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Inaugural Lecture

*NARSALOO RAMAYA & HIS PIONEERING CONTRIBUTION TO
INDO-TRINIDADIAN MUSIC WITHIN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S
EMERGING PERFORMING ARTS AND CULTURE*

By

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Presented at

**Bisram Gopie Auditorium, NCIC Divali Nagar, Narsaloo Ramaya Marg,
The Borough of Chaguanas**

On

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Protocols of Acknowledgements

President and Members of the NCIC Exec; Family and Friends of the late Narsaloo Ramaya; Prof Brinsley Samaroo, Dr Primnath Gooptar, Members of the media; Ladies and Gentlemen

*If music be the food of love play on; give me excess of it, that surfeiting may sicken the
appetite and so die. (Shakespeare's Twelfth Night).*

This quotation, ladies and gentlemen, could not have been applied to our music Icon Narsaloo Ramaya; for he sang and played on and on, for decades, and even taught music to young children during his lifetime. His appetite for music was neither surfeited nor given excess.

Narsaloo Ramaya: Portrait of An Artist

Figure 1: Portrait of An Artist; Narsaloo Ramaya

Formative years

The late Narsaloo Ramaya, the son of Indian immigrant parents was born on December 25, 1919, Christmas Day, two years after the official end of the Indian Indentureship system and after the last 2 ship-loads of Indians had arrived from India in Trinidad. His birth certificate however, indicated that he was born on January 4 1920. But he was always told by his parents that he was a ‘Christmas child’. This official record of registration could mean that his birth might have been registered after his formal birth date.

A product of poor immigrant parents from India living on the barracks of the Hermitage estate in South Trinidad, he lifted himself above his inherited meagre circumstances and went on to make fundamental contributions to creating Indo-Trinidadian pride and national self-respect through his artistic and literary pursuits. He was one of the pioneers in the development of the culture of the national community a teacher and mentor, a researcher, organiser and planner but more so, as an artist.

By his origins Narsaloo differed from the majority of Indians in Trinidad. His parents originated from South India. His father, Dasar Ramaya, was from the Gunthur district of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, from a privileged Bania or money lender (or possibly trader) class, belonging to the Vaishya caste. Dasar had run away from home, not to escape poverty but to escape a domestic situation. He found himself in Madras, signed up for contract labour and came to Trinidad. His mother Chatla Mallamma, from Vishakhapatnam in the Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh was lucky to escape from a former bad marriage, with ‘a burnt

scar on her left shoulder blade',¹ and was coming to meet her cousin/sister, Sanasarma, who had come earlier to Trinidad in somewhat similar circumstances, as an indentured worker. Both Dasaru and Mallamma travelled on the same *pal jahaj*, or sailing ship SS Mutla which had picked them up in the port of Madras in 1911.

Researchers usually know only about North Indian Bhojpuri and Awadhi or Hindi speakers, but there were other ethnic groups and languages brought from India, and Narsaloo's story belongs to the history of the 'others'. Both his parents, Dasaru and Mallamma spoke Telugu, the language of Andhra Pradesh.

His first ten years were spent in the sugar estates, Hermitage, Forres Park and Mt Pleasant where he lived a child's life; began primary school education, played and attended to village events such as Kali Puja's fire walking ceremony and the annual Hosay observances. He moved with his parents and other siblings to Port of Spain in 1931, in search of a better life after his father had completed his contract period. Dasaru had also been considering the idea of returning to his family in India – to atone for his earlier behaviour - but was dissuaded by his wife Mallamma and his children. They created a crying scene which changed his plans.

When the first Indian film, *Bala Joban* reached Trinidad in 1935, and was screened in Port of Spain, Narsaloo was living in the city (Port of Spain) with his parents at No 34 Queen Street. His father had got into business, running a cheap hotel/shelter and a 'cook shop' the local term for a restaurant. The arrival of *Bala Joban* from India and subsequently others in quick succession significantly changed how Indo-Trinidadians saw themselves and how they projected themselves.

Before 1935 Indo-Trinidadian music lived in *sarges*; small, intimate performances in which the artistes and their select audiences all sat on *pals* - white flour bags stitched together and spread over jute bags on the ground. Those were the days of the *baithak gana*.² That was the musical culture of rural Indians when Narsaloo's family lived on the estates. This was the period just before Indian films shifted the centre of Indo-Trinidadian performing arts to the urban areas and country towns.

