



# The Indian Diaspora Journal

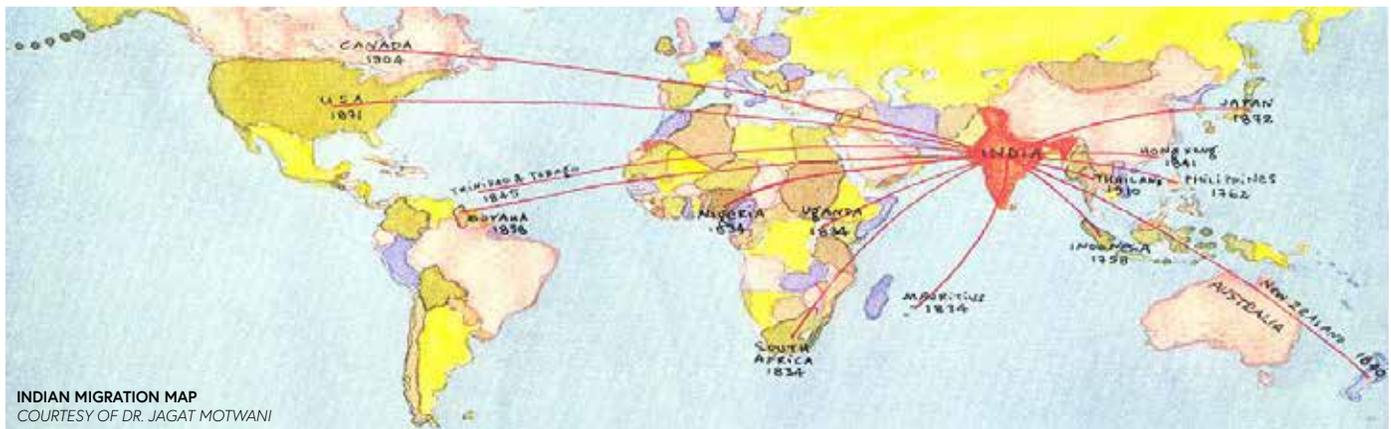
NEWS, INFORMATION, ISSUES & EVENTS

SHARED HERITAGE, ASPIRATIONS, AND INTERESTS OF  
People of Indian Origin (PIO)

INDIAN DIASPORA COUNCIL

September 2017 | Issue 01

## GLOBAL INDIAN MIGRATION



*Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), established in 1997, is an international, secular, and non-political, non-profit organization with global affiliates and membership in 21 countries, with the objective to embrace, engage, and enhance—with optimum inclusivity—the shared heritage, aspirations, and interests of persons of Indian origin.*

### EDITOR'S NOTES for 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

This 20th anniversary issue aims to celebrate our shared heritage, honor each other's achievements, identify common issues, and create an inclusive space to become a stronger global community as we broaden our horizons together.

—SUZANNE MAHADEO, CHIEF EDITOR, USA

### PIO of the MONTH



**Pandit Ram Lall** is honored this month for his humanitarian work and dedication to philanthropy. 🌐

SEE INSIDE OR CLICK 🌐 FOR FULL STORIES

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For more news in this issue: [www.indiandiasporacouncil.org/news.php](http://www.indiandiasporacouncil.org/news.php)  
News, Inquiries, & Commentary: [News@IndianDiasporaCouncil.org](mailto:News@IndianDiasporaCouncil.org)



# The Indian Diaspora Journal

NEWS, INFORMATION, ISSUES & EVENTS

A PUBLICATION OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA COUNCIL

## HAPPY 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY, IDC!



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### SEPTEMBER 2017. Issue 01.



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# From the President

## NOTES ON THE DIASPORA

**Today there are over 28 million in the diaspora,** from recent emigrants to several generations in the legacy diaspora. We speak numerous languages and reside in a plethora of countries. Many work on temporary visas in both skilled and unskilled jobs. The fact that there are 160 Indian high commissions and consulates confirms the widespread numbers of Indians outside of India. Other than the Jewish Diaspora, our diaspora is unique and adds to our legacy—a priceless treasure envied by others—intrinsic in so many ways.

This is indeed a unique phenomenon of migration where the culture, heritage, and values bind and bond as an overwhelming dose of hereditary jewels, traits and attributes that reside within us whenever and wherever we go. Indian heritage is like a towering banyan tree—strong and vibrant with many branches and the deepest roots—of shared values of Indianness, which cannot be easily discarded or denied. Indian heritage is a source of inspiration and pride while we try to fathom its depths and how it sustains the diaspora.

Indian heritage is the cornerstone of the diaspora, transcending time and place, surviving obstacles and severe situations, remoteness, and influences. Despite speaking different languages, living in different and sometimes remote places, sustaining and improving our lives, we share heartfelt feelings of Indianness and the urge and yearning to connect and belong. Meanwhile, we have inherited and taken a lot from India and transformed our lives and the new countries of our birth or adoption.

**The Indian diaspora can be seen as “the export of people seeking better lives for themselves and their families,” which we achieve.**

Our diaspora is a continuing phenomenon and subsequently, we flourish after assimilation and adaptation with each succeeding generation, while adding to economic progress of our respective new home countries. Indian heritage, culture and values are the driving elements for sustenance, survival, achievement, pride and progress at all levels. The older diaspora, which I refer to as the legacy diaspora, of the Caribbean, Africa, Mauritius, Oceania, and Francophone countries, have retained more of the Indian culture and heritage intact and in its original form for the many reasons associated with remoteness, harsh living conditions, sense of belonging and togetherness, sustenance and bonding—while some adaptation was necessary, such as with foods and clothing, some conversion to Christianity, and the breakdown of the caste system. Later, Indian music and songs witnessed a fusion combination, such as “Caribbean Chutney.”

