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FORTY-SIX YEARS OF THE NCIC

The National Council of Indian Culture of Trinidad and Tobago (NCIC) came into existence on July 19, 1964 making it forty-six years old in 2010. This is indeed a laudable achievement considering that the organisation is run on a totally voluntary basis by its executive and members, has survived despite tremendous difficulties, and is today the premier institution for Indian culture not only in Trinidad and Tobago but in the Caribbean.

The organisation continues to adhere to its original objectives of promoting and propagating Indian culture as brought by our forefathers to this country. It is said by many who have lately come to Trinidad from India that Trinidad has amazingly retained the flavours of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar from whence the majority of our forefathers came, even after 165 years of separation from India. Changes have of course occurred as would be expected. We have lost some of the earlier cultural forms while others are seriously being threatened with extinction and we have virtually lost the language that was brought by our ancestors.

The NCIC has been in the forefront of this cultural retention since its formation in 1964 and has by its intervention sought to retain those aspects of our heritage that has remained but are under serious threat. The prime example of this is the local classical singing. This is a type of singing which has its obvious origins in the villages of U.P. and Bihar, but has over the years developed into its own distinctive styling. This has

happened not only in Trinidad but also in Guyana and Suriname.

The NCIC in its early years concentrated mainly on the promotion of local classical singing and was the backbone on which the organisation existed. It was in fact the main reason why this type of cultural practice has survived to this day, though it is now threatened by the recent cultural phenomenon of chutney and the so-called soca chutney. Promotion of classical singing by the Council was diminished in the recent past but, realising the imminent danger, has gone full gear into a hopefully strong revival promoting competitions and concerts.

In the early part of the last century, the 1920's and 1930's, when classical singing emerged, singers like Fakeer Mohammed, Phiramat, AH Jan ,and Bel Bagai, to name a few, "ruled the roost" so to speak, beguiling the nation with their thumries, ghazals, horis ,bhairavies etc. In the early days of the NCIC, singers like Ramdhanie Sharma, Henry Toolum Dindial, Yusuf Khan, K.B. Singh, Yankaran and James Ramsawak amongst others were the stalwarts of the classical singing golden era. I was an active participant in organising the annual competitions at venues like Queens Hall, Himalaya Club and the Naparima Bowl and I still vividly remember the wonderful times I had during these cultural feasts. I am proud to say that even today I am part of the revival.

The NCIC moved into other cultural styles and is today able to boast that it was through the efforts of the Council that authentic Indian classical dance (Kathak) and music, especially the playing of the Tabla was first

seriously introduced to Trinidad and Tobago. Up until that time the only player of the tabla in Trinidad that I am aware of was a Pundit Sieunarine of Debe whose great grandchildren (the Minocha brothers) are now in the forefront of Indian classical singing and music in our country.

At great expense, and when the Council has little funds, it hosted for many years (in the 1970's) tutors from India like Pratap and Priya Pawar, Pradeep Shankar (dance), Pt. Vishwanath Mishra and Prof. Sudhir Verma (Tabla) who revolutionised dance performances and the playing of Indian music. Many memorable and enthralling productions were staged under the aegis of the NCIC Kala Kendra, the likes of which were not before seen in our country. It is also pleasing to note that as a result of the NCIC's work in this field, many of our students in the Kendra were awarded scholarships by the Government of India. These students have today opened up their own training schools in Trinidad and Tobago contributing in great measure to the preservation of our cultural heritage.

The Council continued to preserve the culture by promoting several competitions on filmi songs which by then had taken Trinidad and Tobago by storm, and encouraged the growth and development of Indian orchestras by organising the Saaj Sammelan or orchestration competitions. We also presented filmi artistes like Kishore Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar, Hema Malini.

A close relationship was developed between the NCIC, the Indian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) of New Delhi, India commencing in the 1970's

and continues to this day. The Council has as a result presented many of India's top folk, dance and music groups, art exhibitions, book fairs over the years to the people of our country. We have had, for example, the pleasure of hosting artistes like Ustad Bismillah Khan (the Shehnai virtuoso), Debu Chaudhary (Sitar), Hari Prasad Chaurasiya (flautist) to name but a few of the many.

The year 1986 was a watershed year of the NCIC when it developed what has become its flagship project and now is an institution by itself, the Divali Nagar. Divali Nagar has become the most recognised Indian cultural festival in Trinidad and Tobago and has impacted east Indian immigrant communities settled in several western hemisphere countries. It has become the catalyst for many of these communities to attempt to re-discover their cultural roots with the active participation of the NCIC.

Except for Suriname, it is unfortunate and sad that all these communities, including Guyana and Trinidad, though to a lesser extent in the latter two countries, have lost the language of their forefathers which would have greatly assisted in the preservation of their culture. Cognisant of this fact the NCIC has joined with the Hindi Foundation and the Indian High Commission in actively promoting the teaching of Hindi.

One of the aims of the NCIC is the total development of its fifteen-acre compound at Chaguanas to become the Mecca of Indian culture in our country, a facility which when completed would make us all justifiably proud. We have succeeded with this aim to a fair extent. Much still needs to be accomplished. With a change in thinking now with a new Government in power,

clearly seen in the approval of a Ministry of Multiculture, it is hoped that Indo-Trinidadian culture would be considered an integral part of Trinidad and Tobago culture and would no longer be on the fringes of the cultural mosaic of our country. Multiculturalism should also be placed on the statute books so that no future Government would be able to change the fact at its whim and fancy.

On this the 46th anniversary of the formation of the NCIC, I pay tribute to its founding fathers, the late Bisram Gopie and Narsaloo Ramaya. I wish particularly to remember Narsaloo who at ninety (90) years of age is still with us, and to thank him, profusely for his foresight and to wish him many more healthy and comfortable years.

I also wish to pay tribute to our executive members who continue to provide voluntary service to the Council, and especially to those members who started in the early days of the formation of the NCIC and who are still actively serving the organisation even after forty (40) or more years of joining. I refer to Richard Ramlakhansingh, Bob Ramroop and permit me to humbly include myself, Deokinanan Sharma.

May the NCIC successfully continue the noble work had it has undertaken.

Deokinanan Sharma

President of the NCIC

Preface

The National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC) presents the Sixth Induction into *The Hall of Pioneers*. This induction pays tribute to persons who have made sterling pioneering contributions to the growth and upliftment of their communities and in turn to our country, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, we see people using the benefits accrued from these contributions to forge ahead and advance the nation building process.

This effort by the NCIC to research and record the achievements of these heroes and pioneers through our *Hall of Pioneers* is but a small token of our appreciation and gratitude for the legacy they left.

It also fulfils one of the objectives of the NCIC. We are in fact working assiduously to have a permanent facility to house this project.

The NCIC is a non-profit volunteer organisation. I hereby express my thanks to the members of this present *Hall of Pioneers* committee who have devoted much of their time, skills and efforts towards making this project successful, namely: Mr. Deokinanan Sharma (*President N.C.I.C.*), Mr. Richard Ramlakhansingh, Mr. Brahma Beharrysingh, Mrs. Vijanti Solomon, and Dr. Jerome Teelucksingh. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the N.C.I.C. Executive for their invaluable support in our efforts.

Indrawatee Outar

Chairman, *Hall of Pioneers* Committee 2010.

2nd Assistant Secretary N.C.I.C.

Inductees for 2010

Mr. Sheikh Mohammed Aziz

Mr. Sohan Gidharie

Mr. Stephen Maharaj

Mrs. Anna Mahase

Dr. Ken Parmasad

Mr. Haji Sheik Mohamed Shafik Rahaman

Mrs. Rajandaye Ramkissoon-Chen

Mr. Hardeo Ramsingh

Mr. Harnam Singh

Pt. Ramdath Vyas

BIODATA OF INDUCTEES

Compiled by

Dr. Jerome Teelucksingh

Acknowledgements

My task this year of compiling this work would have been impossible without the hard work and contributions of many good people. I would like to thank the following persons for obtaining information and pictures on the personalities to be honoured in 2010.

