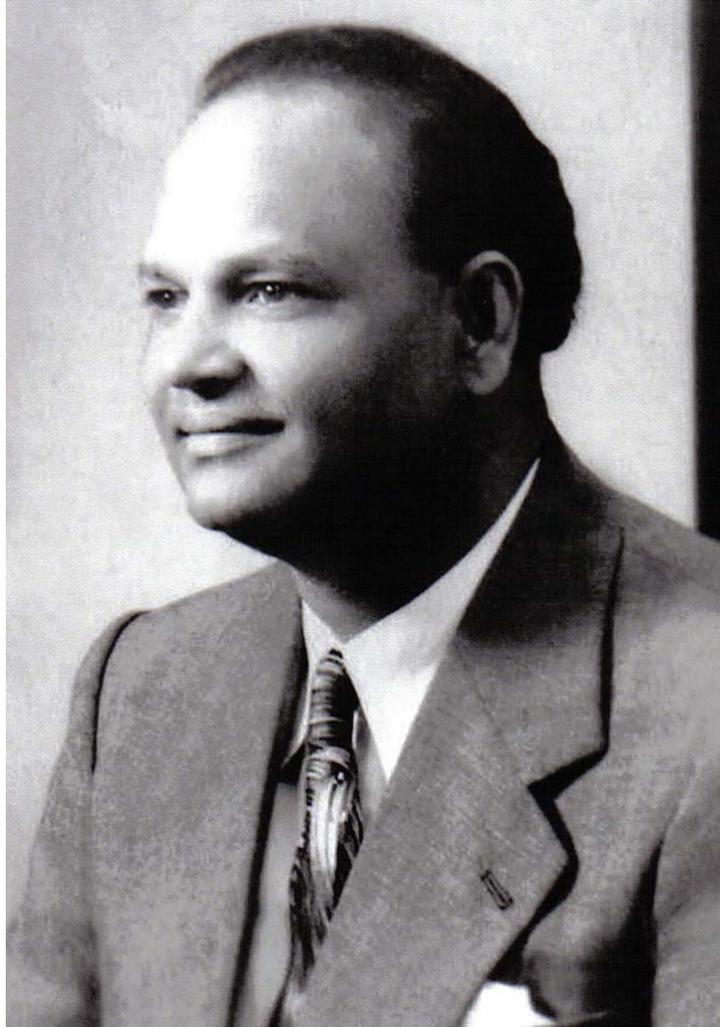
An expert of the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita and Ramayan, he is also an Orator of Indian Philosophy, delivering over 8,000 public discourses, seminars and lectures worldwide. He has directed 37 International Annual Training Camps on Indian Culture in Trinidad where people of all faiths and walks of life participate.

Lastly, as an astrologer, he has researched over 5,000 horoscopes for individuals on an ongoing basis, guiding and protecting their lives and families and ensuring their welfare.

Professor Adesh continues his praiseworthy work to this day. His country of permanent residence is Trinidad & Tobago. His wife Or Nirmala Adesh M.A; Ph D has silently worked with him throughout his life. His son Vivek S. Adesh, with his wife Smt Kadambari Adesh, both talented musicians, are carrying on the work of the BVS in the USA. His daughter, who is married to Pt. Ravindra Nath Goberdhan, the son of the highly prestigious family of Kuldip Narayan Goberdhan of Avocat Village, Fyzabad, Trinidad, an outstanding artiste herself, has been serving BVS in T&T, Canada and U.S.A.

Prof Adesh was declared as one of the greatest living legends in 21st century by The International

Biographical Society of Cambridge U.K. But all of his outstanding achievements, work and praise aside, Professor Adesh is also known for his great integrity, humility, dedication and selflessness. His vision is stated to be, “That this world be one family with equal love for all”, and it is with this in mind that he has selflessly devoted his life, utilizing his professional accomplishments, for the betterment of humanity.



Jang Bahadoorsingh (1914-1978)

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Jang Bahadoorsingh, successful businessman, land developer and political activist, was born on the 24th April 1914, in St. Augustine. He was the last of six children – two girls and four boys. Whilst he was still a baby, the family moved to Felicity in Chaguanas, where his father opted for a parcel of agricultural land which he cultivated to support himself and his family.

During that time, an elementary school was opened in the village where his parents decided to enroll him and where he completed his fifth-standard. As such, he was the only one of his siblings who had the opportunity to benefit from any sort of “formal” education, the others having been born and brought-up under plantation conditions.

Jang was gifted with an intuitive mind and with the capacity to easily assimilate information. He possessed a remarkable memory for numbers, developed an amazing vocabulary and became an articulate conversationalist. These qualities would later be assets in his social life, and business and public interactions.

He was also very ambitious and determined to improve himself. Jang read assiduously on a wide range of subjects, including the Hindu scriptures and those of other religions and became fluent in Hindi. He could recite a number of Urdu poems and memorized many passages from the Ramayana and the *Bhagavada Gita*. Thus it was no surprise that as a boy, during most nights, he would read from the Ramayana to his father.

His second brother, Mahabir, learned the tailoring trade and with the meager funds he and Jang

managed to save, mainly from doing odd jobs in the district, they bought a couple sewing machines and set up themselves in an unassuming rented property in Penal junction as clothing manufacturers of mainly khaki short pants and shirts. These, they would load-up on their horse-cart and peddle them to little stores in the neighbouring districts like Debe. These early experiences were invaluable and would lay the foundation for what were to come in their later business life. They triggered in Jang a deep interest in textiles in which he later became quite an expert and even considered establishing a textile mill in Trinidad. But it was left to his first son-in-law, Arjoon Ramsingh, much later on, to realize this particular ambition.

By then, Jang was married to Dhanrajee, the young and very pretty sister-in-law of his eldest brother, Ramcoomar, and had two children: the first, Bissoondaye, from an earlier, brief association; and in 1938, Krishna. Jang, Mahabir, and their wives and children, eventually moved to Port-of-Spain and established a business in a more substantial building in Prince Street. Whilst at this new location, a second son, Rama, was born.

Jang and Mahabir established the *New Yorker* Shirt Factory in South Quay, along with general retail stores in: Frederick Street and Independence Square, Port-of-Spain; High Street, San Fernando; and Scarborough, Tobago. He also organized a footwear manufacturing company in Agra, India, where there was a readily available and good supply of high quality leather and craftsmanship. The stock, mainly shoes and slippers, was crated and shipped to Trinidad in bulk,

where they were boxed and sold in the stores. He and Mahabir eventually agreed to dissolve their business partnership and go their separate ways. Jang settled for the retail stores and Mahabir, the garment factory.

Jang gradually disposed of the stores and invested the proceeds in various parcels of real estate and became a land developer. This venture came as no surprise to some who knew him. During Jang's early buying trips to Port-of-Spain, he was awed by the "magnificent seven" buildings in Queen's Park West and dreamed of constructing the "eighth", which materialized decades later in 1961 in St. Clair, opposite Queens Royal College.