The film songs performed by Chook Cham's (Ahmad Khan) pioneering Modern Indian Orchestra, of which Narsaloo was a founding member, and its successor Naya Zamana, changed things significantly. The small gatherings of aesthetic communion, the *mehfils*, were replaced by larger, more public shows. The musicians graduated from *pāl* singing to sitting on chairs on the stage and wearing jacket and ties or orchestral attire or 'band clothes'- now referred to as 'orchestra costumes'; similar coloured shirts and pants. You no longer positioned and played your dholak (double mouthed drum) under the crook of your knee, as was the norm when sitting flat on the ground. You put it on a specially prepared drum stand in front of you and played it. Ramsamooj Gosine notes that during this period: 'Orchestras worked feverishly to perfect their pieces and rehearse their singers. It was in this era that names like Myodeen Ackbarali, King Ratiram, Jagan Pandohie, Rhoda Asgarali, Tarran Persad, and Lakshmi Rampersad filled the hearts of many people.'³ The singers stood up and with microphone in hand, delivered their renditions. Sophistication had entered stage, musical presentations in Indian orchestration.

Unlike earlier village forms of Indian music and dance, the new Indian orchestras were more of town creations. Interestingly, Narsaloo had been introduced to music through the western system before Indian music caught his attention and interest and he gravitated to it. He had some western vocal music training from his primary school teachers at Mt Pleasant Government School and later at Nelson Boys Roman Catholic School. Through his school friends and others who frequented the 'cook shop', he knew what was taking place in a wider social context and even abroad. They had already begun to recognise the changes in musical

presentations from the western movies now showing in Port of Spain. They kept up with the emerging music trend and modern film music that played on the cinema stages.

By 1945 he had been a performer with the two local East India musicals which were staged by an entire local cast; *Gulshan Bahar* in 1943 and *Naya Zamana* in 1944-45. These musicals toured the country. The Naya Zamana orchestra emerged out of the second musical. Moreover at that time during the ‘cooking night’ events, prior to Hindu weddings, there were Indian orchestral performances. These performances of modern film music were usually followed by some traditional folk and local Indian classical music and dancing that had been preserved in the estates and villages.

The impact of the orchestras that Narsaloo co-founded (Naya Zamana after 1945 and later Triveni Orchestra) was considerable on the local Indian population. They attracted the best talents; the best singers, the best instrumentalists, each artiste being a big name in his or her own right. Artistes such as Tarran Persad, A.M. Mohammad, Ganga Persad, Sonny Chandi, Sewbalack and singer dancer Champa Devi (Fatima Rahim) and later Noor Jahan were the pride of the local Indian population. Naya Zamana orchestra played film music. On May 30, 1945 this orchestra performed to an audience of over 40,000 people at the Indian Centenary celebrations in Skinner Park, San Fernando. This was the 100th anniversary of the arrival of East Indians to Trinidad which was marked with ‘pomp and pageantry’. The Indian films had changed the successive generations of Indo-Trinidadians’ concept of India and Indian culture. Naya Zamana and a few other large and popular orchestras such as Hum Hindustani, Nau Jawan, Indian Art Orchestra and Jit Seesahai melody makers were central to that growing Indo-Trinidadian self-awareness and self-confidence.

Narsaloo was again in the forefront of the launch of the first Indian radio programme in 1947, “Indian Talent on Parade”, hosted by the then, twenty year old, Kamaluddin Mohammed on Radio Trinidad.⁴ Thereafter Narsaloo featured regularly on the show. Narsaloo also filled in as a singer in his own right, on this programme, whenever other scheduled artistes failed to show. For a little man he had a loud booming voice. He sang baritone. In addition to performing he travelled widely throughout Trinidad with his new friend, cultural enthusiast, radio host and impresario known among his peers as Kamal, functioning as a talent scout for Kamal’s radio programme, featuring local artistes performing Indian music. With Kamal, later affectionately referred to as *Chaarch* (short for *Cha Cha*, the Muslim’s term used to refer to one’s father’s brother), they ‘discovered’, among others, the young singer Isaac Yankaran in Barataria and Harry Mahabir in San Juan, two artistes who were later to rise to national prominence.