**From Durban to Detroit, we strive to do better for ourselves and contribute to our new country’s progress in significant ways:**

- WE HAVE PUT A WOMAN IN SPACE;
- CELL PHONES IN THE HANDS OF WORKING PEOPLE;
- WIPE OUT POLIO;
- EXCELLED IN TENNIS, CRICKET, CHESS;
- EARNED NOBEL PRIZES FOR WRITING,

OUR DIASPORA IS MOLDED BY CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND VALUES WHILE ADDING TO AND INFLUENCING BOTH SUBTLY AND IN VISIBLE WAYS: LANGUAGE, CLOTHING, LIFESTYLE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIAL VALUES.

We have a knack for reconciling our two identities: our inherent Indianness and birth/newly adopted citizenship. We learn to adapt, co-exist, and progress within societies far away from India. *Note that adherence to Indian heritage and cultural origin must not diminish national loyalty in other birth or newly adopted countries, as assimilation and adaptation are key.*

The Indian Diaspora Council (IDC) strives to embrace, engage, and enhance the growing Indian Diaspora in many more countries, while monitoring and addressing critical issues of interest and concern. We are grateful to IDC worldwide affiliates, members, supporters and patrons. As IDC celebrates its 20th anniversary, it has become the premiere Indian Diaspora advocacy organization with worldwide recognition among various governments, organizations, institutions and agencies.

IDC Journal news is an informative compilation of information, achievements, commentary, issues and events pertinent to the Indian Diaspora, as well as planned events and programs, including collaboration with India’s Overseas Indian Affairs Department of Ministry of External Affairs. Thanks to IDC Journal’s dedicated news and editorial teams headed by Suzanne Mahadeo, and congratulations and best wishes for continuing success of IDC Journal and IDC globally.

Sincerely,

*Ashook Ramsaran*  
President

INDIAN DIASPORA COUNCIL  
INTERNATIONAL



# PIO of the Month

HONORING THOSE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



*We honor for a lifetime of global service*

**Pandit Ramlall**

FREEDOM FIGHTER \* SCHOLAR \* COMMUNITY/RELIGIOUS ICON

\* Born **FEBRUARY 28, 1928** in **GUYANA** now in **NY, USA**

\* **FOUNDER** of **ARYA SPIRITUAL CENTER**

\* **PIONEER** of **NYC ANNUAL PHAGWAH PARADE**

\* **INTERFAITH SPIRITUAL ADVISOR** across *Canada & USA*

**RIGHT:** PT. RAMLALL AT CENTENNIAL OF ABOLITION OF INDENTURESHIP (NY)



\* **ORPHANED AT AGE 6 & TAUGHT HIMSELF HINDI**

\* **HARD LABORER** by age 9 & **SUGAR CHEMIST** by age 19

\* **POLITICAL PRISONER** for **GUYANA'S INDEPENDENCE**

\* **TAUGHT HINDI, VEDANTA** to **POLITICAL PRISONERS**

\* **CIVIL SERVICE UNION REPRESENTATIVE** in *NY*

**LEFT:** MAURITIUS CONSUL (NY) & PT. RAMLALL AT INDIAN CONSULATE (NY)

\* Received **INTERNATIONAL SERVICE AWARD**

\* Received **BHARAT GAURAV AWARD** (*Joining Mother Teresa*)

\* **MARCH 23, 2003** declared **PANDIT RAMLALL DAY** in *New York*

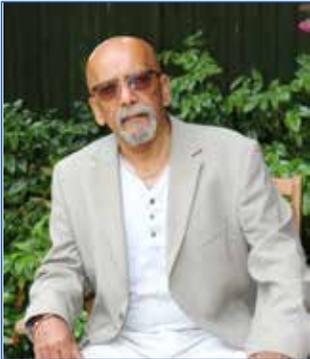
\* Practices **HUMILITY & RESPECT** as life pillars

**RIGHT:** PT. RAMLALL (CENTER)



# High Achievers

## EXCELLENCY IN THE DIASPORA



*For his many achievements, we congratulate*



**Professor Clem Seecharan**

HONORED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES** (St Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago) will confer the D.Litt (Doctor of Letters) to Professor Clem Seecharan on October 28, 2017. Born in the small village of Palmyra in Berbice, Guyana, he is being honoured for his prolific research and writings on Caribbean history and the history of West Indies cricket for more than 25 years. Professor Seecharan was Head of Caribbean Studies for nearly 20 years at London Metropolitan University, where he has been Emeritus Professor of History since 2012.

Educated at Berbice Educational Institute, Queen's College, Mc Master University (Canada), and the University of Warwick (England), Professor Seecharan is the first person to earn a Ph.D from the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies at the latter institution.

Professor Seecharan is a prominent author in academia. His book, *Sweetening Bitter Sugar: Jock Campbell, the Booker Reformer in British Guiana*, was awarded the prestigious Elsa Goveia Prize in 2005 by the Association of Caribbean Historians (considering the book: "a magisterial account that manoeuvres the reader through one of the most painfully fragmentary periods of Guyanese history... elegantly written...a genuinely majestic work.") Of his book, *From Ranji to Rohan: Cricket and Indian Identity in Colonial Guyana*, the eminent Indian Professor of Columbia University, Partha Chatterjee, has written: "This is a serious book on cricket and its socio-cultural implications in Guyana. It bears comparison with C.L.R. James's classic, *Beyond a Boundary*."

His other books include: *Tiger in the Stars: the Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana*; *Bechu: 'Bound Coolie' Radical in British Guiana*; *Mother India Shadow over El Dorado: Indo-Guyanese Politics and Identity, 1890s-1930s*; *Muscular Learning: Cricket and Education in the Making of the British West Indies*; and *Finding Myself: Essays on Race, Politics and Culture*.