In 1944, a third son, Ganesh, was born, followed almost five years later by a daughter, Sandy, and finally another son, Mahase. Since circumstances beyond Jang's control prevented him from proceeding beyond elementary school, this ambitious father was determined to provide his children with the best education he could afford. As a result, all his children except Bissoondaye and Rama, were sent to boarding schools in England. Krishna and Ganesh went on to universities in North America where they eventually obtained doctorates.

There were political and social dimensions to Jang's life. During the 1950s and 1960s, he was an active member of the *Sanathan Dharma Maha Sabha* (SDMS) and was closely associated with Bhadase Sagan Maraj, Simboonath Capildeo and Ram Seuratsingh. Jang spearheaded the planning and construction of the mandir in Ethel Street, St. James in the early sixties along with Kewal Maraj and Sonnyboy Lakhani. He was also one of the founding members of the *People's National*

Movement (PNM) along with Dr. Eric Williams, Kamaluddin Mohammed and Dr. Patrick Solomon. However, due to differences over proportional representation in the months leading up to independence in 1962, Jang soon severed ties with the PNM. He was part of a delegation to Marlborough House in London who petitioned to have the rights of Trinidadian ethnic minorities enshrined in the Trinidad and Tobago's first independence constitution. His political allegiance was then switched to the opposition *Democratic Labour Party* (DLP) under the leadership of Rudranath Capildeo followed by Vernon Jamadar. At this time, his eldest son, Krishna, armed with his doctorate in political science, became a lecturer in the Institute of International Relations at U.W.I. and the deputy leader of the D.L.P. These positions brought pride to Jang and his family.

After a lot of hard work and many worthy accomplishments, Jang's health deteriorated in 1968 and he kept a low profile until his death on the 25th July 1978, at the age of 64. He lived a full life and laid a sound foundation for his children and many grandchildren. His three sons continued the family's land development and housing business after his demise, including the Edinburgh 500 and Westmoorings projects. Jang's infectious charm, personality and wide knowledge, left a favourable impression on most of the people he met, both foreign and local, and when asked what university he attended, he would smile and respond, "The University of Felicity!"



Phoolbasia Charran (1912-2006)

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Phoolbasia Charran, fondly known as the “Matriarch of the Charran Empire”, was born on the 30th September, 1912, the second of five children. She was married at the tender age of eleven to Roopnarine Charran under Hindu rites. When she was fourteen, she left her home at Bejucal and departed to live with her husband and his family. As was customary among most East Indian and Hindu families, the daughter-in-law was expected to perform household chores, such as washing, cooking and cleaning.

Charran sought her independence and was determined to depart from tradition. She decided to work on an estate for thirty five cents a day. The decision to work was met with opposition from some family members especially her stern father-in-law. At five o'clock in the morning she would sneak off to work leaving her eldest child, Ganga, and a bottle of milk near to her sleeping father-in-law.

Each evening, on her return from work, Charran and her husband would then tend to their garden. This provided the capital for the family business. The profits were used to purchase lands in which they grew more crops. In 1950, they began selling a wide variety of items ranging from wholesale vegetables to hardware supplies at their newly opened “*Charran’s Variety Store*” on the Main Road in Chaguanas. She also sold their garden produce at the markets in Port-of-Spain, Tunapuna, Sangre Grande and San Fernando. She soon became a familiar sight in these locations. After a hard day’s work she would dutifully tend to her garden and her children.

Charran was fortunate that her children assisted in the store, especially in cleaning and preparing the vegetables for sale in the market.

Despite their busy schedules the Charrans always found time for religious as well as cultural activities. They regularly took their twelve children to *Sat Sangs* (Hindu Prayers) in the village. After her husband's death, Charran was even more determined to purchase properties in Port-of-Spain and Tunapuna and she also bought merchandise for the expanding variety stores. Her continuous work slowed down during her last days when she became challenged by various ailments such as osteoporosis.

Charran lived a disciplined life. Even at ninety four years of age, she would awake early every morning and begin her household duties and later perform prayers and offer water to the sun. She also provided assistance in the rebuilding and upkeep of a nearby temple. In her lifetime she had also travelled extensively to India, Europe and North America.

Phoolbasia Charran with no formal education was able to overcome a multitude of trials and tribulations to lay the foundation for the thriving businesses of her family which we are familiar with today. All of her twelve children, Ganga (deceased), Muniya (deceased), Lochan (deceased), Harry, Basdai, Reginald, Sanmatti, Anthony, Manawattie, Dane, Dale and Vishnu were able to receive primary, secondary and tertiary education. Most of her children and grandchildren operate successful businesses in Trinidad today, owing largely to the hard work, discipline and determination of this magnanimous lady.



Justice Ralph Narine (1922-)

Justice Ralph Narine (1922-)

Justice Ralph Narine was born in Gooding Village in San Fernando on 18 January 1922. His grandparents arrived from India in 1902 and his parents were born in Trinidad.

Narine attended Coffee Street E.C. School and later Naparima College. Whilst at secondary school he participated in sporting activities including table tennis, cricket and volleyball. In 1940, he became involved in weightlifting and was introduced to playing the mandolin by the famous musician – S.M. Aziz.

He readily took to music. This was no surprise since his father was an excellent harmonium player and his mother a talented singer. By 1941, he made his first public appearances with the S.M. Aziz group, who were accompanied by singers, dancers, acrobats and other musicians.

Also in 1941, Narine joined the Civil Service of Trinidad and Tobago as a Magistrate's Clerk. Music and the sporting activities referred to above continued to be part of his lifestyle but he enrolled as an external law student to read for the English Bar and successfully passed two examinations while at home.

During the early 1940s he accompanied Ramdhanie Sharma, James Ramsawak and Samaroo Kalloo with the mandolin and violin. In 1946, Narine entered and placed second in the Southern Weight Lifting competition featherweight class and also in the 1940s, he played Volleyball for Spitfire at Championship Level for two successive years.

Despite an active social life, Narine soon realized the need to further his studies and in 1947, went to England.

He became a member of the Indian Gymkhana Club in Osterly (a short distance from London), for which he played cricket for six seasons, and had the privilege in 1952 to play against India in one of their practice matches. It was a great privilege for Narine to play alongside that Indian state players and Indian University students and such great Indian allrounders as Vinoo Mankad and B.G. Nimbalkar.

On his return to Trinidad in 1952, he joined Oxford Club for which he played cricket for ten years and served on the Club's executive. It was a pleasurable experience for Narine because Oxford competed in the First Class Club Cricket competitions. During 1953-1955, he was on the team that won the Southern Championships. Because of injury, he stopped playing in 1961. This allowed him to focus his attention more on his musical talents.