Ramaya functioned more or less as Mohammed’s secretary in planning and implementing his public artistic programmes.⁵ From the 1950s when Kamaluddin Mohammed became more involved in national politics with Dr Eric Williams and travelled with him around the country meeting the people, Narsaloo accompanied Kamal. Narsaloo thus played a major role in Kamal’s and William’s rise to national prominence resulting in the birth of the PNM as a national political party. This topic is certainly worth researching in greater detail.⁶ He did regular performances of Indian music on Radio Trinidad for more than thirty years on the programme *Sunday Morning Indian Hour* which carried a substantial amount of local artistes and their local inputs.

The cinema industry in Trinidad was also growing rapidly, from the 1940s up to the 1970s. Cinema houses were built as, and called theatres. Each cinema hall had a large performing stage constructed in front of the screen. These cinemas cum theatres hosted regular and full concerts with orchestras such as Naya Zamana, Dil-e -Nadan, Solo Sangeet, Nau Jawan, Jit Seesahai Melody Makers Orchestra, and Indian Art Orchestra, Dindial Kanik and his Orchestra and many others. Sometimes an orchestra would be billed alongside a single Indian movie but such events were however, usually for ‘fund raising charity

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concerts'. The stage shows involved singers, backed up by full orchestration, and dancing. The cinema shows were also socialising venues for in those days there weren't many entertainment areas in which the India community could meet socially, boys interact with girls, or old friends exchange gossip and jokes. There were only weddings and the theatre. Birthdays weren't very important social events and there were no public fetes that attracted the Indians in large numbers, until much later, after Independence. So the sole, regular event was at the theatre, whose Hindi movies appealed to the whole family. People socialised before the show, at the intermission and again after two long movies.

When Naya Zamana 'clashed' with other orchestras in the same concert, the theatre was full. Some of these theatre venues included Jubilee cinema, Palladium, Globe and Astor in Port of Spain and Ascot in Sangre Grande. Promoters like the Mohammed brothers particularly arranged these clashes of the 'giants', the orchestras and their performers. Narsaloo was part of that happening.

Narsaloo straddled a third development, after Independence, when Indians sought to establish themselves, to stamp their mark on the social, political, cultural and religious fabric of the new Trinidad and Tobago. In this period Indian artistes were beginning to be included in national culture, and Narsaloo was in the forefront of this change. In 1964 he took leadership of the Naya Zamana Indian Orchestra from the ailing Naseer Mohammed. That same year he co-founded and was appointed the vice-president of the National Council for Indian Music and Drama, with Mr Bisram Gopie, a music patron from South, as its president. The organisation was later renamed National Council for Indian Culture (and later registered under the name of 'Council for Indian Culture Ltd – NCIC - and remains so to the present time).

Mr Hansley Hanoomansingh later succeeded Mr Gopie as its president with Ramaya remaining as its vice president. The Naya Zamana Orchestra under Narsaloo's leadership performed in the country's premier concert auditorium, Queen's Hall, an exclusive venue which at that time didn't host many 'Indian shows'.



Ramaya

Figure 2. Hans Hanoomansingh & Narsaloo

In 1965 Narsaloo led the Indian segment of the T&T Cultural Contingent to the Commonwealth Arts Festival in Britain. Two years later he was again representing T&T, this time leading the Indian section of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural contingent to the World Fair, in Montreal, Canada, Expo '67. Torrance Mohammed and James Lee Wah, two members of that cultural contingent and contemporaries of Narsaloo, remember that the Indian segment comprised seven artistes, five musicians and two dancers; dholak, concertina (accordion), dhantāl, harmonium and violin player with lead singer being Tarran Persad. The dancers were Harry Sampath from the Raas Mandal group in Penal and Nizam Mohammed, former dancing partner of Champa Devi. Narsaloo was the violinist. Torrance and Cyril St Lewis (deceased) were joint choreographers and Lee Wah was stage manager of that contingent. Bert Henry was the artistic director with John Cupid as the manager of the pavilion. The Trinidad and Tobago contingent performed 4 shows daily (45 mins each) at the Trinidad and Tobago pavilion in Montreal, from April to October (6 months) of that year.⁷ That show was the forerunner of today's annual Caribana festival in Canada.