Clem is currently working on a three-volume study called *Hand-in-Hand History of Cricket in Guyana*. Guyanese journalist, Petamber Persaud, observes that Clem "came from a bookless world but...has become the most prolific writer on the Indian travails and triumphs in Guyana." Publisher, Jeremy Poynting, remarked recently:

**“Quietly (though this is not the immediate word one thinks of with Clem Seecharan) he has become a very significant Caribbean intellectual presence. Who has written better about cricket since C.L.R. James?”**

Among Professor Seecharan's guests at the historic event in Trinidad will be his life-long friends from Palmyra, Dr. Tulsi Singh of Midland Texas and Dr. Puran Singh of Barbados, as well as Mr. Deryck Murray, the former West Indies wicket-keeper, Professor Brinsley Samaroo, Professor Bridget Brereton (both eminent historians), and prominent attorney, Seenath Jairam, SC, LLM.

# Featured History

## INDIAN MIGRATION TO THE CARIBBEAN

By Deo Gosine

**FROM 1838 TO 1917, MORE THAN HALF A MILLION INDIANS WERE TAKEN AS INDENTURED WORKERS FROM THE FORMER BRITISH RAJ OR BRITISH INDIA, TO 13 CARIBBEAN MAINLAND AND ISLAND NATIONS FOR SUGARCANE PLANTATION FOLLOWING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.** Attempts at

importing Portuguese, Chinese and others as indentured laborers had failed. Much like cotton, sugarcane plantations motivated large scale near enslavement and forced migrations in the 19th and early 20th century.

Following the emancipation of slaves in 1833 in the United Kingdom, many liberated Africans left their former masters. This created an economic chaos for British owners of sugar-cane plantations in the Caribbean region, and elsewhere. The hard work in hot, humid farms required a regular, docile and low-waged labour force. The British looked for cheap labour. Since slavery had

been abolished, the British crafted a new legal system of forced labour, which in many ways resembled enslavement. Instead of calling them slaves, they were called indentured labourers. Indians, primarily began to replace Africans previously brought as slaves, under this indentured labour scheme to serve on sugarcane plantations across the British empire.



### INDIAN ARRIVAL IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION

The first ships carrying indentured labourers for sugarcane plantations left India in 1838 for the Caribbean region. In fact, the first two shiploads of Indians arrived in British Guiana (now Guyana) on May 5, 1838 on board the *Whitby* and *Hesperus*. These ships had sailed from Calcutta. In the early decades of the sugarcane driven migrations, indentured Indians were treated as inhumanely as the enslaved Africans had been. They were confined to their estates and paid a pitiful salary. Any breach of contract brought automatic criminal penalties and imprisonment. Many of these were brought away from their homelands deceptively.

### THE VEILED PROMISES OF A BETTER LIFE & THE HARSH REALITY OF INDENTURED LABOR ABROAD

Many from inland regions over a thousand kilometers from seaports were promised jobs, were not told the work they were being hired for, or that they would leave their homeland and communities. They were hustled aboard the waiting ships, unprepared for the long and arduous four-month sea journey. Charles Anderson, a special magistrate investigating these sugarcane plantations, wrote to the British Colonial Secretary declaring that with few exceptions, the indentured labourers are treated with unjust severity; plantation owners enforced work in sugarcane farms so harshly, that the decaying remains of immigrants were frequently discovered in sugarcane fields. If labourers protested and refused to work, they were not paid or fed: they simply starved.

The sugarcane plantation-driven migrations led to ethnically significant presence of Indians in Caribbean. In some islands and countries, these Indo-Caribbean migrants now constitute a significant proportion of the population. Sugarcane plantations and citizens of Indian origin continue to thrive in countries such as Guyana, formerly British Guiana, Jamaica, Trinidad, Martinique, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Grenada, St Lucia, St Vincent, St Kitts, St Croix, Suriname and Nevis.



(Continued on next page)

**Featured History (Cont.)**



By some estimates, over 2.5 million people in the Caribbean are of Indian origin. Many have ethnically blended with migrants from other parts of the world, creating a unique syncretic culture.

Not just British colonies, sugarcane production affected human history in colonies controlled by other pre-World War II powers. France, for example, negotiated with Britain leading to Act XLVI of 1860, whereby large numbers of Indian indentured labourers were brought for harsh sugarcane plantation work in French colonies in the Caribbean region. The Caribbean colonies of the Netherlands too benefitted from the indentured laborers from India.

In recent years, attempts to commemorate the Indian presence and contributions have come to fruition: In 1995, Jamaica started to celebrate the arrival of Indians in Old Harbour Bay, St. Catherine Parish on May 13. In 2003, Martinique celebrated the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival. Guadeloupe did the same in 2004. These celebrations were not the fact of just the Indian minority, but the official recognition by the French and local authorities of their integration and their wide-scale contributions in various fields from Agriculture to Education, Politics and to the diversification of the culture of the Creole peoples. Thus, the noted participation of the whole multi-ethnic population of the two islands were in these events.

St. Lucia and many Caribbean countries have dedicated commemorative days to acknowledge the arrival and contributions of their Indo-Caribbean populations. St. Lucia celebrates its Indo-Caribbean heritage on May 6. Other dates when the India Arrival Day is celebrated in the Caribbean include May 5 (Guyana), May 10 (Jamaica), May 30 (Trinidad and Tobago), June 1 (St. Vincent), and June 5 (Suriname).