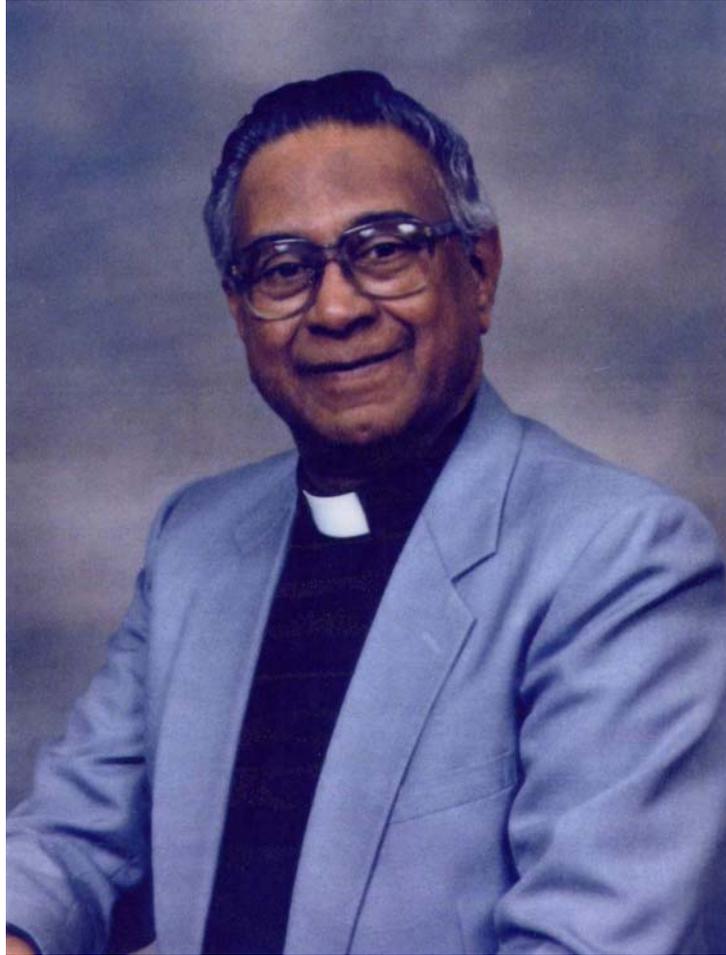
He continued with music until 1968 when he accepted a judicial appointment. In 1973, he headed a Commission of Inquiry into All Sports in Trinidad and Tobago. The subsequent report was accepted in Parliament. He also served as chairman of the government's Sports and Cultural Fund.

He practiced his profession at various levels in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago – Magistrates, High Court and Court of Appeal. In 1968, he accepted the offer to become a member of the Judiciary and served with distinction at the High Court Level and as a Justice of Appeal. He headed a Commission to examine the function and activities of Justices of the Peace and made recommendations.

His job allowed him to do extensive travelling. In 1969, he travelled to India, Kenya, Tanzania, Singapore

and Thailand. In Bangkok, Thailand, he attended a World Peace through Law Conference and a Conference of Judges. In India, he met with such dignitaries as Hemant Kumar, Buji Lord, Mahendra Bhawasar and Mukesh.

Narine retired in 1987 and has since been recognized for his outstanding work in culture and law. In 2002, the radio station 103 FM, honoured him for his service to Music and Law. The NCIC honoured him, as one of its founding members, on 15th July 2004. With respect to this organization, it should be noted that whilst Hans Hanoomansingh was its chairman, Narine assisted in devising a new constitution for the NCIC. Lastly, Narine was awarded the Chaconia Medal (gold) for outstanding service to his country.



Rev. Dr. Roy G. Neehall (1928-1996)

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Roy Gilbert Neehall was born on the 3rd October, 1928, in Woodbrook. He died on the 3rd August, 1996, at the age of 67. He was married in 1950 to Amy Bethia Cosman of Saskatchewan, Canada and they had five children.

Neehall attended Woodbrook Presbyterian School, and graduated from Queen's Royal College. He held a Bachelor of Arts degree with honours from Victoria College and a Bachelor of Divinity with a major in Church History from Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto. In 1958 he completed his Master of Sacred Theology (STM) with a major in Church History and obtained an Ecumenical Diploma at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

From the beginning of Neehall's university education he displayed a wide array of interests, talents and abilities. He was active in the student Christian movement, student politics, the debating society, he sang with a male quartet, he was a member of the French and Spanish clubs, and he played on the football and volleyball teams.

Neehall's career spanned many years and took him to 118 different countries. He started as a student Minister on several Mission Fields of the United Church of Canada during 1947 to 1953. As an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago, he served in the Penal Pastoral Charge (1954-1957), and at the Woodbrook Presbyterian Church, his home church, during 1958-1964. As a minister of the United Church of Canada he served the Garneau, Salisbury, Gilchrist,

and Clareview charges, and lastly, the Devon-Calmar Charge south of Edmonton, Canada, from 1986 till the time of his death in 1996.

Whilst in Trinidad, he was in high demand and served numerous positions in the church and society. These included Full-time Field Officer, Moderator of the Synod and Ecumenical Officer of the Presbyterian Church; Chaplain to the University of the West Indies in Trinidad; Vice-Principal of St. Andrew's Theological College; Independent Senator (representing Religion), in the Senate; and a member of a government-appointed commission on drug abuse.

From 1958-1962, he was Director of a radio Sunday school programme, which resulted in him becoming known as "Uncle Roy" to listeners across Trinidad and Tobago.

In 1969 he became the Associate General Secretary of SODEPAX, the Joint Committee on Society, Development and Peace of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican, in Geneva, Switzerland. He was a member of the World Association for Christian Communication Central Committee and the World Council of Churches Commission on the Churches Participation in Development. In 1973, Neehall became the General Secretary for the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) which was involved in programmes of Church Renewal and People's Development, on behalf of the twenty-nine member churches throughout the Caribbean.

In addition to the many sermons which Neehall prepared and delivered, he also wrote numerous articles and essays, including a monthly column in *Caribbean*

Contact and an unpublished history of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad. For a number of years he was editor of the *Trinidad Presbyterian*.

Among the numerous awards Roy received were two honorary Doctorates of Divinity from Laurentian University and his alma mater, Victoria College at the University of Toronto. He was awarded the Jaycees of Trinidad and Tobago “Outstanding Young Man of the Year Award” in 1967, the first E.H. Johnson Memorial Award of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1983, World Mission Award, Regional Ecumenical Award, and the Staff and Consultant Award from the Caribbean Conference of Churches.

After migrating to Canada in 1983, for family health reasons, Neehall was appointed International Person in Mission from the Caribbean to North America, a programme of the United Church of Canada and United Methodist Church of the USA.

Neehall’s wife, Amy, having suffered for more than twenty years with a bone marrow disease, passed away in early 1999. Their fourth child, Arthur, predeceased them in 1981. The other Neehall children all live in Alberta, Canada. Roy’s beloved sister Grace Bheekhoo, the last surviving member of his family, lives in Trinidad.