Firstly, Ms. Rekha Sawh for researching and compiling the biographies of *Mrs. Rajandaye Ramkissoon-Chen* and *Mr. Haji Sheik Mohamed Shafik Rahaman*. Mr. Yacoob Ali's contribution towards the latter personality is also appreciated. I am grateful as well to Mr. Richard Ramlakhansingh and Mr. Justice Ralph Narine for providing information on *Mr. Sohan Gidharie* and *Mr. S.M. Aziz*.

Mrs. Vyas provided biographical information on her husband, *Pundit Ramdath Vyas*. Mrs. Vijanti Solomon willingly produced the biography on *Mr. Hardeo Ramsingh*. Mrs. R. Parmasad, her daughters and Professor Brinsley Samaroo provided information on *Dr. Ken Parmasad*.

The oral histories provided by friends and relatives of the honourees also assisted greatly in this project. This included the efforts of Mr. Rawle Maharaj who proof-read the biography of his father, *Mr. Stephen Maharaj*.

Many thanks to Mrs. Jennifer Ramsaran, Office Secretary of the NCIC, for all her hard work, particularly in the scanning of photographs and typing of some of the biographies.

Thanks must also be given to Ms. Indra Outar for co-ordinating this entire event to be celebrated on the

10th July, 2010, and Brahma Beharrysingh, executive member of the NCIC, who assisted with the proofreading, and editing of 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

HALL OF PIONEERS COMMITTEE 2010

Ms. Indrawatee Outar	<i>Chairperson and Member, NCIC</i>
Mr. Deokinanan Sharma	<i>President, NCIC</i>
Mr. Richard Ramlakhansingh	<i>Member, NCIC</i>
Mr. Brahma Beharrysingh	<i>Member, NCIC</i>
Mrs. Vijanti Solomon	<i>Member, NCIC</i>
Dr. Jerome Teelucksingh	<i>Professor of History, U.W.I. Dept. of History</i>



Sheikh Mohammed Aziz (1905 – 1963)

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An outstanding son of the soil and one of our country's most outstanding musicians, as a boy experienced a very serious physical set back resulting in a distinct lean forward of his torso to his right and a restriction in straightening his right arm. He took to physical culture and particularly weight training in order to overcome the disadvantages he suffered. It worked to the point where in the late 1930's and early 1940's he was competing as a weight lifter and won in the bantam weight class (110 lb). As an acrobat he distinguished himself in two acts: the first, he suspended himself on the rings with his arms outstretched to the sides at shoulder level thereby forming a perfect cross with no foot support; and the second, he suspended himself by his toes only, an inverted position, and played the mandolin!

As a musician he was par excellence, innovative and precise with every note, nuance and timing. His musical career began with the mandolin, playing "panyol" music with his tutor Miguel, the "Panyol Barber" and his Parang and Maypole groups. This experience may have been responsible for his incomparable work on the mandolin. As an example, he was able to get three strokes in one musical beat while others could barely get two. He was a small man with nimble but strong fingers and a supple wrist. Later on he took to playing Indian music and did so for the best singers of the day, such as Ramdhanie Sharma,

James Rasawak, Samaroo Kalloo, Henry Dindial (“Toolum”) and others.

In 1943 when *Gulshan Bahar* concerts were established in order to raise funds in aid of the Indian Famine Fund, most if not all of the best singers and musicians in the country got together and S.M. Aziz was one of them. Also in that group were: Nazeer Mohamed, Narsalo Ramaya, Jit Seesahai, Champa Devi, Irene Chandi (more popularly known as “Noor Jehan”), Taran Persad, Jagroo Kawal and others. They performed throughout Trinidad, in British Guyana and Suriname.

This group disbanded after its mission was accomplished. But they continued to entertain. Nazeer Mohammed formed the Naya Zamana and S.M. Aziz established the S.M. Aziz Orchestra, which, for many years after his passing on, continued to provide music and singers.

As time went by S.M. (as he was fondly called) promoted "shows" at venues in the south. These were concerts with singers and dancers. Among them were, Alice Jan, a pioneer of earlier times now reappearing in her come-back attempt, Bibi Jan and Noor Jehan in concert and music.

By that time S.M. was no longer confined to playing the mandolin, but also the clarinet. Earlier, he had already introduced the violin, a western drum set called the "traps" and conga and bongo drums. He taught two members of his orchestra to play the traps. Joseph Sahai became the master of the drums. S.M., as mentioned earlier, was very innovative.

S.M. died on the 9th day of April, 1963 at the age of 58. His wife, Hamidan, died on the 14th day of April, 1997. There are three surviving children to the couple: Salima, Halima and Nazim (himself a mandolinist and guitarist). And the only surviving member of the S.M. Aziz orchestra is Mr. Justice Ralph Narine, who was himself honoured by the NCIC just last year.

It is interesting to note that aside from his musical endeavors, S.M. was actually a tailor by trade and had established a shirt factory in Port of Spain. Certainly a very complex and colourful picture develops of this unique personality.



Sohan Gidharie (1926 -)

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Sohan Gidharee first saw the light of day on May 23rd, 1926. His birth occurred in one of the barrack houses on the Forres Park Estate in Claxton Bay. Sohan was one of three children born to indentured immigrants Gildharre and Sokhia. His siblings Mohan and Sunardaye, were also born on the Forres Park Estate. Mohan passed away many years ago, but Sunardaye, who is seventy nine years, is still alive.

Sohan's early life was spent around the barracks, together with other children in unorganized and unsupervised games. As he grew older he was taught to take care of himself, as well as to do household chores commensurate with his age. It was not until Sohan was eight years old that he was enrolled at the Mt. Pleasant Government School in Sum Sum Hill, Claxton Bay.

Due to poverty, his parents were more concerned about survival than an education for the young Sohan. After a few years he was withdrawn from school and was forced to enter the world of work on the estate. Sohan was given light work which earned him twenty four cents per day. As he grew older and possessed greater strength and stamina, his work became more and more difficult. All his earnings were controlled by his father who used it to provide for the family's welfare.

When Sohan was eighteen years old, his parents thought that it was time for him to be married, and they sought a suitable bride for their youthful son. It took them a year to find the boy his soulmate. At nineteen years of age, Sohan was married to Rajwantia of Whiteland, Gasparillo.

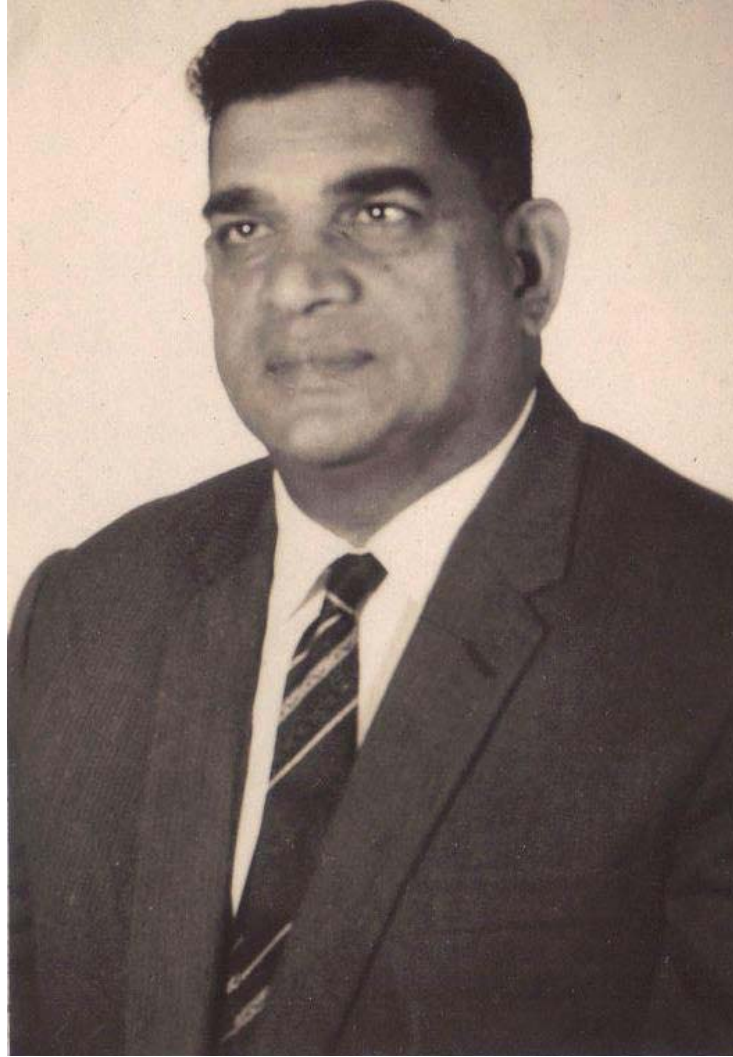
After marriage the couple lived with Sohan's parents and siblings. With the passage of time and the passing away of his parents, as well as changes in his own circumstances and after he secured a full time job as the caretaker of a public swimming pool in Couva, he moved on and settled with his own family at the Mt. Pleasant Road. Together with his wife Sohan fathered nine children, all of whom are alive. Additionally he has fathered another eight children by another liaison.