Educator and Researcher:

Narsaloo pursued the academic path simultaneously with his artistic career. During the period 1952-58 he obtained his GCE 'O' and 'A' levels and Teacher's Diploma. In 1963 he enrolled at the UWI but due to illness was unable to continue his course of studies and was forced to withdraw. He however read sociology and anthropology privately. As a primary school teacher since 1958, Narsaloo taught music to his students. In 1972 he composed a song with Hindi lyrics for schoolchildren to sing at the 10th anniversary of our country's Independence celebrations. Employed as a teacher in various schools run by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS) since 1958, he became the vice-principal of the Aranguez Hindu School, in 1969, a position which he held till his retirement in 1974.

In that year (1974) he transferred his pedagogic impulses to the wider national community as a Cultural Research Officer with the newly-created National Cultural Council (NCC-1971) of the Ministry of Education and Culture with folklorist Andrew Carr, followed by J.D elder and later Marjorie Padmore as its head.⁸ He travelled to India in 1975, on the invitation of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to visit 'music academies and other institutions of culture' in that country⁹.



Figure 3: Narsaloo Ramaya in India as guest of the ICCR; 1975. Photo courtesy Ramaya's family Album

Narsaloo Ramaya in India. as guest of the ICCR in India-1975. Photo courtesy Mr Ramaya's family

.He arrived in Delhi and visited, among other institutions, the Kathak Kendra of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy of Kathak Dance , a constituent division of the National Academy of Music, dance and drama in all of its manifestations).The Director of the Kathak Kendra, Mr Gopal Dass later that evening informed me - I was then a post graduate student pursuing a specialisation course in Kathak - that Mr Ramaya had paid a courtesy call on him and had explained that due to his heavy schedule he was unable to meet with me, but had conveyed his best wishes for my studies. His encouragement to young artistes was evident.

Under the NCC Ramaya presented programmes for the Government Broadcasting Unit; delivered lectures to secondary schools students of forms Six and organised performances by students for the country's Independence celebrations. While at the NCC in 1980, he founded and led Triveni Indian Orchestra. He provided advice to local Indian classical singers on such aspects of their repertoire as 'ghirgiri, Murkhi and Alaap.'¹⁰

Ramaya was also a prolific researcher and writer on local culture. From 1967 to 1991 he researched and wrote sixteen (16) manuscripts on local culture. Those who were fortunate to read his manuscripts have only high praise for his research efforts. Dr Hans Hanoomansingh commented on his penmanship, 'with a beautiful calligraphy, flowing effortlessly like the music from his violin during the heyday of his playing'. He however wrote in an unpretentious, simple style, conveying his thoughts with clarity and effectiveness. His research manuscripts and publications included: 'Indian Music' (1967); *East Indian Traditional music*(1974)¹¹; *East Indian Folk Traditions* (1978); *Hosay - Mohurrum Festival of the Muslims* (1982); *Evolutionary Trends in Indian Music* (1984); *The Cult of Kali Worship in Trinidad and Tobago*(1987); *The Festival of Shiv Ratri* (1988); *Musical Instruments of the East Indians of Trinidad and Tobago*(1988); *Initiatory Rites of Hindus - Rites of Passage*(1988); *Phagwa- Festival of Holi* (1989); *Sopari Mai Celebrations of La Divina Pastora Festival* (1989); *Hindu Gods and Goddesses* (1989); *East Indian Immigration and Indentureship* (1990); and *Hindi Films and songs: Impact and Contribution* (1991).¹² Ramaya remained with the NCC until its dissolution in 1983 and wrote some of his manuscripts while employed there. Most of his manuscripts are located in the library of the University of the West Indies, St Augustine campus.

As an artiste he performed with such pioneers in local Indian entertainment as Champa Devi (Fatima Rahim), Tarran Persad, Jhagroo Khawal, Sayeed Mohammed, Henry 'Tooloom' Dindial, Bahadoor, Bijou, Chook Cham (Ahmad Khan), Noor Jahan (Irene Montrichard nee Housein), Fakeer Mohammed, Ramcharan and Ralph Narine. He was associated with some of the first patrons of the Indian arts in Trinidad; Babu Ramsingh, Paul Harris of Brierley Street Sangre Grande, Lionel Seukaran of San Fernando, Manmohansingh of Cedros, and promoters Kamaluddin Mohammed, Moen and Sham Mohammed, Pat Mathura, Amjad Farzan Ali, Nazim Muradali, and Hans Hanoomansingh.