Although the last few years of his life were spent in Canada, Trinidad was always close to his heart. Neehall’s life and career can be summarized in his own words, “Above all I see my ministry in terms of proclaiming and working with others to bring hope for the world, individuals and societies.”



Doon Pandit (1900-1958)

Doon Pandit (1900-1958)

Doon Pandit was born in 1900 in the village of Las Lomas #1 to Trinidadian-born Surjan and Anupathi Devi who were first generation East Indians. He was the second amongst five children. Doon's early education was at the Las Lomas R.C. School, but social and economic constraints prevented him from attending school regularly. His father, Surjan, was deeply committed to his Brahmin responsibilities and ensured that his children were fully equipped to promote their religion. Thus, Doon and his siblings were required to regularly attend pujas and yagnas to observe and learn.

Surjan became ill in 1910 and died peacefully in 1911 at the Tacarigua District Hospital. As a result, Doon's schooling was abruptly ended when he was eleven years old. He now had to care for his siblings, while his mother toiled in the fields. Tragedy again struck when Doon's mother died in 1916. The children were now all orphans.

Doon and his brothers took refuge at a relative, but conditions there were very difficult. They returned to Las Lomas and became involved in small-scale farming. Doon was however never comfortable with farming as his interest was in religious activities. He chose Tiwarie Baba of Tacarigua as his guru. Baba was a scholar of Sanskrit and Hindi and was well versed in Hindu rituals and astrology, and the sacred texts.

Tewarie Baba taught Doon all the rudiments of Hinduism. Doon used to accompany him to all of his yagnas. It was at one of these yagnas that he met Basso whom he married in 1933. Basso's mother, Sookrani, was a single parent. Sookrani knew the prayers for healing

scorpion and snake bites, jaundice and most illnesses. Basso later took a leading role in the Gandhi Ashram in Arima and in helping in Doon's school building programs. She encouraged him to move to Arima where the education of their children was more easily accessible.

In 1939 Doon returned to Las Lomas #1 and began to oversee the Shiva mandir and later built a small wooden house at the back of the mandir. It was here that his reputation as a mystic healer grew and quickly spread throughout the island. Every year, thousands of persons from all spheres of society would visit Doon. Indeed, he transcended religious, racial, age and class barriers. His clients included the unemployed, businessmen and politicians. As a social worker he refused to be drawn into politics. He is reported to have healed the wife of the Governor General of Trinidad and Tobago after conventional medicine had failed. Persons with physical and emotional problems came from nearby islands and as far as Venezuela, Britain and United States. These acts and the diverse clientele enhanced his reputation and Doon soon became a household name.

Not surprisingly, Doon always identified with the poor and distressed and it was thus he became interested and was touched by the plight of the lepers who regularly came to his mandirs seeking his healing powers and hoping to be put out of their misery. Governor Sir Bede Clifford, acknowledging Doon's capacity for social service, granted him permission in 1946 to construct and administer a mandir on the Chacachacare Island where scorned lepers lived. This was a major achievement in a Christian-dominated society. Doon would organize weekly pilgrimages to Chacachacare and usually carried food, offerings, articles of worship and conducted services for

his Hindu brothers and sisters. He was usually accompanied by musicians, singers and dancers to entertain the lepers. He later sought government's help to improve their lives by appealing to the government to allow those lepers, who were not seriously sick, to settle in Las Lomas and provide them with lands to cultivate.

His work amongst the lepers of Chacachacare was recognized by the King of Britain who, in June 1949, bestowed on him the title, "Member of the British Empire". It was the first time that an Indo-Trinidadian who had served his community, using Hindu values, had been given this prestigious award by Britain. Interestingly, Doon never wore western clothes. When he was made a "Member of the British Empire" (MBE), and had to make regular visits to the governor's house, he continued the wearing of dhoti, kurta, pagree and sandals. He always encouraged all persons to retain their culture and language so that the children should not go astray.

In 1950 he sought to heal the divisions within the Hindu community. He met with Pundits S.P. Tiwarie and Teeluckdharry and convened a meeting of all Sanatanist pundits. They decided to form a "Pundits Parishad". Among those chosen to serve were Pundit Bhagoutie of San Juan who was the Dharmacharya, Doon agreed to serve as President, Pundit Teeluckdharry and Pundit Goberdhan were vice-presidents and Pundit Jankie Persad Sharma was the treasurer.

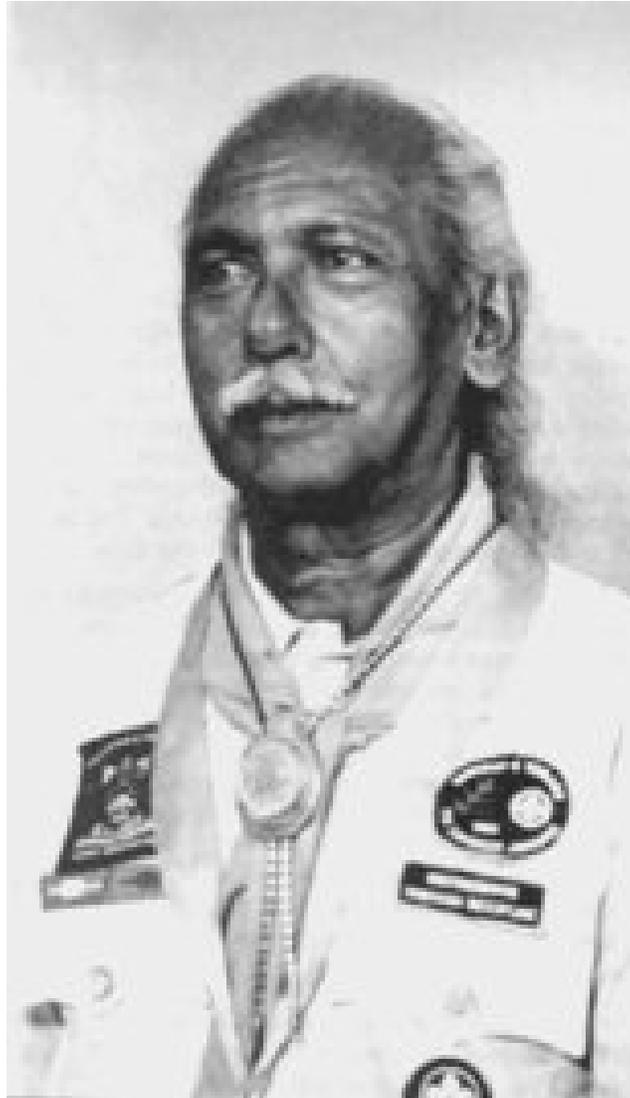
Doon Pandit was also famous as a builder of mandirs and was actively involved in the building of mandirs in Arima and Las Lomas. He would also assist in building mandirs at Curepe, Surrey Village, Lopinot and Laventille. Furthermore, Doon worked with Pundits Teeluckdharry, Jankie Persad Sharma and Goberdhan in

building temples in Debe and Siparia. These mandirs built by these visionary pundits not only changed the landscape of Trinidad, but later became the foundation for the rapid rise of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha's (SDMS) school building programme.