Destination Colony	Arrival Year	Language
Guyana (British Guiana)	1838	English
Trinidad	1845	English
Jamaica	1845	English
Martinique	1853	French
Guadeloupe	1854	French
Cayenne (French Guiana)	1854	French
Belize (British Honduras)	1857	English
Grenada	1857	English
St. Lucia	1859	English
St. Vincent	1861	English
St. Kitts (St. Christopher)	1861	English
St. Croix (Danish West Indies)	1863	English
Suriname (Dutch Guiana)	1873	Dutch
Nevis	1874	English



**DEO GOSINE**  
IS FOUNDER  
PRESIDENT OF  
LABIDCO PORT  
SERVICES IN  
TRINIDAD &  
TOBAGO; INDIAN  
D I A S P O R A  
COUNCIL COUNTRY

COORDINATOR, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO; FOUNDER OF INDO-CARIBBEAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO; CIVIC LEADER PHILANTHROPIST; ADVANCED ENGINEERING DEGREES IN USA; PAST PRESIDENT OF SOUTH ASIAN ENGINEERING SOCIETY OF USA.

# The Journey's End

## 100 YEARS SINCE END OF INDENTURESHIP

By Dr. Satish Rai

**ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, on March 20, 1917 the ABHORRENT INDIAN INDENTURE SYSTEM (now known as GIRMIT in many parts of the world) was LEGALLY ABOLISHED by the Legislative Assembly of colonial India. THE INDIAN INDENTURE SYSTEM FOLLOWED THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND TRANSPORT OF MILLIONS OF AFRICAN AND IRISH PEOPLE TO THE AMERICAS AND OTHER EUROPEAN COLONIES.**

From 1830s some 1.2 million Indians were transported mainly to French Reunion, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, South Africa, Suriname, Fiji, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. Today the descendants of these girmityas form some 12 million strong gimit diaspora or the colonial/sugar diaspora. Some Indians from Gujarat and Punjab later joined the girmityas in these colonies as free settlers.

For nearly 100 years the history had almost forgotten the gimit system of human labour transportation as well as the sacrifices, struggles and contributions of the global girmityas. Recently a small number of individuals from across the globe have been working hard to bring gimit history to the fore. In 2016, through the efforts of Dr Satish Rai and his colleagues in India (Mr Aslam Khan and Mr Chander Prakash), the Uttar Pradesh government in India included a gimit session in its inaugural Uttar Pradesh Pravasi Divas (UPPD). This session was chaired by Mr Ashook Ramsaran, the then President of Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO). The session was repeated during UPPD 2017. Soon after that Mr Ramsaran revived the Indian Diaspora Council of USA (IDCUSA) and launched a global project for Centennial Commemoration of the Indian indenture (Gimit) system. I was appointed the Chairman of Australian project. Since then Indian Diaspora Council of Australia (IDCA) was formed to organise Centennial Commemoration of the Indian indenture (Gimit) system in Sydney, as well as to undertake other gimit related work in Australia.

**As a part of the global project, IDCA has organised events for Centennial Commemoration of the Indian indenture (Gimit) system. Sydney events were held on Friday 17th March at the Bowman Hall (Blacktown) and on Saturday 18th March 2017 at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Center.**

Events throughout the Gimit diaspora are being held to mark 100th anniversary of abolition of Indian indenture (Gimit) system in 2017. Events have already been held in Fiji, Australia, Trinidad & Tobago, and two in Delhi, India. Further Global event will be held to mark 100th anniversary of abolition of Indian indenture system in Mauritius, Guyana, India, Holland and at the University of London, UK.

We hope these events and associated publicity and promotion of events will place the gimit history, struggles and legacies on the global map and generate much interest and creative work after the event to preserve the gimit history and legacies for future generations.

The Centennial Commemoration of the Indian indenture (Gimit) system was the starting point to highlight, educate and start a process to address the issues plaguing the Indo-Fijian communities in Australia and beyond. We recognize that



*The Journey's End (Cont.)*

Fiji has not taught in the schools or promoted the Fiji Gimit history for the last 100 years. One significant consequence of this deliberate or otherwise neglect is the descendants of the Fiji gimitiyas have little knowledge of gimit and the legacies of the gimitiyas. This has impacted on the descendants of the gimitiyas a negative ways, especially since their flight and fragmented post 1987 and 2000 racist coups. The first significant impact was loss of their gimit legacy and identity. Until 1987 they believed in Fiji and regarded Fiji as their homes and had Fijian identity. But the coups shattered their identity to the core and many are now lamenting and questioning their Fijian identity while trying to rediscover their identities in Australia or even in India, the homeland of their ancestors.

The second banished descendants of Fiji gimitiyas have little knowledge how their first banished and exiled ancestors succeeded in establishing a stable, cohesive and productive community for them and their children within a short period since the first gimitiyas landed in Fiji on 14th May 1879. The descendants of the Fiji gimitiyas living in NSW and in rest of Australia and in the Fijian diaspora has much to learn from the experiences of their gimitiya ancestors and the honourable legacy they have left behind.

After the successful commemoration of the 100th anniversary of abolition of Indian indenture (Gimit) system, the Indian Diaspora Council of Australia Inc. (IDCA) is now planning to establish a Gimit Heritage, Research, Retirement and Cultural Centre in Australia, preferably in NSW. The Gimit Heritage & Research Centre Projects aims to amend the historical amnesia that surrounds the Fiji and global gimit. The Gimit Heritage & Research Centre Projects wishes to ensure that Gimit, gimitiyas and the descendants of the gimitiyas are not consigned to the dustbin of history but become an integral part of the Australian social consciousness, similar to all the Australia historical events and memories.