With respect to his singing career, Sohan started off singing film songs, then later on added religious songs to his repertoire. He informed that after he left formal schooling his parents had him attend night classes in Hindi, which was taught in the village "kutia" by a man named Ramcharran. Unlike many of his contemporaries he could actually read Hindi. At age fifteen he would leave home and go out to any classical singing session where two of his mentors performed. Sohan proudly boasts that Charlie Babwah of Forres Park and Samsher of Indian Trail were his singing role-models and icons. Both mentors realized that Sohan was talented and had the potential of becoming a great singer. They encouraged, guided, motivated and taught him the basics of classical singing, and soon he mastered the art form.

Sohan sang for any occasion and in every village or community in the country for more than sixty years, bringing joy and happiness to his many fans. Sohan was so loved for his singing that his fans followed him in large numbers wherever he sang. He was fondly known as the "King of tent singing". His singing took him to Queen's and Texas in the U.S.A., Toronto in Canada and

Suriname where he performed to large and appreciative audiences. His fans, friends, supporters and well-wishers are indeed missing him and his singing from regular sessions of Baithak Gana.

In 1991, he retired from active duty and is living on work and NIS pensions. Advancing age and ill-health have dealt a severe blow to a once popular and a greatly loved artiste. However, his voice and the memories of his once vibrant and dynamic singing would always remain with fans and connoisseurs of classical singing.



Stephen Maharaj (1915 - 1984)

Stephen Maharaj (1915 – 1984)

Stephen Maharaj was born on the 7th December 1915 to an orthodox Hindu family in Lopinot, Arima. He was initially called “Carpoondeo” and raised in a strict Hindu family because his father was the village pundit. Stephen, as a child, would accompany his father whenever he performed marriages and pujas and officiated at festivals such as Phagwa and Ramleela.

When he was five years old, Stephen enrolled at the Arima Roman Catholic School. He was very studious and popular among his fellow students and teachers. When Stephen reached the senior class he was appointed a monitor. However, his father discouraged him because to become a teacher, Stephen would have to accept Christianity.

As a result, Stephen was sent to a private institution, the Pamphilian High School. His desire was to become a medical doctor but his parents were too poor to support this dream. He then decided to become a pharmacist and was apprenticed to his uncle who was a respected pharmacist in Chaguanas. In those days, the apprenticeship system operated for those who desired to become pharmacists.

He was then apprenticed to a registered pharmacy and a licensed druggist gave him practical lessons in dispensing drugs. Stephen also attended lectures given by doctors who were appointed by the Pharmacy Board. After four years of studying and writing exams, he was a qualified pharmacist. For a brief period he worked at Brechin Castle as a druggist and soon became quite respected and competent in the profession.

He subsequently married to Pearl Gobin and moved to Princes Town. Here he opened a drugstore, which was bought as a wedding present, and soon became very popular and earned the nickname "Doc". This nickname was due to his diligent study of the prevailing illnesses and issuing of relevant prescriptions. In this regard, Stephen rendered yeoman service to the poor who could not afford the doctors and instead consulted him. Additionally, he also served as president of the Pharmacy Board of Trinidad and Tobago.

Stephen admired the selfless work of Tubal Uriah Butler. It was no surprise then that he soon entered the political arena and joined Butler's political party, the British Empire Workers and Citizens Home Rule Party.

As a politician, Stephen was fearless and a strong political force in south Trinidad. He contested the seat in the Victoria County Council and won convincingly for two terms. The constituents were pleased with his performance. This experience and service prepared him for a future in the Legislative Council.

In the 1950 elections, Stephen won his seat by a comfortable margin. The Butler Party had won the majority of seats in the elections but the Governor denied the Party the right to form the government. Although he served in the capacity as an Opposition Member of Parliament, this was no impediment when it came to providing yeoman service to his constituency.

In 1956, Stephen again won his seat but the People's National Movement (PNM) won the majority of seats and formed the government. After the Butler Party ceased to exist, he joined the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) led by Dr. Rudranath Capildeo. Often, Stephen

would act as leader of the DLP in the absence of Dr. Capildeo who went to the University of London to pursue scientific research. It was a credit to his ability and statesmanship that despite the intrigue within the DLP he managed to keep the Party together.

As a senior member of the DLP, Stephen accompanied Dr. Capildeo to the Independence Conference at Marlborough House in London in early 1962. Stephen rendered invaluable service to the fragile talks which would chart the political destiny of Trinidad and Tobago. Stephen was responsible for old age pensions being raised from \$3 to \$9 monthly. He also convinced Prime Minister Eric Williams to provide monthly assistance to T.U. Butler and Aubrey James.

Differences in political ideology led to Stephen departing the DLP. He formed the Workers and Farmers Party (WFP) in 1965. This was a worker-oriented party and its members included CLR James and Basdeo Panday. This party and its members publicly condemned the anti-worker legislation – the Industrial Stabilization Act – which was enforced by the PNM in 1965. The WFP fought the 1966 general elections but failed to win a seat.

On the 21st April 1969, more than 650 workers took strike action against the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC). Those participating in discussions included the Transport and Industrial Workers Union (TIWU), OWTU, NJAC, politicians and activists such as Alloy Lequay and Stephen Maharaj as leader of the WFP. He was among those persons who were fined \$10 or 14 days imprisonment. Others included Joe Young

(President of TIWU), Carlton Rosemin and Sylvester Mondesir (also of TIWU).

After demitting public life, he focused on serving Princes Town and marginalized groups. As a devout Hindu he built the Craignish Mandir. Also, he was a special friend of the Spiritual Baptist Community which was being persecuted for their religious beliefs.

Stephen was a friend to all persons. He had an open heart and broad vision and this was reflected in his public life as he made no distinction among persons of different religions, class backgrounds or ethnicities. He lived a noble life and his aim was to create unity between the country's two major races.



Anna Mahase Snr. (1899 - 1978)

Anna Mahase Snr. (1899 – 1978)

Anna Mahase Snr. was born on the 4th March, 1899, to George and Rookabai Chandisingh. She attended the Guaico Canadian Missionary School where her father was the Head Teacher. She was exposed to Hindi reading and writing which were taught during Religious Instruction classes in all Canadian Mission (CM) Schools. Her mother, Rookabai, while a child in India, was privately tutored in English and Hindi. Therefore, Anna enjoyed learning Hindi grammar and translation and, as early as a child, she would compare Hindi leaflets published by Rev. Dr. John Morton at his press in Tunapuna, with the English version of the Bible.

During 1904 to 1910, Anna's family resided in the Catechist's house at the back of the school. In 1910, Chandisingh decided to travel to British Guiana (Guyana) to seek employment with the Presbyterian Church as a Catechist. Before departing he sent Anna and her sister Dorcas to the Iere Home for Girls in Princes Town, where they attended the Princes Town CM School. During 1910 to 1914, Anna spent time at this Institution which was headed by Ms. Adella J. Archibald. At the Home, there was an organ but Anna could not afford to pay for her music lessons. She therefore asked Ms. Archibald whether she could use the organ on her own and it was so that Anna slowly began learning the tunes of hymns. During the vacation periods of 1914 Anna spent time teaching Needlework at two institutions – The Tunapuna and San Juan CM Schools.