Doon Pundit was very popular amongst non-Hindus and had many Afro-Trinidadians as his disciples and who assisted at his temples. He was a philanthropist who always assisted anyone who sought his help. He became a member of the Blind Welfare League and the Red Cross Society and at all times urged his hundreds of followers to make voluntary donations to these organizations. He even built breakfast sheds to feed the scores of destitute persons who came to his temples in Arima and Las Lomas.

Doon Pandit was a strong advocate for uplifting women. He had the unwavering support of his wife Basso and Mrs. J. Holkhoorie. He formed a Social Welfare Group at the Arima Temple to develop the skills of women in sewing and knitting. In addition, Basso organized the St Helena Piarco Indian Women Welfare Group to serve the depressed people of these areas.

Doon died on the 28th August, 1958, at the relatively young age of 58. Trinidad had lost one of its most illustrious sons. Thousands of mourners, from all walks of life, lined the streets to pay tribute to this fascinating and colourful personality.



Manny Ramjohn (1915 – 1998)

Manny Ramjohn (1915 – 1998)

Manny Ramjohn, Trinidad and Tobago's first gold medalist in a major athletics event, was born in 1915 in San Fernando and educated at Naparima College in San Fernando. He was a long-distance runner whose specialties were the 5,000 metres and 10,000 metres events and represented this country in a number of athletic events at home and abroad.

On the 11th December, 1946, at the Central American and Caribbean Games (CAC Games) in Columbia, a thirty- year old Ramjohn ran the 5,000 meters and placed first with a record time of 15:54:8. Additionally, Ramjohn was one of the five athletes to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the Olympics in 1948 at Wembley, England. At the Olympics he ran the 5,000 and 10,000 meters but unfortunately he did not complete the races.

Ramjohn's career included the White City Games in London, England in 1939, where he ran the one mile and three miles races. As a long-distance runner he recorded 96 victories, 40 second – place positions and 13 third place finishes. Ramjohn's exceptional athletic feats were achieved despite not having formal coaching. He was blessed with an exceptional talent and endurance.

Ramjohn was also active in guiding young minds in the society. In 1930, he joined the Fifth Naparima Scout Troop and in 1937 he was elevated to King Scout and Patrol Leader. As King Scout and Patrol Leader he was one of twelve representatives from Trinidad and Tobago to witness the coronation of King George IV. His involvement with the Scouts continued whilst he was

an employee at Texaco, and he remained a scout leader until the time of his death.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago awarded Mr. Manny Ramjohn the Humming Bird Medal Silver for his outstanding contributions to Social Work and Sport. He also received numerous other awards: some of these included the Wood Badge from the Scout Association of the United Kingdom in 1948; Medal of Merit from the Boys Scout Association of Trinidad and Tobago in 1973; and the Silver Ibis Award for meritorious service in 1979. In the later years of his life, Ramjohn continued to be honoured. In 1980 he received the Silver Platter 50-year Award from the Point-a-Pierre District Scouts Association.

He was the cousin of former President of Trinidad and Tobago, the late Noor Hassanali and First Lady Dr. Jean Ramjohn Richards (wife of current President Dr. George Maxwell Richards). Ramjohn, who lived most of his married life at his humble home in Caratal Road, Gasparillo, was married to Irma, and had six sons, one daughter and fourteen grandchildren.

Ramjohn died at the age of 82 at the San Fernando General Hospital on Friday 23rd January, 1998. He was buried under Muslim rites at the Paradise Cemetery in San Fernando. It must be noted that he never lost his passion for distance running as he continued to perform 16-mile runs even until a few weeks before his death.

Trinidad and Tobago never forgot this son of the soil and decided that the newly built stadium located at Union Park in Marabella be named after Manny Ramjohn. Thus in 2001, the Manny Ramjohn Stadium was constructed and hosted some of the games of

Under-17 World Cup. In 2003, the annual Manny Ramjohn Memorial Games were initiated in Marabella at the Manny Ramjohn Stadium.



James Ramsawak (1917-1998)

James Ramsawak (1917-1998)

James Ramsawak was born on the 5th December, 1917, in the quiet, agricultural village of Barrackpore, in the county of Naparima. He was the third child of Ramsawak and Alice Maharaj. As a child and teenager, James fully embraced the rural, rustic life where sugar cane cultivation and oil production were part of the enriching experiences of anyone who lived in such communities in south Trinidad.

He attended the Inverness Canadian Mission Indian School and attained a sixth standard education. He was known to be a good student who participated in all the school's activities. At this stage in his life he developed a passion for the singing of hymns. As a practising Christian that passion was carefully nurtured by the local Presbyterian Church which he attended.

At age fifteen he joined the Texaco Oil Company located in Barrackpore. During the first few years of his apprenticeship James was involved in various aspects of oil production, after which he was given a position as a "gauger". James gave the company dedicated and loyal service for a period of fifty years until his retirement in 1982.

Ramsawak was a self-made and self-taught individual. Despite the fact that he was a Christian, attended church and sang hymns, he also developed a keen interest in Indian music. His paternal grandfather, an indentured worker, possessed a glorious and rich Indian cultural tradition. This inspired the young James who eagerly learnt to the Hindi songs. The boy, who was already an accomplished hymn singer, quickly learnt

from his grandfather the different types of classical songs. In order to better develop his singing skills James began singing Hindu religious songs known as “bhajans”. He sang these in village temples, at the homes of villagers, at yagnas, satsanghs and social occasions. As his popularity grew, demands were made of him to sing in far-off villages. He embraced every opportunity and shared his beautiful, melodious voice with an expanding fan base.

Interestingly, Ramsawak never had formal musical training, but read widely on the subject and taught himself the rudiments of Indian music. During his era he was unrivalled, because most of his peers had a limited musical knowledge.

As a young man, Ramsawak possessed leadership qualities and would play a pivotal role in the founding of the “*Ramsawak Sangeet Saaj*”. This was a band comprising of family members. His wife, Rookmin Celia, was the band’s sponsor. Ramsawak played the harmonium, sang Hindi movie and classical songs; his brother, Thomas Ramsawak, played the dholak; whilst his nephew, Frank played the clarinet. Other members were: Selvon Latchman who played the mandolin and accordion; Elias Latchman who played the drum set; Sam Juthan and his daughter Zorah played the dhantal and they were accompanied by Ramsawak’s niece, Carmen, who sang and danced.

With verve and panache Ramsawak was a symbol of sartorial elegance. He always dressed to impress and was easily recognizable at public functions. As far as his music was concerned he was a star in his

time. There was a certain flair about him which created envy and jealousy among his peers.