Narsaloo and Multiculturalism

Long before the concept of multiculturalism had been espoused in Trinidad and Tobago, with it receiving varying degrees of credence in Canada, France and UK, Narsaloo was practising it effectively. And this was despite the then existing brand of urban, Afro Saxon, Christian patriotism which was articulated and promoted locally. He had no doubts in his mind that the Indo- Trinidadian society had been as patriotic as anyone else but demonstrated it in their own unique way, always conscious of their cultural values and art forms. They remained on

the periphery of general, societal acceptance, always having to adjust to the projected values of the then ruling elites. Yet he took the brave and pioneering step and launched the Triveni Orchestra, or three flowing rivers, in 1980. He was eminently qualified to do so. He had surrounded himself with a library of diverse music; both western and eastern, Indian classical music, the music from the great masters of both genres. He held a special place for the music of India and for Ustad Bismillah Khan and his Shehnai.¹³ He had remained close to the local artistes of that period and had developed an eye for spotting talent. He was aware of the winds of change that were sweeping Trinidad and Tobago and the western world. He had let the winds of other cultures blow through the windows of his house, yet like the Mahatma, Gandhi, he refused to allow any to blow him down. He remained firmly rooted to the Indian art forms, always looking for ways to improve them but making them relevant to the local environment.

Triveni Orchestra took its name from the term *Triveni*, a Sanskrit and Hindi term, meaning three streams. It is generally used to refer to the convergence of the three rivers in Prayag, later renamed Allahabad¹⁴ (the abode of Allah), India; the Ganga, Yamuna and the underground stream, the Saraswati. In this case Ramaya's Triveni, the orchestra was structured both in policy and practice, to produce and play the whole range of music that represented our Trinidad and Tobago musical offerings; the European, African and the Indian. But it was envisaged to lay stress on the Indo and the Afro- Trinbagonian, and the English genre of music, in short the music of contemporary Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. In the Triveni orchestra he surrounded himself with a band of young dynamic musicians, including Virendra Persad and Richard Ramlakhansingh. They developed and played a repertoire of what they considered to be Trinidadian music, crossing over all the parallel genres of music, played in this country. The offering was more syncretic than multicultural. They rapidly became the band in demand throughout the country and abroad. Today Triveni Orchestra is among a small group of orchestras playing cross-over music that continue to hug the limelight of the Trinidad and its diaspora in North America and Europe. Narsaloo had begun a trend that others followed. Currently similar party-music bands include Dil-e-Nadan, Mellow bugs, Gayatones and Karma.¹⁵ It took thirty years since 1980, for the government of T&T to formally establish a Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism though a properly articulated, written policy on this version of our culture was never formally presented for public discussion. This is however not to say that it was only Narsaloo Ramaya who espoused and practised the concept of Multiculturalism in Trinidad and Tobago, but he is one of its early, pioneering practitioners of this policy both through his music, his other activities and his vision. Today this concept has been dropped by this government, returning to its former nebulous situation where no clearly articulated policy is distinguishable.

Achievements

Narsaloo Ramaya has received several honours and awards during his lifetime for achievements in the cultural field. In 1970 he received the national award; The Humming Bird Medal (bronze), for his outstanding contribution to Indian culture.

In 1972 the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha conferred on him a Silver Medal, for his cultural contribution to the community. In 1975 Narsaloo was again honoured by the Teachers' Association of the Maha Sabha. That same year he was awarded a fellowship by the Government of India to visit music academies and other cultural institutions in India. In 1986 the NCIC conferred a Gold Medal on Narsaloo and in 1991 he was honoured by Nrityanjali Theatre, Institute for the Arts, under the artistic direction of Sat Balkaransingh. In an elaborate ceremony at Queens Hall the *Angwastram*, the celebrated "Shawl of Honour"

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was conferred on him for his Contribution to Culture. By that time he very rarely played his beloved violin in public. But he played at his Angwastram ceremony, in Queens Hall, possibly for the last time at that premier auditorium. His erstwhile nimble fingers showed signs of slowing. It was the end of a long and illustrious stage career.

Later, in 1996, Narsaloo would have a road named in his honour, the road running North South in front of the Divali Nagar, in the Borough of Chaguanas; *The Narsaloo Ramaya Marg*. In 2006 and 2008 he was inducted into the 103 FM Radio Station and the NCIC Halls of Fame respectively. His history is now not only inextricably tied up with that of the municipality of Chaguanas, but to the wider community; a fitting tribute to a National Icon.