In 1915, on the advice of Dr. Harvey Morton (son of Rev. John Morton) and Ms. Archibald, Anna

proceeded to the Naparima Training College (for boys only) where the present Grant Memorial School is now located. She stayed at the Susamachar Presbyterian Manse with Dr. and Mrs. J.C. McDonald in San Fernando. Anna entered Naparima Teachers' College with three other females in a special class. Anna thus created history as she was one of the first women being trained with men at the College.

She also taught Hindi at Naparima Girls' High School, which was then located in the same building as the Teachers' College. At both institutions she continued to wear her orhni, of which she was very proud. Additionally, she would be the Organist for the 9 o' clock service of the Sunday School of the Susamachar Presbyterian Church.

At the age of nineteen, Anna sat the Third Class Teachers' Examination in 1918 and earned distinctions in Arithmetic and English and topped the island in Hindi.

On the 1st May, 1917, Anna became the first trained East Indian Assistant Teacher to be employed at an Assisted Primary School in North Trinidad and two years later was the first qualified East Indian Female Teacher in Trinidad and Tobago. She was employed as a Fourth Class Assistant Teacher at the Sangre Chiquito Presbyterian CM School and earned \$10 per month. She lived with Rev. and Mrs. Paul Atwaroo, the catechist and his wife.

This self-taught musician would provide music for her School, the Morton Memorial Presbyterian Church in Guaico and taught all of her children and many others to play the Piano and the Organ. In her autobiography, *My Mother's Daughter*, Anna recalled

her influential role as a teacher, “In those early days all the teachers went out every morning to visit and bring out the children to school. I did my share of it and the result was that all the little Hindu and Muslim girls began attending school when their parents saw that I was a female East Indian Teacher.”

In July 1919, Anna married Kenneth Emmanuel Mahase Snr. who was a graduate of Naparima Teachers’ College and whom she met while they were both teachers at the Sangre Chiquito Presbyterian School. After her marriage, her husband was appointed Head Teacher at the Grovesnor Presbyterian School. Her bridesmaid at the wedding was Stella Abidh a childhood friend of hers at the Iere Home, who would herself later carve a distinguished career in Medicine.

Anna’s marriage would have meant an end to a promising teaching career because the Government’s Teaching Regulations at the time stated, “No Married Woman is to be retained on the staff of any Government or Assisted Primary School in the Colony.” Fortunately, Rev. Morton intervened and spoke with the Director of Education. Morton questioned the relevance of the work of the Canadian Mission in educating and training young ladies to be teachers if they were not allowed to work when they were married. As a result, the Director of Education decided to get rid of the restrictive and discriminating regulation and Anna was allowed to continue teaching, thus blazing yet another trail!

This was however still an era when there was no provision for teachers to be entitled to maternity leave with pay. Nonetheless, from her marriage there were seven children, all of whom grew to be highly

distinguished and respected individuals, namely: Dr. Cyril Mahase (Teacher and Medical Doctor); Lenore Mahase-Samaroo (Teacher and Concert Pianist); Barbara Rodman (Teacher and Writer); Stella Nath-Khan (Teacher and Businesswoman); Elaine Gray (Teacher and Artist); Dr. Anna Mahase Jr. (Teacher and Principal); and Kenneth Mahase Jr. (Teacher and Principal).

In 1954, at the age of fifty-five, Anna retired from the teaching profession. Her career spanned thirty-seven years of distinguished service at Canadian Mission Presbyterian Schools. She had served two years in Sangre Chiquito, one year at Grovesnor and thirty-four years at Guaico. She retired as a Senior Mistress (Vice-Principal) – she never became Principal because that position was denied to women in those days.

Her life's work encapsulated a high level of multitasking. Anna was a pillar in the Presbyterian Church. She assisted in Trinidad Girls in Training (TGIT), Young People's Association and the Christian Endeavour Society. She found the time to organize School Concerts, Bazaars and teach Sunday School Classes. Anna had a special interest in the welfare of Women and was President of the Women's Missionary Society. She was a member of the Committee for Women's Work in Trinidad and was the person in this group who suggested, according to the minutes of their meetings, that a Secondary School for Girls be established in North Trinidad. The result was the establishment of the St. Augustine Girls' High School (SAGHS). The family annually donates, for the School's graduation ceremony, the Kenneth and Anna Mahase

Memorial Medal and Trophy for the Best All-Round Student.

In addition to being immersed in the school and church, Anna was also actively involved in Gardening and Community Service. For more than thirty years she was a member of the Child Welfare League. She served as secretary and treasurer for many years in that Organization. Furthermore, she headed the Red Cross Chain Link, which had been initiated by the wife of Rev. V.B. Walls. She also represented the county in Table tennis and because she was ambidextrous, she became famous for both her right and left hand smashes! She assisted her husband Kenneth, a founder of the Indian Cultural Society or Bharat Sumati Sabha of Guaico, Sangre Grande, in raising funds for the erection of a building to be used for the cultural and recreational activities of the young people of the county. This building later became the Sangre Grande Hindu College when the founders donated the land and building to the Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago.

The life and career of Anna Mahase Snr. is one of a trailblazer and role model. She was not only a successful Teacher but also a caring mother and wife. Anna's sterling contributions to organisations, rural communities and primary schools helped mould the minds and lives of thousands of our citizens. Truly, she is an outstanding woman of substance.



Dr. Kenneth Vidia Parmasad (1946 - 2006)

Dr. Kenneth Vidia Parmasad (1946 - 2006)

Kenneth Vidia Parmasad, academic, poet, songwriter, story-teller, cultural and political activist, was the second child born to Ramsaran and Samdaye Parmasad on the St. Joseph Estate, Mayaro. Ken, as he was known to all, attended primary school in Mayaro and secondary school in Chaguanas where he obtained his G.C.E. Ordinary Level Certificate. From there he went on to Mausica Teachers' College. He graduated in 1969, placing third in his class, and was awarded a scholarship to attend the University of the West Indies (U.W.I.) at St. Augustine.

He taught for two years at San Juan Presbyterian School while attending evening classes at U.W.I. and in 1973 graduated from U.W.I. with a B.A. Degree in History and Sociology. Between 1973 and 1978, he taught at the Chaguanas Junior Secondary School. In 1983, he was awarded the M.A. Degree in History from U.W.I. and in 1993 he obtained the Ph.D. Degree in Cultural History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. Upon his return to Trinidad in 1993, he taught at U.W.I., St. Augustine until his passing on April 17, 2006.

In his article, "*By the Light of a Deya*" written during his undergraduate years at UWI and later published in The Aftermath of Sovereignty: West Indian Perspectives, (David Lowenthal and Lambros Comitas, eds. 1973), Ken Parmasad began exploring on paper his embryonic ideas on the Indian Trinidadian question, a subject to which he would have a lifelong commitment. For his undergraduate thesis, Ken journeyed the length

and breadth of Trinidad collecting, from elders in the community, Indian folk stories which he realized were being lost with the passing of these elders. Some of these stories are retold by him in his book, Salt and Roti: Indian Folk Tales of the Caribbean, the first book in Caribbean literature to engage this aspect of the Indian tradition. His seminal research on the 1884 Hosay Riots (now renamed the “Jahaajee Massacre”) for his M.A. thesis in 1983 not only liberated this event from the religious character imposed on it by the dominant discourse at the time but also set the stage for the ensuing academic research on and cultural activism around the event. His Ph.D. thesis contests the colonial discourse on Indian indentureship and analyses how the Indian community reconstructed into a new whole the cultural fragments that they had brought with them into this new society. His article “*Power and the Body: Medicinal Practices on Board the ‘Coolie’ Ship*” is drawn from this thesis and is published in Beyond Tradition: Reinterpreting the Caribbean Historical Experience (Heather Cateau & Rita Pemberton, eds.). Ken was in the process of editing and revising his Ph.D. thesis for publication when he passed away.