When younger members of the band were forced to give up or forego participation because of high school and as others got married and moved out of the community for that or other reasons, the energetic Ramsawak was not daunted. The irrepressible Ramsawak founded another orchestra when the “Ramsawak Sangeet Saaj” ended. The new group was known as the “*Radha Krishna Orchestra*” with newcomers Cecil Fonrose, an Afro-Trinidadian guitarist, Sundar Popo of “*Nani Nana*” fame and Lochan Salantie, the village barber turned dholak player. Other promising musicians and singers were Sheik Mohammed, Moonilal Beepath and Mikey Sam.

Besides being a versatile musician and melodious singer, Ramsawak also built musical instruments including the mandolin, bul bul tarang and dholak. With his gifted hands he also repaired damaged instruments. Additionally James Ramsawak was employed on a part time basis by the Ministry of Community Development to teach singing (vocal training) and instrumentation (training to play musical instruments) in schools, temples and community centres. His work was highly appreciated and recognized throughout the south. Some of his outstanding students were Sundar Popo, Lily Ramcharran, Drupatie Ramgoonai, Judy Ali, Kamla Maharaj, Cecil Fonrose, Mitra Beepath and Heeralal Rampartap.

As an accomplished harmonium player, singer par excellence and a prolific composer, Ramsawak toured Suriname, Guyana and New York. He enjoyed

entertaining foreign fans who adored and loved him. He was also fortunate to perform for Vijantimala (the movie star) and her husband – Dr. Ajit, playback singers Mohammed Rafi, Mukesh, Talat Mahamood, Anuradha Paudwal, Manna Dey and Kanchan and Babla. He also sang on many prestigious occasions in the presence of presidents and prime ministers including the late Noor Hassanali, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, Dr. Eric Williams, George Chambers, Grantley Adams and Norman Manley. He also won the admiration of friends such as Kamaludddin Mohammed and Justice Ralph Narine.

Apart from music the multi-talented Ramsawak also delved into drama and directed the play “*Abu Hassan*” at the Inverness Presbyterian School in Barrackpore during a successful concert. He was associated with Bhadase Sagan Maraj and was a popular and cherished artiste in the Maha Sabha’s school building fundraising concerts throughout the country.

James Ramsawak’s monumental contribution to East Indian Culture is indelibly recorded in the annals of Indo-Caribbean history. For an illustrious career, he received the Humming Bird Gold Medal on the 31st August, 1995, by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. He died peacefully on the 7th February, 1998, and his memories and music continue to live on.



Swami Satchidananda (1931-1993)

Swami Satchidananda (1931 – 1993)

Swami Satchidananda was originally known as Hari Ram. He was born on the 18th July, 1931, in California. A cruel blow was dealt to Ram, his brother and sister, when their parents died and they were left as orphans at an early age. Fortunately, a caring aunt and uncle took care of them.

As a boy, Ram showed a keen interest in performing pujas, learning Hindi and singing bhajans. The temple became the focal point of his life. When he was eighteen years old, Ram was fortunate to obtain a decent job as a Laboratory Assistant at the Brechin Castle Sugar Factory in 1949. A few years later, in 1956, Ram resigned his job and decided to become a disciple of Swami Purnananda. The resignation from his job and departure from his home in Felicity indicated his seriousness in pursuing a religious path in life.

In 1956 Ram and Purnananda went to Demerara in Guyana, where Ram was inducted into the Order of the Brahmacharya on the 29th August 1957. Upon his return to Trinidad, Brahmachari Hari Ram established the *Vishwanath* cultural group. This would later change its name to the *Divine Life Society*. He would regularly conduct havan at the religious groups he founded.

In 1967, Brahmachari Ram received a scholarship, sponsored by the United Hindu Organization, to attend the prestigious *Sandeepaney Sadhanaalaya* of Powai in Mumbai, India. After completion of his studies he enrolled at the international headquarters of the Divine Life Society based at Rishikesh in India. Then in May, 1968, he was elevated

to the status of a Swami and given the title “*Satchidananda*”. A year later, in 1969, Swami Satchidananda returned to Trinidad and Tobago, and soon established the *Shivananda Yoga Vedanta Academy* in Chaguanas.

Satchidananda made frequent visits to other countries where he attended international conferences and delivered lectures. Even though he was a Hindu, Swami Satchidananda was keen on promoting religious harmony. This was evident during the years 1983 to 1985 when he served as the President of the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO).

During the 1980s and 1990s, Satchidananda was honoured for his sterling contributions to the betterment of citizens and promotion of Hinduism. Among the awards was the *Shastri* Diploma bestowed upon him by the Trinidad Academy of Hinduism in 1983. Also in this year the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* of Trinidad and Tobago presented him with an Award of Merit. Then for this country’s Independence Awards, in 1986, he received the Humming Bird Medal. Finally, in 1992 the *Kannti Marg* Award was given to Satchidananda for his outstanding work among Hindus.

After living a fulfilling and dedicated life, faithfully serving humanity, the Swami died on the 8th December, 1993.



Kung Beharry Singh (1920-1989)

Kung Beharry Singh (1920-1989)

On the 26th September, 1920, Kung Beharry Singh was born in Aranguez to Joseph and Sumintra Doolamsingh. He was the third of five boys and three girls. He spent his early childhood and teenage years in Aranguez.

He withdrew from school after receiving a standard three education. His withdrawal from school was due to poverty and the difficulty of his parents maintaining a large family. At an early age he had no choice but to work to support his family. Despite the family's state of indigence, Singh was raised in a home that was disciplined and had a high standard of morality.

"K.B. Singh" as he was fondly called was unskilled and therefore experienced considerable difficulty in securing a regular, well-paying job. After a brief stint as a labourer with the St. Patrick County Council he worked as a "driving instructor" in Chaguanas. Most of his working years were spent driving trucks for contractors and companies. Before retiring at age sixty-five, his final place of employment was at a hardware in Chase Village.

As a young man Singh displayed an interest in Indian music. His inspiration and tutor was his father and later, Pundit Mahase Maharaj of Avocat. He quickly learnt the songs and music taught by his father. Language then was an important factor in his training as he acquired skills in Hindi and Sanskrit. This would become useful tools in his blossoming singing career.

He was blessed with a powerful, beautiful and melodious voice. Furthermore, Singh had a charming

personality. He was an outstanding classical singer who won many local competitions and generously received commendations, awards, certificates and trophies. His singing reputation went beyond Trinidad and Tobago as he toured Guyana, Suriname and Holland winning new fans.

K.B. Singh was married in his mid-twenties to Sumintra Boralal of Cap-de-ville, Point Fortin and they produced eight children – five boys and three girls. He always had the best interest of his children at heart and was known to be a caring, loving father.

He was a very versatile harmonium player and an accomplished dhantalist. He gave selfless service to the community by teaching vocal and harmonium music in the twilight of his years.

Kung Beharry Singh died of cardiac arrest on the 8th September, 1989, but he lives on in his music and in the memories of his friends, family and fans.

