

Hamare Pyare Bhaiya Martin - Tribute to Dr. Martin Boodhoo by Vidur Dindyal



*Dr. Martin Boodhoo BSoc.Sc MA PhD ACIS
June 20, 1930- December 25, 2017*

We say a prayer to bhagwan for blessing our community with such a modest, humble and great achiever our dear brother Dr Martin Boodhoo.

He came from humble beginnings. He could not afford to attend high school, yet by dint of hard work he became Head of University of Guyana. That was only one of his great accomplishments. His father, an indentured labourer arrived in 1893 on the "M.V. Sheila". His mother was Guyanese by birth. Martin's mother died when he was five and his father when he was eighteen.

When the war ended and India became independent, the dismantling of colonialism and its iniquities was nigh. In BG our own father of the nation Dr Cheddi Jagan ushered in a new dawn of freedom from inequality and injustice and opportunity for all.

Brother Martin, a Hindu among many others broke through the glass ceiling which hitherto barred Hindus and Muslims from white collar jobs in teaching and in the Civil service. His achievement was spectacular with attaining a senior staff position in the Sugar estate once the bastion of colonialism, with its hallmarks of class and white rule.

Career. Sicknurse and Dispense to UN Consultant

His working career began in 1945 as a student Sicknurse & Dispenser at the Uitvlugt Sugar Estate Hospital. He qualified as a Certified Sicknurse and Dispenser, and was placed No.2, on the Pass List.

In October 1952 through involvement in Community activities (Scouting, Youth Work and Welfare Services) he won a Fellowship to study Industrial Welfare and Community Development in the UK

He qualified in 1953. Before leaving UK, Martin (as a Scout Leader) did a course of training for the "Wood Badge" at Gilwell Park, London, the International Training Headquarters for Scouting.

In that year he was privileged to witness the Royal Procession through the streets of London, of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II after Her Coronation.

He returned to Guyana in June 1953, and was employed by Bookers Sugar Estates Ltd. as the Industrial and Social Welfare Officer at Albion Sugar Estate, Corentyne, Berbice.

Studied privately, and qualified as an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators (ACIS) of the UK in 1959.

While at Albion Estate he founded Scout Troop No.31. This Scout Troop won the 'Governor's Cup on two occasions,

Community Development Officer in the Essequibo-Pomeroon district, promoting Self-help Programmes for Youths, Women, Village workers and Amerindian communities in Pomeroon area.

In January 1962 appointed Housing Officer of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. This involved the mammoth task of re-housing sugar workers from 'logies' on all Guyana sugar estates.

During 1963-1967, while in work, was an evening student at the new University of Guyana. During then he was elected its President of the Student's Union for two terms (1965-66 and 1966-67).

In 1967 he graduated- among the first batch of students- with a BSoc.Sc. Degree in Public Administration and Economics.

In October 1967, he went to UK for post-graduate studies at the University of Essex. In 1968 Martin obtained his M.A. Degree.

Awarded a Fellowship by the UK Government to research at the University of Leeds on “The Role of Public Enterprise in Economic Development in Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago”.

In 1971 he obtained his Ph.D. degree. Appointed Lecturer/Research Fellow at Leeds University.

In April 1973, was appointed a Lecturer at the University of Manchester and subsequently Director of the Public Enterprise Management Programme, a position he held until September 1979.

Served as External Examiner in Public Administration and Management, at the University of Malawi, for periods- 1976-77 and 1982-1885.

High point of professional career was service with several agencies of the United Nations (UN) System. Appointed Consultant to the Government of Malaysia, until September 1981.

From 1981 to 1985, stationed in Zambia, he served with the International Labour Organisation as the UN Regional Adviser on Enterprise Development for 8 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa,

From 1985 to 1991, stationed in Trinidad & Tobago, served as ILO Regional Adviser for 14 countries in the Caribbean, until his ‘retirement’ from the UN system in December 1991.

October 1993 to 1996, he set up and was the First Executive Secretary & Head of the Privatisation Unit for the Government of Guyana with Technical Assistance from the World Bank.

In 1995 until 1999 he served as the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Guyana. He was the first UG graduate to be so appointed. The Pro-Chancellor acts for the Chancellor whenever he is away. As Pro-Chancellor he served as Chairman of the Council (Board of Governors) of the University.

The Scout Movement always a part of Dr. Boodhoo’s extra-curricular activities, he served from 1993 to 1995, as Secretary of the Scout Association of Guyana,

In addition to professional responsibilities, he continued his association with service/youth/sports organisations such as Rotary, Scouting, the Heritage Society and many Community/Social clubs.

In 2002, the Olympic Association of Guyana appointed Dr. Boodhoo as ‘Team Manager’ for Boxing at the Commonwealth Games, held at Manchester where he and his family have lived since 1973.

Dr. Boodhoo’s hobbies over the years, have been Table-Tennis, Soft-Ball Cricket, Dominoes, Gardening, Swimming, Card games especially Bridge and participation in community activities.

Career Phases.

I share with you what Brother Martin said about his rich experience and spectacular achievements.

"My career – spanning...nearly 60 years so far – could be summarised in four major phases.

“Phase I from 1945 to 1967. I was employed in Guyana as a Paramedic, Industrial Welfare Officer, Community Development Officer and Housing Officer and I studied as an evening student to complete my secondary education and a degree at the University of Guyana.