Ken Parmasad became a U.W.I. student at a time when the dominant Eurocentric and Christian cultural norms on the campus were being challenged. He was one of the organizers of the 1969 agitation by U.W.I. students for the right to celebrate Diwali on the campus, a right we now take for granted. Out of this agitation was born the Society for the Propagation of Indian Culture (S.P.I.C.). Ken was an active member of S.P.I.C. and the elected President between 1971 and 1973. S.P.I.C.

proved to be a powerful institution on the campus and, in 1973 under Ken's leadership, forced the entire campus community to put the Indian Trinidadian question on the front burner when S.P.I.C. members shut down the U.W.I. campus.

Ken was also deeply involved in the 1970 Black Power Movement. Having grown up on a coconut plantation in Mayaro, Ken had to confront on a daily basis the last vestiges of a dying colonialism. The issues raised during the Black Power Movement resonated with his experiences on the plantation. He was drawn to the Movement, became one of the grassroots organizers and, together with other S.P.I.C. members, helped to build solidarity between the Movement and the struggles of Indian sugarcane workers and cane farmers of Central Trinidad. His analysis of the event is given in his article, "*Ancestral Impulse, Community Formation and 1970: Bridging the Afro-Indian Divide*", published in The Black Power Revolution 1970: A Retrospective (Selwyn Ryan and Taimoon Stewart eds. 1995).

After he graduated from U.W.I. in 1973, he became actively involved in the working class movement. He was instrumental in organizing the National Foodcrop Farmers' Association (N.F.F.A.) and engaged in political work at the mass level among sugarcane workers and cane farmers. This phase of Ken's life was marked by intense political activism as he and others sought to bring about political transformation of the society. This chapter in Ken's story remains to be more fully explored.

Ken was a member of the Writers' Union of Trinidad and Tobago. His political activism, however,

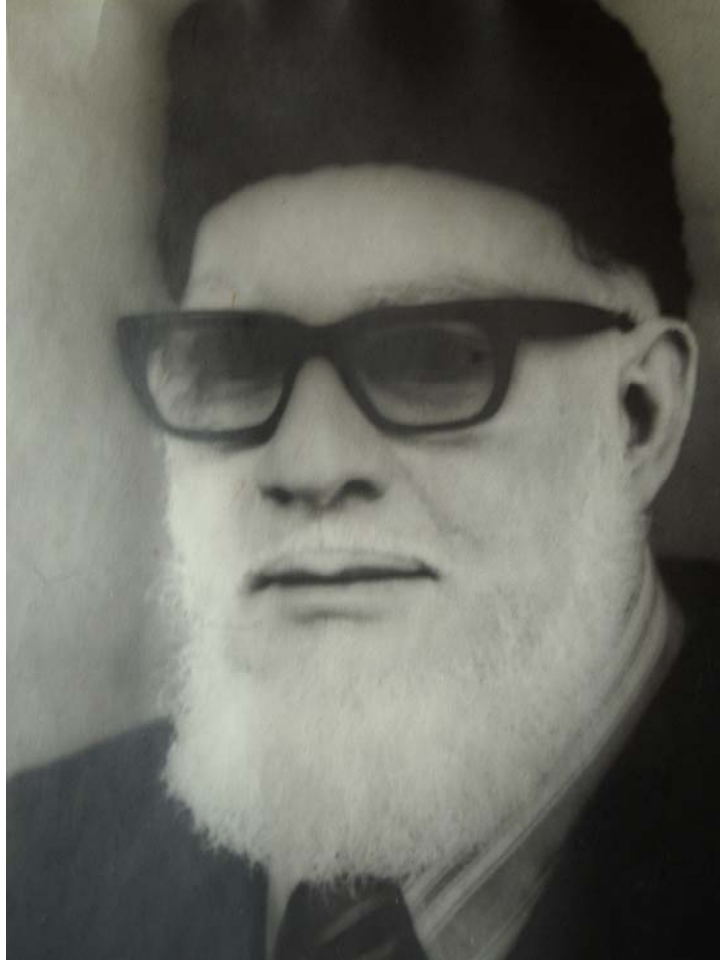
left him little time for his creative work. He published two books of poetry, See the Sunlight and Child of the Storms. Penguin Books and Macmillan Education have included selections from See the Sunlight in their publications. (The Penguin Book of Caribbean Short Stories (1996) and Caribbean Language Tree Student Book 4). Ken also published The Broken Flute which he intended to be the first in a series of stories for children.

As a songwriter, he has composed both Indian folk songs and calypsoes. His daughter, Sasha, as a young girl was awarded several prizes in national competitions performing his poetry and his songs. He co-authored the song “*Children of Noble and Ancient Culture*” with Professor Anantanand Rambachan while both were students at U.W.I. This song has become the theme song for the Sanskritik Sangam, a cultural organization based among secondary schools in Trinidad. Several other songs were written by Ken in his U.W.I. days for use in the Baal Bhakti classes – religio/cultural classes he and Professor Rambachan started in villages particularly in South Trinidad. Some of these songs were recorded by Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan on the LP record “*Come - Let us Chant*”. Ken himself released a CD of some of his more recent song compositions entitled “*Sonawa Ke Datawa*”.

Ken Parmasad was essentially a teacher. In all his endeavours, this was his primary aim, always to educate, to raise the consciousness of those with whom he came into contact. It was for this reason that during his lifetime, he willingly gave of his time and his knowledge, giving lectures, speeches, judging competitions held by youth organizations, temples,

schools, Indian cultural organizations. In fact, one of the projects of the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC) during the early days of the Divali Nagar was guided by Ken and his research. This was the construction of a replica of the Fattel Rozack. Following a long association with the Hindu Prachar Kendra dating back to the 1980s Ken became, on his return from India, more organizationally involved with the Kendra which provided a forum for intellectual and cultural discourse and eventually became a part of his extended family.

Throughout his life, Ken maintained close ties with the ordinary people, choosing to live and work among them, recognizing that the community and, by extension, the society was built on the backs of the working people. To his wife, Roslyn and daughters, Sasha and Vishala, Ken was a devoted husband and father.



*Haji Sheik Mohamed Shafik Rahaman
(1917 - 1984)*

Haji Sheik Mohamed Shafik Rahaman (R.A.) (1917 - 1984)

Haji Sheik Mohamed Shafik Rahaman (R.A.) was born in San Fernando, Trinidad on 15th May, 1917 and died on 29th March 1984 at age sixty-six. A devout Muslim, his father was the late Hafiz Yacoob Ali (R.A.) and his mother, the late Hajjin Sakina Ali (R.A.). The late Haji Shafik's father was the first Trinidadian to be the Hafiz of Qur'an (one who recites the Holy Qur'an by heart). His mother, the late Hajjin Sakina Ali (R.A.), bore two sons by her husband, the late Mohammed Fazlur Rahman (R.A.) of San Fernando, and the above named Haji Sheik Mohamed Shafik Rahaman (R.A.), who became an entrepreneur and Religious Leader. The late Hajjin Sakina Ali (R.A.) served her community well and cared for many whom she nurtured and guided to adulthood with sound Islamic beliefs and practices.

Haji Shafik (R.A.) was married to Hajjin Ayesha Rahamut (R.A.), the daughter of the late Amjad Rahamut (R.A.), who founded a motor accessories enterprise extending to petrol and gas stations. It was in this enterprise that he excelled, joining the business run by his father-in-law in 1936 and was chiefly responsible for its growth and development in the 1950's and beyond. Haji Shafik (R.A.) assumed the Chairmanship of the Rahamut Service Stations in 1947 and continued as its Chief Operating Officer until 1974.

In the late 1950's, together with a group of southern businessmen, Haji Shafik pioneered the entry into the Insurance Business with the establishment of the enterprise, Capital Insurance, and served as its Chairman until his death in 1984. In the last six years of his life, he became ill during a sojourn to the Holy City of Mecca in Saudi Arabia

in 1978 where he had been attending conferences as the Chief Representative of the Muslim community and also as Representative of the Muslim World League here in Trinidad.