#### **THE PROPOSED GIRMIT HERITAGE, RESEARCH, RETIREMENT AND CULTURAL CENTRE WISHES TO ACHIEVE THESE MAIN AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

1. Pay tribute to Fiji and global gimitiyas and recognise their pains, sacrifices and struggles during the indenture period and appreciate the legacy the gimitiyas have left behind for their descendants and all those who are touched by their enduring global legacies.
2. Promote the histories, struggles and legacies of Fiji and global gimitiyas among the present and future generations.
3. Research, preserve and promote the history, culture (including art forms) and languages that the gimitiyas brought to the colonies which they preserved and enriched over the 180 years since the first gimitiyas were transported from India.
4. Provide a space for the descendants of the gimitiyas, researchers, students and members of the public to experience life on a gimit farm. In order to achieve this the following structures/facilities are required:
  - Acquire a piece of land on which the Gimit Heritage, Research, Retirement and Cultural Centre will be established. The size of the land will depend upon finance and scale of the Centre.
  - Construct a building which will accommodate staff, a gimit museum, a gimit library and a gimit audio-visual studio.
  - Construct a gimit coolie lane of up to 8 coolie quarters in which the visitors will experience gimit living conditions.
  - Construct an outdoor gimit kitchen where the visitors will be able to experience gimit cooking experience and gimit food.
  - An open space for 'gimitiyas' to experience social life after work on farms. This will include music and dance once a week on Saturday night or Sunday day time.
  - Have a small sugarcane farm for the visitors to experience sugarcane farming.
  - A small vegetable farm.
  - An area for farm animals, chicken, ducks and so on.
  - Construct a Retirement Home
  - Construct a Nursing Home
  - Construct a Cultural Hall for cultural and social events.
  - Have courses and workshops.
  - Link the Fiji experience to the international gimit experience



IDCA HAS STARTED COLLABORATING WITH AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION TO CONDUCT NECESSARY RESEARCH WORK AND PREPARE A VIABLE PROJECT PROPOSAL. CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES HAS ALSO STARTED. ANYONE WISHING TO BE A PART OF THIS PROJECT AND IDCA SHOULD CONTACT DR SATISH RAI ON 0410 524 835 OR EMAIL: RAIVISIONFILM@GMAIL.COM.

# Natural Disasters

## DEVASTATION REACHES AROUND THE WORLD

By Ashook Ramsaran

RECENT NATURAL DISASTERS IN SOUTH ASIA, THE CARIBBEAN REGION AND USA IN THE FORM OF UNPRECEDENTED INTENSITIES OF SEQUENTIAL HURRICANES, FLOODS, EARTHQUAKES HAVE CAUSED UNTOLD WIDESPREAD DEVASTATION, DISRUPTION, PAIN AND ANGUISH, AND LOSS OF LIFE WITH LONG RECOVERY PERIOD AND

### LIFE CHANGING CONSEQUENCES.

From floods in Assam and Bangladesh, to earthquakes to Mexico, to sequential record breaking hurricanes and floods affecting islands of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Texas and Florida – there has been massive devastation and continuing efforts at recovery from these historic natural disasters. The sudden devastating impact on people's lives, property and way of life have been witnessed by the world as the news media provided up to date coverage of these natural disasters.

The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) and its global affiliates join with other organizations, agencies, groups, individuals and institutions worldwide in expressing sadness at the huge toll on humanity, loss of

life, tremendous loss of property and impact on livelihoods of millions affected by these natural disasters. IDC's global membership shares the pain and anguish of those affected and extend our best wishes, with prayers and good wishes for quick recovery from these disasters.

**Despite advance warnings due to technological advances in storm forecasting, the damage due to floods and sequential hurricanes were at historic levels.** Despite much

preparedness, the severity of the storms caused devastation and damage beyond expectations. By most predictions and analyses, it will take years for most of the affected areas to fully recover and with enormous assistance to do so.

IDC commends first responders, medical and evacuation services everywhere, including the many volunteers, for



*Flooding in Assam, India*  
Photo NDTV.com



*Flooding in Bangladesh*  
Photo: British Red Cross

**Natural Disasters (Cont.)**

their prompt, diligent and daring efforts to provide emergency services to affected individuals and their families. We fully support all measures taken to bring quick relief to those affected and to instill confidence to those in need. We are very confident that the resilience and courage of people affected, supported by those who can, will help them endure these natural disasters and rebuild their lives and livelihoods.



IDC urges compassion and support on an urgent basis by governments, relief agencies, organizations and individuals to relieve the widespread suffering, urgent need for water, food, electricity, communications, as well as impending health problems due to flooding devastation on such a historic scale. The needs are enormous and we urge urgent donations through reputable and recognized relief organizations.

**Hurricane damage in St. Maarten**

Photo, left: The New Yorker

**Hurricane damage in Texas, USA**

Photo, below: The Inquisitr



**Hurricane damage in Puerto Rico**

Photo, below: The Sun



**Earthquake damage in Mexico**

Photo: NBC News



**Hurricane flooding in Florida, USA**

Photo: Climate and Society

# Natural Disasters

## AWAKENING DIASPORIC STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

In light of the recent natural disasters affecting the Caribbean, IDC members reached out to those affected, awakening strength and reflection.

**“If Life taught us anything, it is to survive under tough conditions and be resilient. I am a tough country boy—Guyanese—so we will manage, though with difficulties.”**

—OSCAR RAMJEET

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**“A true Guyana country boy who believes in the foundational principles of human tenacity to tackle adversities with courage and conviction.**

**Reminds me of Peter Jailall’s poem:**

**‘Cullie man barn fu wok.’**

**No work or challenge can deter a committed man’s determination to succeed in his mission.” —CLIFF RAJKUMAR**

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***“...reminds me of our forefathers who also weathered the storms and braved many hardships to build a new and better life for their families.” —CLIFF RAJKUMAR***

# Community Work

REPORT BY DR. SHARLA MADHO-KHARGI

## EVALUATIVE CASE STUDY OF CAREGIVER SUPPORT & ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN GUYANA

**AFTER 28 YEARS, I FINALLY RETURNED TO GUYANA** to fulfill one of my life-long dreams: advocating for and providing support to my homeland's disabled population. This is the report of my findings:

**DAY 1: My trip began at the Community Based Rehabilitation Program (CBR) in Port Mourant, Berbice, gathering data and conducting assessments to understand and help parents of disabled people.** Mark Adams, program officer for the CBR program, set up the visit, made introductions to teachers and administrators, as well as parents who currently participate in the program. I immediately began administering surveys to parents, teachers, and administrators followed by parent-training skills classes, which included American sign language. Parents and teachers were extremely receptive and thankful. They reported feeling relief after the training sessions as it helped them understand their children better.