"The major lesson I draw from this period is that poverty did not discourage me in making determined and consistent efforts to improve my station in life; in the process, I believe I was able to assist others to enhance their welfare.

"Phase 2 from 1967 to 1979. I pursued post-graduate studies and undertook research and lecturing at universities in the United Kingdom as well as Consultancies, Teaching and Research in developing countries. The principal motivation while studying as a mature student- with a wife and four children – was not only to achieve personal success but to prepare the ground for better opportunities for the family.

The other consideration was to test the hypothesis that graduates of the University of Guyana can effectively hold their own ground overseas, so that the way could be cleared for future aspirants.

"Phase 3 from 1979 to 1991. I served as an Adviser in the UN system on projects in developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, this period was the high point in my professional career. I ardently believe that knowledge and experience should be shared internationally in order to improve socio-economic conditions especially in developing countries.

"I believe my contributions in Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Latin America are...a source of satisfaction because of the collaborative approach adopted to development issues and the bond of world-wide friendship that was cemented over the years in many countries.

"Phase 4 from 1992 to date, I returned to Guyana to 'serve' in the development of my native country. I believe that allegiance to one's native land should be underlined with some contribution to the country of one's birth during the 'prime of life' and as well as in the 'golden' years.

"One of my fundamental convictions is that whenever possible, occupational commitments should be combined with a measure of community service. This has given me tremendous satisfaction during my entire career - 'in search of a niche'.

Gratitude to Family and his mentors.

Martin is the first to credit all those who have inspired him and helped him on his way.

During his "apprenticeship" as a Sicknurse & Dispenser; he was also an evening student at the Uitvlugt Under-Privileged School run by a great philanthropist Brother Gangaram Dwarka through whose support he studied and passed the London Matriculation Examination in 1950.

Martin's signal achievement in June 1971 at the University of Leeds, when he became the First UG student to graduate with a Ph.D. degree. He deeply gratefully acknowledges the loyal and dedicated support of his family especially his wife Chandra with their four children- Harry Devanand, Navindra Pramanand, Chitra Nalini and Radha Serojini and nephew- Krishnadat Prashad (who lived with the family like a son).

He was greatly influenced by Sir Arthur Lewis- Economist and Nobel Prize Laureate whose address when he became Chancellor of the University of Guyana, in 1967, stated, inter alia, that excellence was achieved not only by intellect; it derives even more from character...To achieve excellence, one must have self-discipline; to practise the same thing over and over again, ...to push oneself from the easy part to the hard part. Only the humble achieve excellence, since only the humble can learn.

For fieldwork for his doctorate on "The Role of Public Enterprise in Economic Development in Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago", his Supervisor Prof. A.H. Hanson, wrote to the Prime Ministers of Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago, soliciting their support for Martin. He stated that "Mr. Boodhoo is one of the most able candidates for a doctorate I have ever supervised..."

In recognition of his sterling contributions, to the Caribbean, he was made an Honorary Life Member of the Guyana Chapter of the Caribbean Management Development Association.

In 1993 the University Of Guyana Guild Of Graduates presented 'Medals of Merit' to Dr. Boodhoo and four other distinguished graduates.

Hindi & Sweet Voice

He was not a loud person. He was unassuming. A conversation with him was a joy. He spiced it with Hindi words and phrases and sometimes threw in a verse or two from the Ramayan or Gita. He was versed in his scriptures.

Hamaare priy bhai ek vishesh vyakti the. Jab vah paida hua tha, toe soorya devata chamakeele dhang se chamak gae the. Pavan devata ne ek meetha sugandhit hava ko urd diya. Pakshiyon ne meethee dhun gaaya. Our dear brother was a very special person. I feel when he was born, the Sun god shone brightly. The Wind god blew a sweet smelling breeze and the birds sang sweet melodies.

Have you heard him sing? I was enchanted with his rich mellow baritone singing voice. It reminds me of one C.H. Atma. This brief medley of his songs, I chant in tribute and celebration of brother Martin's life.

Roun main saagar ke kinaare, saagar hansa uraaye

Kyaa jaane ye, chanchal lahen, main hoon aag chupaaye. Roun main saagar ke kinaare.

Main Ghi Kaa Diyaa Jalaun Re Ghar Aao, Ghar Aao

Chain na din bhar, rain na nindiyaa, bikhar gai maathe ki bindiyaa. Nainan nir bahaan re ghar aao, .

Preetam aan milo, preetam aan milo,

Dukhiya jiya bulaaye, preetam aan milo. Raat andheri aayi baalmaa, man mora ghabraaye hai,
Door ped par baitha panchhi, yehi rat naa lagaaye hai, aan milo, preetam aan milo, preetam aan milo.

Bhagwan ko mai bahut bahut dhanyabaad ka praarthana karta hu, ke hamara bhaiya Martin ka jeewan hamara saath raha tha tha.

Jai Sita Ram!

Vidur Dindayal

London, UK

28 January 2018

Vidur Dindayal was born in Guyana and currently resides in the UK. He published *Guyanese Achievers USA & Canada: A Celebration*. A collaboration between Vidur Dindayal and the Guyanese diaspora *Guyanese Achievers, USA and Canada* celebrates the academics, actors, doctors, educators, entrepreneurs, and others who, by demonstrating inventiveness and persistence, have been recognized as exemplars of Guyanese achievement in North America.