Haji Rahaman and Haji Dr. Wahid Ali (R.A.), who served as President of the Senate for some time, and with members of the other religious bodies, were among the founding members of the Inter Religious Organization (I.R.O.) which today serves our multi-religious society.

Haji Shafik (R.A.) became a member to the Constituent Assembly of the Muslim World League (Rabitat al Alamal Islami), the inner sanctum of this distinguished body of Muslim leaders worldwide, and served until his demise in 1984. As a member, he introduced many changes and innovations to the structure and streamlined the administrative functions of the Muslim World League (Rabitat al Alamal Islami).

He was the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference of South America and the Caribbean and also served as Chairman of the organizing Conference. He was also the President General of the largest Muslim body in Trinidad and Tobago and indeed the Caribbean, the Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association (ASJA), until the end of the 1970's due to ill health. Rahaman served the organization for over twenty continuous years, first as a member of the Central Executive of the ASJA and then as President General, until he demitted office in 1979.

In the business sector he was one of the founding members of the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce. He also served as President of the Petroleum Dealers for several years. In this capacity, he attended many of Texaco's Shareholders' Meetings in the United States, being one of the leading petroleum dealers of this International Petroleum Organization.

He established the ASJA Primary Schools in the 1950's and worked closely with the late Honourable Bhadase Sagan Maharaj, when the opportunity presented itself for the establishment of non Christian denominational schools. ASJA obtained the concession to convert its ASJA Boys' College, San Fernando, a Private Institution, in September 1966, to a full-fledged Denominational Institution. ASJA Girls' College, San Fernando, also obtained this recognition in 1976.

The main thrust of Haji Shafik's emphasis in his latter years was the consolidation of ASJA into a networking religious body with the establishment of Jamaats or branches and the conversion of the adhoc groups into a main body to serve the Muslims more efficiently and effectively.

Haji Shafik Rahaman (R.A.) will certainly be remembered for his steadfastness in propagating the ideals for which he lived and served. In the year 2005, the newly constructed Education Complex located at ASJA Avenue, Charlieville, Chaguanas, was named after the Haji and known as the Haji Shafik Rahaman Education Complex in his memory.

He was gracious and modest in his demeanor and was well known for his charitable disposition.



Ranjandaye Ramkissoon-Chen (1931 – 2009)

Ranjandaye Ramkissoo-Chen (1931 – 2009)

Rajandaye, or “Raj”, as she was called by her family and friends, was born on the 2nd September, 1931, in Debe, South Trinidad, to humble parents. Her father, Mathura Ramkissoo, was a Tailor, owner of a rice mill and proprietor, her mother, Phulbasiya, was a Seamstress. She was the fifth of nine children, three boys and six girls, all of whom attended the Debe CM (Canadian Mission) School, taking a privately owned bus to attend school.

Rajandaye, like her other siblings won a Bursary and placed first in the island to attend Naparima High School. Her sisters and brothers all used the same books at school. When she read a book, she would be able to recall the entire book – such was her photographic memory.

At High School she placed first in class every term studying modern studies for her Higher School Certificate Degree. She won the Jerningham Prize for placing first in the British Commonwealth in the High School Certificate Exam. Her parents worked very hard, giving their children the best education and producing from them four Doctors, an Engineer and a Teacher.

She was one of three female students who left Trinidad and moved to India to attend Patna University in India as science students. It was an open scholarship and during those days it was not customary for girls to study, yet alone go abroad, so Rajandaye played upon her father’s feelings and got to go to India. A proud father, he always kept every newspaper clipping about any of his children. Ranjandaye left Trinidad taking the boat, SS Colombie to London first, then from London to

Bombay on the SS Strathraver. Word was sent to her family via the Indian High Commission of her safe arrival. At Patna University Rajandaye set a record placing first in every term thereby awarding her a scholarship every term.

She moved on to study Medicine at P.W. Medical College, Patna Bihar, India. Raj won ten gold medals at University then went on to do her Masters Degree in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Patna Medical University and returned to Trinidad after her ten years of studying in India.

Upon her return, she worked at the San Fernando General Hospital. Rajandaye, now “Dr. Ramkissoon”, went to England shortly after and within a year became a Member of the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynecology N.R.C.O.G. in London.

At University, Rajandaye received the highest number of awards of any previous student there, thus creating history. She won the Wheeler Gold Medal for standing first in the Examination, the A.N. Sarkar Gold Medal for standing first in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, the Husnain Gold Medal for standing first in Ophthalmology, the Tilakdhari Lal Gold Medal for securing the highest aggregate among women at the final M.B., B.S., examination and the P.C. Tallent’s award of 750 rupees for securing the highest aggregate at the second M.S., B.S., and final M.B., B.S., examinations taken together.

She returned to Trinidad to continue working at the San Fernando General Hospital. There she met her husband Dr. Wilfred Chen and got married on the 3rd of October, 1964 in a civil ceremony. She left for Hong Kong in 1965.

Dr. Ranjandaye–Chen worked in Hong Kong for two years and it was there that she acquired International fame for her research in Ectopic Pregnancy. On her return to Trinidad, top Obstetricians and Gynecologists from Scotland came to Trinidad to study her work and she was given the highest award of Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She was given the Chaconia Gold Medal in 2003 by Trinidad and Tobago for her exceptionally brilliant work as a Surgeon and Obstetrician.

She was the first female Doctor from Trinidad to be elected as an honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of London; she was also the longest serving “O and G” consultant in the country. The British Medical Journal published her research work in pregnancy on “The association between Ectopic Pregnancy and the Intra-uterine Contraceptive Device”. Rajandaye practiced at Victoria Nursing home in San Fernando and lived at Vistabella in San Fernando.

She was an extremely versatile person who also wrote poems. But it was only in the 1980s that she found more time to write. With a demanding job she managed to write on whatever she found to write on. She was taught from an early age not to waste paper so whether it was the back of a prescription pad or an old form she wrote her poetry. Her poems are being used in London schools to teach students. Her books published are Ancestry in 1997, Mirror Eye in 2001, Many Sides of Red in 2006 and Meenachi in 2007. Her poetry was based on the experience of immigrants from India to Trinidad, her parents, her experiences, her medical profession and where she was born. She also wrote about ancestral pioneers.

Winning the Longman Trinidad Short Story Contest was her short story entitled "*Josiah's Escape*". One of her stories appeared on the final short list of the BBC Commonwealth Short Story Competition in London 1997. It was called "*In the Train*" and was about the experience of a student travelling through India using the train. Her works have been published in the United States, London, Canada, Poland, and India. Her poetry is used by schools and Universities around the world.

The good doctor died only recently on the 16th December, 2009. Although she had no children she was a mother to all her nieces and nephews and spending time with her family and friends was important to her. As a doctor her motto was "the patient comes first".



Hardeo Ramsingh (1929 -)

Hardeo Ramsingh (1929 -)

Hardeo Ramsingh was born on September 12th 1929 at his family's residence at 122 Cacandee Road, Felicity Chaguanas. He is the third of eleven children (two sons and nine daughters) parented by the late Ramsingh Bandhoosingh of Felicity and his wife, Sookdai (formerly Lutchmansingh), both of Charleville.

Because they both emerged from very humble family backgrounds they were unable to access any formal academic education or acquire any vocational skills. Consequently, their only option was to eke out a livelihood for their family by manually labouring in the near-by Felicity Sugar Estate.

Ramsingh Snr. enlisted to work in the sugar estate in 1912 while his wife did likewise soon after their marriage in 1922. From then to their retirement in the 1970s, they toiled relentlessly on miscellaneous laborious and sometimes menial jobs under harsh conditions. The wages were very meager and were used to feed, clothe, shelter and nurture themselves and their family. They barely managed to do so.

From Monday to Saturday Hardeo's parents spent most of their daylight hours toiling hard on the Sugar Estate and on their rental holding they did subsistence farming. Consequently, the two elder sisters received very limited schooling because they were needed at home to take care of the younger ones, including Hardeo who fortunately and significantly gained admission into the Felicity Presbyterian School at the age of four.