**DAY 2: Next, I visited the Sorsha Williams Foundation in Georgetown, Guyana, a program owned and facilitated by Ms. Karen Williams—an amazing human being who makes all efforts to meet the needs of parents of disabled children.** This program serves children with special needs and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Parents who participate in this program were very receptive to the skills training sessions and were also very thankful for help. I then did an interview with the Guyana Times newspaper and a television interview via the "Coast to Coast" program, facilitated and hosted by Mr. Nazim Hussain, National Coordinating Director of Caribbean Voice. Both interviews were helpful to raise awareness and create advocacy for the disabled population.

**DAY 3: I had a successful meeting with Hon. Volda Lawrence, Minister of Public Health. The meeting was facilitated by Indian Diaspora Council President, Mr. Ashook Ramsaran.** Min. Lawrence and her staff were welcoming and respectful of the objectives of my trip. They were kind enough to listen to my assessment of the CBR program and offered to help with the project by putting me in contact with the staff of the Disability Council in Guyana. On the same day, I reviewed the Ptolemy Reid Program, also in Georgetown, which serves children with disabilities. **The staff at the Ptolemy Reid program were hungry for knowledge and resources to better help them to serve the disabled population.**

**DAYS 4-5: I followed up with more training sessions at the CBR program and conducted one-to-one house visits with families of disabled children—making a profound impact on me and reminding me of the extent of work that needs to be done to improve the disabled population in Guyana.**

My observations and interactions with families, programs, teachers, and administrators provided an in-depth understanding of the real-life condition of these facilities. **There was no running water and barely functional furniture. I was even more disturbed at the limited resources available to the disabled population. It was appalling that teachers at the CBR program use beer bottle caps as counting tools, and outdated and inappropriate books that do not address the appropriate cognitive level of the students. Despite all these conditions, the teachers worked diligently with what was available to provide an education to their students. All of these programs are in dire need of education, awareness, nurture, advocacy, and resources to support and sustain appropriate care for the disabled population.**

### My Conclusions:

- Parents are unaware of the amendments that were put in place by the 2006 Convention on the Rights for People with Disabilities.
- The needs of the disabled population are minimized.
- Parents of disabled people are in need of education, advocacy and resources to understand and help their disabled children.
- The CBR program is in need of school supplies, furniture and additional educations resources to continue to teach the students of the program.
- The CBR program needs to be restructured to appropriately serve the needs of disabled children as well as their parents.

### Proposed Future Plans & Actions:

- Rebuild and restructure the CBR program.
- Provide resources to maintain the CBR program.
- Provide consistent and ongoing skills training to parents of disabled children.
- Provide and train professionals to sustain the growth of the CBR program.

My next steps are to put the appropriate resources in place to support, rebuild, restructure as well as sustain the CBR program to fit the needs of parents with disabled children.

# Events Calendar

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*October 15 2017 - Paris, France*

**IDC INTERNATIONAL IN COLLABORATION WITH  
IDC FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES**

**4:00PM:** Interactive Dialogue: Issues & Concerns of PIOs in Francophone Countries

**6:00PM:** Gala Dinner & Recognition of Indian Diaspora High Achievers

**VENUE:** Hotel Intercontinental Le Grand Paris Opera

**CONTACT:** kponaman@gmail.com (Prof. Krishna Ponaman)

*November 3, 2017 - New York, USA*

**IDC'S CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY UPON 100TH  
ANNIVERSARY OF INDENTURESHIP'S END**

**6:00pm:** Celebrating the diversity, strength and influence of the Indian Diaspora

**VENUE:** Indian Consulate, New York, USA

**CONTACT:** 4harbachan@gmail.com  
(Harbachan Singh Esq.)

*March 4, 2018 - New York, USA*

**C. B. JAGAN CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION  
2018: A CENTENNIAL TRIBUTE TO THE LATE  
DR. CHEDDI B. JAGAN, COMMEMORATING HIS  
LIFE, LEGACY, & INFLUENCE ON THE PEOPLE OF  
GUYANA, THE CARIBBEAN AND GLOBALLY**

**10:00am:** Conference & Interactive Dialogue

**6:00pm:** Gala Dinner & Recognition of PIO Stalwarts

**VENUE:** York College, City University of New York

**CONTACT:** ashookramsaran@gmail.com (Ashook  
Ramsaran)

*March 17-20, 2018 -  
Durban, South Africa*

**IDC INTERNATIONAL IN COLLABORATION WITH  
IDC AFFILIATES AND CHAPTERS WORLDWIDE:  
INDIAN DIASPORA WORLD CONVENTION 2018**