Figure 4. A road is named after him 'Narsaloo Ramaya Marg. L-R: Narsaloo, Sadik Baksh, Fmr Minister of Works & Transport GORTT & D. Sharma (Pres of NCIC) Photo courtesy Ramaya Family Album

Narsaloo the man

Narsaloo has been a very dignified yet humble, warm, disciplined and meticulously tidy person: in his personal bearing, attire, penmanship and dealings with his family, the artistic fraternity and the public.¹⁶ This has been his hallmark.

He always presented himself in clean, ironed attire; white shirt, pants, shoes and socks. When Kamal Charch and I visited him at his house in Barataria in midmorning of February 1, 2011, unannounced, (during my visit to Charch's home to talk about Narsaloo, Charch insisted that we visit him immediately). Age had taken its toll on him. He was hardly able to either recognise or hear us. His sight and hearing had significantly deteriorated. But lying quietly on his couch, when we arrived, he was still impeccably dressed. He sported a clean, long-sleeved, white, ironed shirt, black pants and a pair of white socks. He came out to sit with us, on a rocking chair, in his gallery. As recognition dawned on him on the identity of his guests, he became more effusive, excitedly remembering his 'good old days' with 'Moen, Sham and Kamal' and the artistic fraternity, his contemporaries. He became emotional. This iconic artist, humanitarian, husband to Betty, father of four, uncle, grandfather (Nana and Aja) and visionary was still the simple man, of Andhra Pradesh ancestry who had fortunately found his roots twelve thousand miles away, re-established ties with his relatives in the Telugu speaking village in south India and was now 'ah old man' full of emotions for Trinidad and Tobago and his people here, especially the artistes. The tears flowed... they were joyous tears for people who still remembered him and paid him visits; "You all making me cry," he uttered between wiping his eyes with a clean handkerchief brought by his daughter, Sita, while his wife Betty sat with us cuddling her baby grandson. He cried for the artistes and the artistic fraternity that he remembered. Our ninety-two year old icon cried for joy, remembering the old pioneering days of Indian music in Trinidad. It was a happy occasion.

As we prepared to leave, the then octogenarian Charch, in keeping with his Islamic background, and practising tenets of the faith, stood up and faced Narsaloo, uttered a prayer in Urdu, blew (*phukay*) on Narsaloo three times.¹⁷ This is also in keeping with Indian tradition of blessing and warding away of evil. He promised Narsaloo to return to visit "for as long as (his failing) health permitted". As we departed, Narsaloo hobbled along with us to the front door of his home, still maintaining that typically old Indian behaviour pattern of according the highest respect to one's guests. He held on to the gate, standing upright, his Betty at his side, to bid us farewell.

Narsaloo's health deteriorated further until June 20, 2013 when the physical body could no longer bear the burden of its suffering. He passed over to greener pastures. The funeral services were performed according to Roman Catholic rites, a faith in which he had been baptised in 1943. This was followed by cremation at Belgrove Funeral parlour and crematorium in Tacarigua, next to the plot on land on the Orange Grove Estate that had been allocated for 'Hindu burials' - these were the early days when cremation was not an in-thing in Trinidad. The plot is now occupied by a building of the Anglican Church. Was it by design, or by divine intervention that having lived in Barataria, Narsaloo's last rites were performed in close proximity to a school, the Tacarigua

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orphanage, an institution that had been established in 1868 to take care of the orphan children of Indian immigrants, and from which many musicians had emerged over the years?

He departed as he had lived, a full and eventful earthly life; a student, law clerk, taxi driver, bus conductor, teacher, researcher, musician and mentor. He constantly and effortlessly crossed racial, religious and artistic barriers, always with an encouraging word to all who came into contact with him, especially the youths. He was not perfect. He had his indulgences; with the bottle and his female fans in his earlier years. But he remained a family man He was married twice and sired seven (7) children. His daughter, Urmila plays the violin.

In this the 100 year of the end of the Indian Indenture system, and the 98th anniversary year of Narsaloo's birth it is fitting that we record and celebrate the pioneering work, the life and time, the achievements of Narsaloo Ramaya, one of the great cultural, musical icons of Trinidad and Tobago, who was in the forefront of promoting good quality, modern Indo-Trini music.