Despite tremendous adversities such as poor housing (his home being a dirt-floored, mud-walled, thatched-roofed *ajoupa*), lack of electricity and comfortable furniture, inadequate text books, no protection against the ravages of mosquitoes and no one to assist him with homework, he strove courageously to gain academic excellence at all levels. This was aided and encouraged by his teachers and principal, the late A. Aliharan, a professional icon.

His consistent diligence and outstanding academic performances eventually caught the eye of his Principal who drafted him into the Teaching Staff in January 1944 at the Felicity Presbyterian School. He became a paid Pupil Teacher even before passing any examination. It was the start of not only his illustrious teaching career but also an enviable scholastic record.

Between 1944 and 1950, Hardeo passed all seven annual mandatory examinations prescribed for teachers entering the Service via the Pupil Teachers' system. Very remarkably, when he passed the last of these, namely, the Teachers' Provisional Certificate Examination in 1950, he placed first in the island with six distinctions, an aggregate of 824 and a percentage of almost 75 per subject.

Subsequently, he entered Naparima Teachers' College in January 1951 and graduated in June 1952. Thereafter, he obtained the A.C.P. and L.C.P. Teaching Diplomas from the College of Preceptors in England in 1945 and 158 respectively.

Not fortunate enough to receive secondary schooling he studied privately and obtained two "A"

Level and three “O” Level Certificates from London University (England).

Finally, at the tertiary level he was able to pass in 1967 the B.A. (General Honours) Qualifying Examination as an evening student by virtue of which he was awarded a Government Scholarship from 1967 to 1969 to read for the B.A. (General Honours) Final Examination.

After entering the teaching profession as a pupil teacher in January 1944, Hardeo retired as Principal I in 1986 after serving for about forty-three years. All told, he worked in four schools: Felicity Presbyterian; Felicity Hindu; Waterloo Hindu; and Orange Field Hindu.

After retirement he served YTEPP as a tutor and later as a supervisor, from 1987 to 1996 and switched over to the Adult Education Programme, serving as tutor and supervisor from 1997 to 2008 at the Felicity Lifelong Learning Centre.

His other involvements include being a foundation member of TTUTA since 1979 within which he has served as a District Chairman and Secretary, a member of the Central Executive, General Council and the Council of Delegates and as a member of its various National Committees. Prior to TTUTA, he was a member of TTTU, PSA (Teachers’ Section) and STATT. During the 50s and 60s he held executive positions in the Maha Sabha Teachers’ Association. He has also been a member of TTARP and was an executive member of the same for years.

It cannot be left out that one of his greatest loves was in fact Scouting. He rose up in the ranks from Scout,

Patrol Leader, Scouter and finally as President of the Chaguanas District Council.

In community service, he was involved at the committee level or otherwise in almost every communal organization or venture, be it charitable, spiritual, cultural, educational or physical upliftment. Some of these included the Village Council, the educational institutions and churches, sporting and other clubs as well as festivals such as Ram Leela, Phagwa and Hosay.

To preserve the history of his village and to foster a love for research and writing among villagers, he published a book entitled, The History of Felicity in 1996. The text was revised in 2008. This is a documentation of basically Indian Immigrants who came with their rich cultural traditions and have developed and survived as a community over time. In fact, the birthplace of Hardeo, a true indentured son of Felicity, is famous for its many temples, as illustrated in his book, and its celebration of Divali, which is one of the most spectacular events in the religious and cultural landscape of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hardeo's personal life has been no less fruitful. He wedded in 1953, after a few years of secured employment, to his charming spouse, Doolarie. She has been a "jack of all trades" and a constant support for her husband, especially now in their winter years. They had four children, namely, Ramakrishnan, Anjani, Renouka and Mala, who are all married and are parents to seven "lovely gems": Karun, Rachel-Ann, Shanna-lee, Shaun, Salina, Shane and Javid.

His contributions were recognized with many awards, including: the Caribbean Union of Teachers' (CUT) Award in 1986 for meritorious service rendered to the Caribbean Teaching Fraternity; a Honourary Membership Award from TTUTA in 1992 for distinguished service (one of seven such awards up to that time); a Chaguanas Borough Council Award in 1992 for outstanding service to education in T&T; and awards from the Felicity Hindu, Waterloo Hindu and Orange Field Hindu Schools in 2002 on the occasion of Maha Sabha's 50th Anniversary Celebrations for dedicated service to the organization in Religion and Education. Other awards for exceptional community service were received during the present decade from: the Kiwanis Club (Central); the Hindu Credit Union; and the Seventh Day Adventist Church of Felicity.

Certainly Mr. Hardeo Ramsingh, who has proven himself an extraordinary and distinguished scholar, educationalist, administrator, sportsman, trade unionist and above all, community development enthusiast, is well deserving of yet another award – that being bestowed upon him on this occasion by the NCIC.



Harnam A.N. Singh (1929-)

Harnam A.N. Singh (1929 –)

Harnam Singh was born in Las Lomas No. 2 on the 21st September, 1929. At the age of five he began attending the Las Lomas Roman Catholic Primary School. He remained in the school until Second Standard and subsequently attended St. Helena Canadian Mission (CM) School. It was here that he completed his post primary education. Whilst at the St. Helena CM School he joined the Trail Rangers and went to island wide rallies with the group at Naparima College.

His father, at seven years of age, arrived in Trinidad with Harnam's grandparents from India in 1877. As a result of poverty, his parents were unable to afford the tuition fees to give Harnam a secondary school education. He wanted to further his education at a commercial school but financing remained a problem. Fortunately, a Chinese shopkeeper in the district, William Siu Chuck, offered him temporary employment. This provided Harnam with sufficient money to pay for tuition at the Jordan Commercial School in El Dorado. He would cycle to the school, for five days each week, and was soon proficient in typing, bookkeeping and shorthand. After qualifying in the intermediate stage of the programme, he left to search for employment.

He applied to the Malaria Division in the Health Department and obtained a job as a field attendant to trap mosquitoes in the San Juan-Laventille area. After a few weeks in this post, he was transferred within the Health Department and began working as a lab attendant and did clerical duties. The monthly salary was twenty-five dollars. After working in this post for many years, he

was offered the post as messenger which he accepted and held until 1955.

From an early age, Harnam was always interested in assisting residents of Las Lomas. When he was fifteen years old, he willingly completed the old age and social assistance application forms for senior citizens. These applications would be sent to the Warden of County Caroni and the Social Assistance Department. Thus, it was no surprise that Harnam would initiate discussions to form a community council. The elders and friends of the district supported the idea and the Las Lomas Community Council was organized and founded by Harnam in 1945. The land for the Council was made available by his father and the building soon became a centre for social, cultural and religious events in Las Lomas. The Community Council had a president and executive members and the patrons included Doon Pundit, J.R. Guran (former schoolmaster of St. Helena CM School), and prominent Port-of-Spain businessman, E. Joseph Pillai.

Harnam, as the honorary secretary of the Las Lomas Community Council, encouraged the General Manager of the Centeno Central Experiment Station to provide jobs for the residents. Thus, the villagers obtained work at this agricultural experiment station where cocoa and coffee were the original crops when the estates were privately owned.

Harnam was delegated to make a survey of the district to determine how many children would be available to attend school therein. The survey showed that there were more than one hundred students – who

at the time had to walk from two to three miles each way to attend the nearest school.

The Las Lomas Community Council was therefore also instrumental in getting a primary school established. The Council submitted a petition to Roy Joseph, the Minister of Education, for a facility to educate the children in Las Lomas. However, the Minister replied that there were no available funds for that year. The Community Council indicated that the Community Centre would be provided at no cost and that the Ministry of Education only had to provide the furniture and teaching staff. Roy Joseph agreed and the Las Lomas Government Primary School was officially opened by Joseph in 1951. This was the first time in Trinidad and Tobago that the Government agreed to open a school in a building that provided the basic structure. Due to increased enrollment the Government decided to build a new structure complete with a playground, water supply and toilet facilities in 1958.

In September of 2002, Harnam was invited to attend the 50th Anniversary of the Las Lomas Government Primary School and was the guest speaker. He came down from Vancouver at his own expense.