Pioneers inducted in 2008

Mahmoud Pharouk Alladin (1919 – 1980) Internationally renowned Artist, Poet and Writer. Promoted art education in Trinidad and Tobago and the upliftment of local talent in Indian song and dance, Parang and Calypso. Director of Culture in 1966 and President of the Trinidad and Tobago Art Society for many years. Awarded Trinidad and Tobago's Gold Medal of Merit in 1968. Awarded Venezuela's highest decoration – “*Order of Francisco de Miranda*” – for promoting better cultural understanding between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

Ralp Baney (1929 –) Internationally renowned Artist (Sculptor). Awarded the Service Medal of Merit Gold from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (1973). Awarded for Teaching Excellence by the Maryland State Board of Community College. Awarded Honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine (2004). Member of prestigious Art associations: the *British Royal Society of Sculptors*; *Sculptors Guild New York*; and *Washington Sculptors Group*. Listed in “*Who's Who in American Art*” and “*American Artist of Renown*”.

Vera Baney (1930 – 2008) Internationally renowned Artist (Sculptor). Honorary Doctorate from the University of the West Indies (2007) for lifelong achievement and contribution to the field of Art. First place in Ceramics, University of Maryland, Guild Exhibit (1973). Outstanding Potters Award, Creative Crafts Council, 11th Biennial (1974). First place in Ceramics, 2nd International, Martin Luther King Library, Washington DC (1974). Hummingbird Gold Medal, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (1982). Teacher at Dundalk Community College in Baltimore. Photographs of her work have been reproduced in “*Responding to Art*” and “*Contemporary Crafts of the Americas*”.

Bisram Gopie (1910 – 1986) Contributed immensely to the development of Culture, Hinduism and Trade Unionism. Awarded Medal of Merit (1971) and Member of the British Empire. Founder of the *Ghandi Seva Sangh* in 1948 and lifelong President until his passing. Founding member and first President of the NCIC.

Responsible for the building of the Mahatma at Harris Promenade, San Fernando. Responsible for the building of temples such as the Ghandi Ashram and Temple at Todds Street, San Fernando.

Ram Kirpalani (1924 – 1985) Outstanding entrepreneur and philanthropist. Established a chain of successful departmental retail stores. Pioneer of the development of shopping malls in Trinidad and Tobago.

Kewal Krishan Maharaj (1920 –) Outstanding businessman. Founder of *Maraj and Sons Jewellers Limited*. Member of the NCIC. Judge on the *Mastana Bahar* Competitions.

Surujpat Mathura (1923 – 2007) Pioneer in the promotion of Indian Culture in Trinidad and Tobago. Representative for Caroni/Chaguanas in the Federal Parliament (1958). Assisted Bhadase Sagan Maharaj in consolidating major Hindu factions into the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (1952). Acted in the film “*Girl from Trinidad*”. Honoured by the Association of Publishers and Broadcasters for “lifelong career in all categories of the media” (2004). Announcer on Radio Trinidad. Host of “*Indian Variety*” television programme. A Cultural Icon.

Kamaluddin Mohammed (1927 –) Religious and cultural activist, politician and statesman. Host of radio programme, “*Indian Talent on Parade*”. Chairman of the St. George County Council (1953). Served on Legislative Council (1956). Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. Received awards from Liberia, Brazil, Senegal and Venezuela.

Narsaloo Ramaya (1919 –) Pioneer in Indian culture. Early member of the Modern Indian Orchestra. Assisted in the production of the first grand Indian cultural show “*Gulshan Bahar*”. Leader of the *Naya Zamana Orchestra*. Produced many solo records. Awarded Hummingbird Bronze Medal (1970).

Ramdhanie Sharma (“Shamma”) (1918-1988) Exceptionally gifted singer. Contributed to Indian classical music. Declared “*Caribbean Champion of Indian Classical Singing*” (1964).

Shri Brajamadhava Battacharya (1910 –) World renowned scholar, poet, playwright, novelist, writer and religious philosopher. Publish numerous works, including thirty Bengali novels and eleven books. Established a number of holistic education institutions in Trinidad. Consecrated murtis at temples and performed poojas. Taught Sanskrit and Indian history at the U.W.I. Honoured by the Bengali Literary Association for contribution to Bengali Literature. Inducted into the 103 FM Hall of Fame.

Pioneers inducted in 2007

James Isaiah Boodhoo (1932 – 2004) Pioneer Caribbean Artist who based his work in the Caribbean experience. Portrayed this experience in Brazil, the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, India and locally. Long and distinguished career as Primary, Secondary and Tertiary level teacher between 1948 and 1989. Teacher of Art, Art Education and Chief Examiner at the Caribbean Examinations Council. Prepared more than 7000 cross-word puzzles for over quarter of a century. Novelist and cultural activist for over three decades.

Simbhoonath Capildeo (1914 – 1990) Co-founder of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (1952). Played a crucial role in the building of Hindu schools in Trinidad. Political activist (1940 – 1976). Member of Parliament (1956 – 1961). Founding member of the Paschim Kashi Temple in St. James, Trinidad.

Dr. Joan Homaida Kazim (1925 –) Freedom Fighter in Indian Independence Movement. Pioneer in Child Welfare Services. Founder of the Islamic Social and Cultural Association. Director of the Islamic Academy. Educationist and Exemplar to the National Community.

Pandit Basdeo Misir (1914 –) Promoter of Sanatan Dharma for over 50 years. Former President of Pandit's Parishad. Former Vice-President of Caribbean Pandit's Council. Former Dharmacharya of Vishva Hindu Parishad. Donated land for Krishna Mandir, Lengua Village. Political Activist during the 1960s.

Taran Persad (1925 – 1983) Lead singer of Naya Zamana Orchestra (1945 – 1972). Lead actor in Indian drama "Gulshan Bahar" during the 1940s. Fund-raiser for Bengal Famine Relief Fund. Prominent singer in Radio Trinidad's pioneering "Indian Talent on Parade" from the 1940s. Pioneer in the re-construction of Indian culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Jankie Persad Sharma (1894 – 1977) Builder of Temples and Schools in South Trinidad. Introduced the Shrimad Bhagwat Purana

Katha and Krishna Leela. Dharmachar of Hindu Sanatan Dharma Association and later Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha. Trained a generation of Hindu Pandits. Taught Sanskrit and Hindi, composed Bhajans and Kirtans as part of his island-wide outreach programme.

Sonny Ramadhin (1929 –) First Indo-Caribbean person to play for the West Indies Cricket Team. Represented the West Indies in 43 test matches in the Caribbean and abroad. First-class cricket career (1949 to 1965) in which he took 758 wickets (with an average per wicket of 20.24) and 38 catches. Inspired a generation of young cricketers.