**VENUE:** Durban, South Africa

**CONTACT:** Info@IndianDiasporaCouncil.org

*March 22, 2018 - University of Guyana,*

**COMMEMORATION OF CENTENNIAL OF THE  
BIRTH OF LATE PRESIDENT CHEDDI JAGAN**

**VENUE:** University of Guyana, Turkeyen, Guyana

**CONTACT:** Info@IndianDiasporaCouncil.org

*June 19-23 018 - Paramaribo, Suriname*

**CONFERENCE ON SLAVERY, INDENTURED  
LABOUR, MIGRATION, DIASPORA AND  
IDENTITY FORMATION**

**ORGANIZED BY ANTON DE KOM UNIVERSITY  
OF SURINAME, SUPPORTED BY NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES SURINAME (NAS), AND DIRECTORATE  
OF CULTURE, ET AL.**

**VENUE:** University of Suriname, Paramaribo, Suriname

**CONTACT:** mauritshassan@yahoo.com  
(Prof. Maurits S. Hassankhan)

# IDC on the Go

## EVENTS, MOUs, RESOLUTIONS & PROCLAMATIONS

### EVENTS & PARTICIPATION

- **IDC Gandhi Community Empowerment Conference 2016** – QUEENS COLLEGE, NEW YORK, USA. (OCTOBER, 23, 2016). <http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/press/Gandhi-Community-Empowerment-Conference%20-2016.pdf>
- **IDC Launch of Centennial of Abolition of Indian Indentureship** – NEW YORK, USA. (MARCH 3, 2017) <http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/news.php>
- **IDC Initiated Indian Diaspora World Convention 2017** – TRINIDAD & TOBAGO. (MARCH 17-20, 2017) <http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/pdf/IDW-Convention-2017-Resounding-Success.pdf>
- **IDC Evaluative Case Study of Caregiver Support & Advocacy for Children with Disabilities in Guyana** BY DR. SHARLA MADHO-KHARGI. (MAY 17-24, 2017) <http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/news.php>
- **IDC Reunion Island Conference on "L'ENGAGISME A-T-IL ETE UN CRIME CONTRE L'HUMANITE"** ("Is ENGAGISM A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY?"). (JUNE 30, 2017) <http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/news.php>
- **Indian Consul General Amb. Riva Das presented with NYS Resolution on 100th Anniversary of Abolition of Indian Indentureship.** (JULY 19, 2017) <http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/news.php>
- **IDC Participation in Session: New York State Lt. Governor Hochul meets South Asian Community.** (AUGUST 28, 2017) <http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/news.php>
- **IDC so-sponsor of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) Rally** – RICHMOND HILL, NEW YORK, USA. (SEPTEMBER 16, 2017)

### MOUs & AGREEMENTS

- The Vihar Foundation (VF)
- Indo-American Global Chamber of Commerce (IAGCC)
- Richmond Hill Economic Development Corp (RHDEC)
- Antar Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad (ARSP)
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)

<http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/mou.php>

### RESOLUTIONS & PROCLAMATIONS

**Resolution:** New York State Legislature A-701

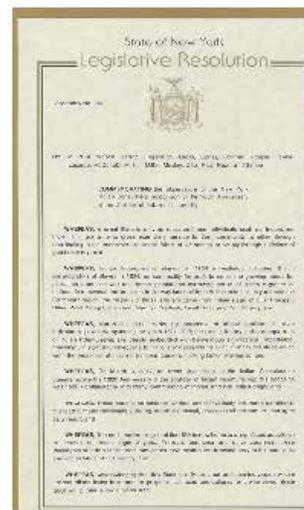
**Proclamation:** New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo

**Proclamation:** New York State Assembly Member David Weprin

**Proclamation:** New York State Assembly Members Nily Rozic

**Resolutions:** Adopted on 19 March, 2017 at Indian Diaspora World Convention 2017

<http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/resolution.php>



## **IDC PRESS STATEMENTS**

- In Remembrance on the 16th Anniversary of World Trade Center Attacks
- IDC Congratulates India on its 70th Anniversary of Independence
- Emancipation Day 2017 – Commemoration of 1834 Abolition of Slavery in British Colonies
- New York State Lt. Governor Hochul meets South Asian Community
- SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME FOR DIASPORA CHILDREN [SPDC]
- Know India Programme for Young Overseas Indians
- Indian Consul General Amb. Riva Das presented with NYS Resolution on 100th Anniversary of Abolition of Indian Indentureship - July 19, 2017
- Oscar Ramjeet appointed as IDC's Director, Legal Affairs Committee
- Evaluative Case Study of Caregiver Support & Advocacy for Children with Disabilities in Guyana
- IDC Congratulates newly elected PIO Members of National Assembly of France
- Congratulations to Hon. Leo Varadkhar, Ireland's new Prime Minister
- IDC Supports Proposal to help eligible New Yorkers become US citizens
- Commemoration of Indian Arrival Day in St Vincent & Grenadines
- Commemoration of Indian Arrival Day 2017 in Trinidad & Tobago
- Memorial Day 2017 in United States of America
- Commemoration of Indian Arrival Day 2017 in Guyana
- Government of Grenada Officially Declares 1st May as Indian Arrival Day
- IDC in Solidarity with Earth Day
- Congratulations to H. R. Shah, recipient of Padma Shri Award 2017
- Indian Diaspora Council Celebrates Passage of New York State Excelsior Scholarship Program
- Commemoration of the Centennial of Abolition of Indian Indenturedship
- Mass Killings in Orlando June 12, 2016
- IDC Discusses Indentureship Centennial with OIA Sec. D. Mulay
- IDC Mourns the Passing of Philanthropist George Subraj
- IDC Mourns the Passing of E. R. Braithwaite
- IDC Marks 11th Anniversary of Caribbean American Heritage Month 2017

**See more:**

<http://indiandiasporacouncil.org/media.php>

## **NEWEST LIFE MEMBER**

**Name:** Imran McSood Amjad

**Country of Birth:** Guyana

**Residence:** St. Maarten

**Position:** Founder

**Company:** NAGICO Group of Companies (founded 1982)

**Other:** Chairman/Shareholder

– Marshall Motors N.V. (dba "Motorworld"); Chairman/Shareholder – Diamond Management N.V (dba "Caribbean Auto")

**Interests:** Cricket, movies, music, Caribbean issues



### **Mr. Imran McSood Amjad has joined the ranks of IDC life members.**

**Road to success:** He left Guyana in 1982 to manage a start-up company, NAGICO insurances, in St. Maarten with USD\$75,000 in paid-in capital. He also operates an auto rental company with a fleet of 1,000 cars; the largest in St. Maarten. The Auto Group has accounted for 50% of all new car sales in St. Maarten/St. Martin for several years now.