The tireless Harnam also organized and founded the Las Lomas Consumers Cooperative Society in 1950. He served in the posts of director and secretary. The Society provided consumer goods and eventually closed in 1969. The Las Lomas Community Council was, in the late 1970's changed to Las Lomas No.2 Village Council and is still an active movement.

Harnam was a member of the Mahatma Gandhi Study Circle which met at the Himalaya Club in San

Juan. During 1948 to 1955, he served as the Las Lomas correspondent for the Trinidad Guardian. His articles and photography were appreciated by the newspaper and he was given the task of reporting on political, cultural and religious activities across the island including events at the Governor's residence.

Harnam was also involved in religious activities. He knew such prominent Hindu leaders as Simboonath Capildeo and Bhadase Sagan Maraj and was a founding member of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha when it was organized as the major Hindu organization. He was in a specially convened group, which included Ranjit Kumar, which adopted the constitution of the Maha Sabha and helped unite the opposing organizations.

One of the ambitions of Harnam was to further his education. He decided to apply to the University of Manitoba and was accepted on the basis of being a mature student and also on two strong recommendations, one of which was given by Adrian Cola Rienzi and the other by Dr. Horace P.S Gillette, the Government Malariologist, under whom he worked. In 1955 Harnam departed for Winnipeg in Canada but making a trip via New York and by Greyhound Bus to Winnipeg. He pursued a Diploma in Agriculture at the University of Manitoba.

He obtained employment in the forestry industry in British Columbia where he tied a steel chain around logs. This job was enlisted as "Chokerman" – a very tough task. He also worked part-time in the post office, the trains and held other jobs.

After obtaining his Grade XII through private colleges in Vancouver, at twenty-eight years of age, he

applied to the University of British Columbia. He was accepted and completed a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics and Mathematics, Diploma in Adult Education and Bachelor in Education. He later received a scholarship from the Government of British Columbia to pursue a Diploma in Industrial Education.

When Harnam graduated from the University of British Columbia and decided to seek employment in his homeland, he was informed that there were no vacancies. But this did not disturb him because he had a full time job with the British Columbia Transit Authority.

Furthermore, he continued his social activity in his new home. He is one of the founders of the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Cultural Society of British Columbia. He served at the Society's secretary and director until 2006. But he continued his membership and is presently a director and Chair of the Indian Arrival Day Committee. He was one of the organizers who held the first Indian Arrival Day Celebration in British Columbia in 1995, the guest speaker of which was the late Dr. Dura Pai Pandia – who was one of the moving personalities from India who motivated the Indian Community in Trinidad, Guyana and other countries where they were domiciled to organize themselves. Additionally, Harnam is a member and has served as a director of the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Society of British Columbia.

Harnam was also the first Trinidadian to get a job with the British Columbia Transit Authority and retired therefrom in 1995. He also served as an executive member of the transit union and was a vice president and director of the transit credit union.

For many years, this son of the soil has humbly served Trinidad and Tobago and Canada in social, political, cultural and religious spheres.



Pundit Ramdath Vyas (1945 -)

Pundit Ramdath Vyas (1945 –)

Pundit Ramdath Vyas was born on the 12th July, 1945 in Charlieville. He attended the Charlieville Canadian Mission School and the Osmond High School. He pursued an undergraduate degree in Education from The University of the West Indies and later obtained a Diploma in Education.

Ramdath had a diverse teaching career which ended with his retirement in 1989. At seventeen years of age, he began teaching at the Monroe Road Hindu Primary School. He would later continue his career at the Palo Seco Government Secondary School and the Couva Government School. He was also a good sportsman and played volleyball and table tennis.

Shortly after the death of his father, Ramdath, at thirty-two years of age, began his life as a pundit. Pundit Vyas became a popular pundit and was always in demand for religious functions. Someone once said that the pundit had “an infectious smile and a handsome face and brings inexplicable peace to all.” Young persons were attracted to this knowledgeable pundit who delivered discourses from the Ramayan, Ramcharitmaanas, Bhagvad Gita and Puraanas. The youths felt motivated and inspired by the pundit who was a voice of reason and faith.

During the 1990s, Pundit Vyas served in various capacities in the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS). During 1988 to 1992 he was a member of the Education Board of the SDMS. And, from 1990 to 1992 he was First Vice-President of the SDMS. Whilst serving this role he was also president of the Pundits’ Parishad of the

SDMS. He was also the Hindu representative on the Inter Religious Organization (IRO) during 1990 to 1992. Undoubtedly, Pundit Vyas provided crucial religious leadership for the Hindu community and Trinidad and Tobago.

Pundit Vyas was much honoured in the land of his birth. In 1992 he was presented with a national award – the Chaconia Medal, for outstanding community service. Three years later, the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC) honoured him for long and dedicated service to Hinduism. In May 2009, during an Indian Arrival Day observance, he received an award of recognition from the Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamat Association (ASJA). He has also been recognized by the Spring Village Temple in Balmain, Couva, Todds Road Hindu Temple, Mahilia Sabha Green Street Temple and the Craignish Hindu Shiva Temple.

For his selfless service to the Hindu community in the diaspora in North America, Pundit Vyas has also been recognized. Among the groups honouring him included the Satya Sanatan Dharma Cultural Sabha of Canada, in 1992, for his positive contribution to Hinduism. A few years later, in 1996, the Florida Hindu Organisation and Devotees presented him with an award in appreciation for his dedication and inspiration for Sanatan Dharma. Also, this year the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha of the W.I. Inc. Shiva Mandir of Queen's in New York presented him with an award for his services to their temple.

Despite ill-health, Pundit Vyas remains a hero of dharma and a role model for Hindus and non-Hindus alike. Pundit Vyas has certainly fulfilled his life's

mission as he has enriched the professional, personal and spiritual lives of thousands of persons in the Caribbean and abroad.

Pioneers inducted in 2009

Professor H.S. Adesh (1936 –) World renowned and accomplished scholar, author, poet, musicologist, artiste, philosopher, editor and educator. Founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Sansthaan and the Shri Adesh Ashram in Trinidad and Tobago and other similar organizations in Canada and the U.S.A.

Jang Bahadoorsingh (1914 – 1978) Successful businessman, land developer and political activist. Member of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (S.D.M.S.). Founding member of the People's National Movement (P.N.M.) and Member of the Democratic Labour Party (D.L.P.).

Phoolbasia Charran (1912 – 2006) Hard working, determined and dedicated wife and mother, whose efforts led to the creation of many thriving businesses in Trinidad and Tobago, earning her the title, "Matriarch of the Charran Empire".

Justice Ralph Narine (1922 –) Musician, athlete and member of the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago with a track record of outstanding service in the fields of culture and law.

Rev. Dr. Roy G. Neehall (1928 – 1996) Renowned Minister of the Presbyterian Church, serving locally and internationally in various important capacities.

Doon Pandit (1900 – 1958) Famed Pundit, founder and President of the "Pundits Parishad" of 1950, builder of Hindu temples, mystic healer, social worker and the first Hindu Indo-Trinidadian to be given the title "Member of the British Empire" (M.B.E.) for his humanitarian service.

Manny Ramjohn (1915 – 1998) Gifted long – distance runner and the first Trinidadian to win a gold medal at a major athletics event (the 1946 Central American and Caribbean Games in Columbia) and one of the first Trinidadians to represent the country at the Olympics

in (Wembley, London, England in 1948). Active Scout Leader who made sterling contributions to that organization.

James Ramsawak (1917 – 1998) Singer, musician and composer. Teacher of many of Trinidad and Tobago's artistes.

Swami Satchidananda (1931 – 1993) Trinidad-born Swami. Founder of the Divine Life Society and the Shivananda Yoga Vedanta Academy in Trinidad and Tobago. President of the Inter-Religious Organization (I.R.O.) between 1983 to 1985.

Kung Beharry Singh (1920 – 1989) Champion singer and musician. Teacher of singing and harmonium music.

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 Monrichard) (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*.

NCIC Executive 2010

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