I thank you for your attention.

End Notes;

¹ Kim Johnson, *Jahaji Tempo: Narsaloo Ramaya and the Birth of modern Indo Trini Music*. Unpublished Manuscript.

² From the Hindi *baithnā* (v: to sit), audience and performers sat flat on the floor for these musical group sessions. It also refers to a gathering of persons 'sitting' together for purposes of discussion or Satsang or a musical (vocal, instrumental and dance) session.

³ Ramsamooj Gosine. "Better Management of the Artistes" *Aagaman* (Souvenir Magazine). Trinidad: Commemoration Committee on Indian Arrival and The High Commission of India, 1991:p75.

⁴ Kamaluddin Mohammed. Personal interview, February 11 2011, Mohammed Ville, San Juan, Trinidad.

⁵ Author's interview with Kamaluddin Mohammed, February 2, 2011 at his home in Mohammed Ville, San Juan Trinidad.

⁶ Discussions with historian Prof Brinsley Samaroo on May 20, 2017 at the public Lecture at NCIC Divali Nagar.

⁷ Discussions with Torrance Mohammed and James Lee Wah, jointly, on January 10,2011 in San Fernando

⁸ Torrance Mohammed. P.I. (Tel) May 19 2017.

⁹ Personal Interviews with Narsaloo Ramaya in 1990 and 1991 and reproduced in “Narsaloo Ramaya: A Portrait”. *Natrang Quarterly. Trinidad: June 1992 Vol.1 No.2 & 3*: p10-11

¹⁰ Jameer Hosein in Heritage Radio 101.7 F.M. Interview on June 29 2013.

¹¹ Narsaloo Ramaya. "East Indian Traditional Music", in *Art and Culture. Vol. 1 Number 3 NCC (Journal) 1974*.

¹² Narsaloo Ramaya, “Hindi film and Songs: Impact and Contribution” *Aagaman (Souvenir Magazine)*. Trinidad: Commemoration Committee on Indian Arrival and The High Commission of India, 1991: p45.

¹³ Hans Hanoomansingh. P.I. Feb 10, 2011. Ustad Bismillah Khan had visited Trinidad with a troupe of Indian artistes in the early 1970s. The troupe included Kuchipudi dancers Guru Vempati Chinastayam and his foremost student Shobha Naidu and their music and dance of South India. The troupe was presented by local hosts the NCIC.

¹⁴ Initially called Prayag, it was renamed Allahabad during the Muslim rule of India. Hindus still refer to it as Prayag.

¹⁵ This view is corroborated by impresario Rafi Mohammed. Personal interview, February 11 2011, Mohammed Ville, San Juan, Trinidad.

¹⁶ Corroborated by Hans Hanoomansingh on Feb 9, 2011 and repeated by Kamaluddin Mohammed on Feb 11, 2011.

¹⁷ Mr Mohammed informed me that at the age of 19, he was appointed Maulvi of the Jama Masjid in East Port of Spain.

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Presenter’s Profile:

Dr. Sat Balkaransingh is a former senior public servant with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, a part time University lecturer and a Consultant in Policy, Strategic & Project Planning and Culture. He is a dancer-choreographer. Co-founder of the Nrityanjali theatre and its former Artistic Director; he founded and is currently the Artistic Director of the Kathak Kala Sangam (Academy for the arts). He is an internationally recognised performing

artist. The author of several research papers, chapters in books & journals and 2 books, Balkaransingh recently launched his latest book *The Shaping of a culture Rituals and Festivals of Trinidad with Selected counterparts in India 1990-2014* (London: Hansib, 2016) in Trinidad and India.

He has just returned from a book promotion tour of India where he lectured to research students and scholars of six Universities. He also delivered research papers at 3 international conferences on Indian immigration, the 100th anniversary of the end of Indian Indentureship and the way forward for the successor generations of Indian Immigrants scattered throughout the Indian Diaspora.

He has studied in Trinidad, India and UK and holds a BA Econ (Hons), Delhi Univ; Sp. Post Grad, Dance (Kathak Kendra, Delhi); MSc, Project Planning & National Development, Univ of Bradford, UK; PhD Cultural Studies, UTT.

File: Narsaloo Ramaya - Icon and Pioneer of Indo Trini Music
SB: 1990-91; February/March 2011; June 2013; May 20, 2017.