Timothy Roodal (1884 – 1952) Early oil explorer in South Trinidad and Cinema magnate. Member of the San Fernando Borough Council (1928 to 1948). Mayor of San Fernando between 1942 to 1945. Member of Legislative Council (1928 to 1950). Member of Governor's Executive Council (1946 to 1948). Builder of *Roomor*, one of the Magnificent Seven buildings in Port of Spain.

Sooganie Lalla (1908 – 1999) Dedicated mother who through self discipline, hard work, sacrifice and faith in her religion, was able to nurture and see to the education of her children who rank among the most brilliant and successful individuals in Trinidad and Tobago. A true upholder of Dharma and an exemplar of Hindu motherhood.

Ajodhasingh (1906 – 1961) Lifelong Chiropractor ministering to the needy. Vice-Chairman of St. Patrick County Council. Member of the Legislative and Executive Councils (1950 to 1961). Minister of Communications and Works. Represented the State at Queen Elizabeth's Coronation (1952).

Pioneers inducted in 2005

Albert Mannie Dookie (1915 – 1968) for blazing a trail in long distance running. 1931: Won first three-mile race at Queen’s Park Savannah. 1933: Won one-mile and three-mile races in Guyana. 1934: Represented Trinidad and Tobago at second British Empire Games, London. 1944: Created new record for three-mile race in Trinidad. 1944-1968: Sports Administrator for Athletics.

Francis Evelyn Mohammed Hosein (1880 – 1936) for distinguished public service. Island Scholarship Winner. Graduate of Oxford University, Lincoln’s Inn. Author of historical drama depicting the struggles of Nepoio Indians, “Hyarima and the Saints.” 1928 – 1933: Represented St. George in Legislative Council. 1929 – 1931: Mayor of Arima. Legal Advisor to East Indian National Association and East Indian National Congress. Represented Sugar Workers in the Nation’s Courts.

Chanka Maharaj (1913 – 1966) for outstanding public service and as a champion wrestler. 1945: Islands Champion Wrestler. 1946-1950: Parliamentary Representative of St. George. 1950-1956: Parliamentary Representative of St. Joseph. 1947: Member of Constitutional Reform Committee. 1952: Co-founder of Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha and Chair of its School Building Committee. Active member of Butler Party, social worker and cultural activist.

Nazir Mohammed (1913 – 1968) for putting Indian culture on national stage. Leading harmonium player. Staged Indian dramas Gulshan Bahar and Naya Zamana. Created Naya Zamana Orchestra which emerged as top band 1962. Jungle Competition. Blended western with oriental musical instruments.

Samuel Dickson Selvon (1923 – 1994) for being one of the first West Indian novelists. Grandson of indentured labourer. Creative writer for Trinidad Guardian. Writer of ten novels, numerous short stories and poems. Best known novels being: *The Lonely Londoners*; *A Brighter Sun*; and *Turn Again Tiger*.

Gemma Ramkeesoon (1910 – 1990) for outstanding social work in Trinidad and Tobago. Started social work with the Cedros Bees. Secretary to St. Mary's Home, Tacarigua. Executive Director of Young Women's Christian Association. Secretary/Treasurer of Bishops Centenary College. Represented Anglican Community at 1950 World Conclave in London. Won Hummingbird Gold Award for Social Work, 1976.

Sahadeen Ramroop (1922 – 1999) for organizing sugar workers in north Trinidad and activism among women. Spent fifty years as a worker in the sugar industry. Shop Steward for all Trinidad Sugar Union. Led sugar worker strikes in 1973 and 1975. "Didi" (eldest sister) to hundreds of women in St. Augustine, Tunapuna and El Dorado. Created self-help groups among sugar worker families.

Sewdass Sadhu (1901 – 1971) for building of Temple in the Sea, Waterloo. Born of indentured parents at Waterloo Estate. 1947: Built first Temple at Waterloo. 1952: Temple demolished by Caroni Sugar Company and Sewdass Sadhu spent next two decades rebuilding the temple, this time in the sea. Made return trips to India and brought murtis and pictures for temple. Today's temple stands as a monument to a people's determination to carve a space for themselves in the New World.

Isaac Yankaran (1932 – 1969) for gifted musical talent. Born at Waterloo from indentured servants of Madrasi lineage. Grew up in Barataria, then a centre for revival of Indian culture. From 1947 started appearing on radio programmes featuring Indian culture. Returned to Brickfield, Waterloo where he established a name in classical and popular melodies. Made first record in 1966, second released posthumously in 1982.

Pundit Goberdhan (1892 – 1966) for early leadership of the East Indian Community. 1933 – 1952: President of the Hindu Sanatan Dharma Association. 1952: One of the founders of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha. 1940 – 1955: President of East Indian National Congress. 1937 – 1942: Member of East Indian Advisory Board. Land valuator, temple builder and social worker.

Pioneers inducted in 2004

Pundit Capildeo (1871 – 1926) Indentured labourer. Hindu priest, religious teacher, businessman. Father of Simbhoonath and Rudranath Capildeo and grandfather of V.S. Naipaul and Shiva Naipaul. Builder of famous Lion House in Chaguanas.

Adrian Cola Rienzi (1905-1972) Formerly Krishna Deonarine, pioneer trade union leader, politician and lawyer. First Indo-Trinidadian to sit on the Governor's Executive Council.

Dr. Stella Piari Abidh (1903 – 1989) First Indo-Trinidadian woman to qualify as a medical doctor. Played a stellar role in the development of the public health sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

Haji Ruknudeen Meah (1865-1963) Pioneering and visionary leader of the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago. One of the founders of the TIA and ASJA. He was the first person to be appointed the spiritual head of the Muslims.

Seepersad Naipaul (1906 – 1953) Father of Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul and author Shiva Naipaul. He was the first Indo-Trinidadian to become a writer and to publish a work of fiction. He was also a journalist.

Ranjit Kumar (1912 – 1982) Cultural activist, engineer, politician, first to introduce Indian films to Trinidad. Member of the Legislative Council, builder of Wrightson Road.

Bhadase Sagan Maharaj (1920 – 1971) Politician, trade unionist, religious leader, businessman, educationalist, benefactor. Founder of the Maha Sabha and initiator of its role in the education of the East Indian.

George Fitzpatrick (1875 – 1920) First Indo-Trinidadian lawyer and first to sit on the then Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Sought the betterment of life of East Indians in the colony through improvement in estate conditions and greater access to education.

Noor Jehan (Irene Montrichard) (1921 – 2002) Famous Indo-Trinidadian singer and cultural activist. Performed throughout Trinidad, the Caribbean, Syria, Lebanon and India and in dance dramas like *Gulshan Bahar* and *Naya Zamana*.

Champa Devi (Fatima Rahim) (1923 – 2001) Household name in East Indian dance, a cultural activist and dance teacher. Tutored artistes like Rajkumar Krishna Persad, Geoffrey Holder and Owen Ali. Appeared in dance dramas *Gulshan Bahar* and *Naya Zamana*.

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