He opened a Motorworld showroom in 2017 (one of, if not the largest, showrooms in the Caribbean), and served as Director of the St. Maarten Government Economic Development Corporation (EDC), which was instrumental in the construction of the Boardwalk that stretches the entire beach area of downtown Philipsburg, St. Maarten.

Mr. Amjad is also Mr. Cricket on his island, was the founder and first President of the Cricket Association, and was on the forefront of promoting cricket in the Leeward Islands. NAGICO donated thousands of dollars in sponsoring regional, first-class cricket. He was recognized by the Dutch for his sterling contribution to the island and was awarded the prestigious Order of Orange Nassau (Member) in April 2015; and the Pelican Award from the University of St. Maarten. He was awarded Who's Who in the World Citation, and was named Man of the Year - St Maarten in 2007. He also promotes Indian and Guyanese culture.

IDC International president Ashook Ramsaran stated that, "We place high value in your position as a pioneering entrepreneur in the Caribbean region. We are appreciative of your interest and commitment to IDC and we welcome your membership in IDC. We look forward to your participation and support of IDC's events and activities, locally, regionally and at the international levels as IDC continues its efforts to expand in its outreach to connect persons of Indian origin globally."

# Current Issues

## OVERSEAS CITIZEN OF INDIA (OCI) CARD

Traditionally, when it comes to Indians (people of Indian origin) living across the world, the Government of India has two definitions entitled for them—Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) and Person of Indian

Origin (PIO). In 2002, the PIO scheme was launched as a means to offer citizenship benefits to people of Indian origin who also possess foreign nationalities, in line with the benefits enjoyed by the common Indian populace. Correspondingly, in 2006, another scheme with the title Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) was launched that offered more benefits to said Indian-origin foreign citizens as compared to PIO. Finally, in 2015, the Indian Government merged both the PIO and OCI schemes to form one streamlined option that serves as the Government's outreach to Indian origin people with foreign citizenship.



## PIO to OCI? The Obstacles are in the Cards

By George Joseph

Though Ashook Ramsaran, former president of the Global Organization of Persons of Indian Origin (GOPIO) was a recipient of the Pravasi Samman, the highest honor given a member of the diaspora, he never received a Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card.

And when the PIO program is merged with the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Card on June 30, he will not get that card either - like millions of others.

The problem is that many card-seekers such as him have no record to show that their forefa-

thers came from India.

"I am a fourth-generation PIO," he said. "But I have no official proof that my great-grandfather or great-grandmother was born in India except one line in a register kept in Guyana. It was not acceptable to issue a PIO card, although the government recognized me with the Pravasi Samman award and the state of Uttar Pradesh gave me the UP Ratna Award."

Ramsaran, who moved to the U.S. in 1968, believes a merger will adversely affect almost 8 million PIOs in Malaysia, South Africa, Mauritius, Reunion Island, Guyana, Trinidad,



Suriname, Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Belize. Most have no records to show their Indian connection.

The government has come out with a way to accept alternate documentation. It is being tested

in Mauritius.

Unlike the PIO card, the OCI card grants a life-long visa and allows the cardholder to stay in India without registering with police. A person who registered as OCI for five years and is residing in India for one year out of the five is eligible to apply for Indian citizenship, while PIOs have no such option.

"When the PIO and OCI cards are merged, those whose forefa-

thers migrated four to five generations ago may not be qualified under OCI, though they are qualified to get a PIO card. That is a big concern," said Thomas Abraham, founder and president of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin.

But Jeevan Zutshi, a community activist based in California, welcomed the merger. He said it will benefit more people in the diaspora. Visit [www.in.ckgs.us](http://www.in.ckgs.us) to apply to convert the PIO card to OCI card.

The merger will adversely affect almost 8 million PIOs

### APPLICATION FOR PIO CARD DENIED

DEAR IDC,

My name is Brian Ramphal. I was born in Guyana (formerly British Guiana) and a 4th generation Guyanese Indian. I'm a technology entrepreneur within extensive experience working in India. From the past 30 years, I have resided in United States of America. Over the past 20 years, I have traveled to India and wanted to reconnect with my great grandparents' birth country and my heritage. A colleague introduced me to India's PIO program.

(Continued on next page)

In 2011, I traveled to Guyana to research my family history and official documents needed to apply for India's PIO card. I visited Guyana national archives, courts, foreign affairs Ministry and the India embassy in Guyana and obtained the readily available documents such as my great grandmother's name and British ship registration number, my short form birth certificate, father and mothers' information, legal names, Guyana IDs, passport, and other related documents to fulfill India's PIO.

After 10 days in Guyana, and the assurances of the India embassy in Guyana that I had the necessary information to apply and will be granted India's PIO card, the Indian High Commission in Guyana informed me that I must apply for India's PIO card in the country where I currently reside. In this case, I must apply for India's PIO card in United States of America.

I returned to the USA with the assurance from the Indian High Commission in Guyana that I will be granted India's PIO card from the USA. I was excited and applied immediately. The Indian government contracted with an outsourced company to process the PIO Application. Living in California required me to send my PIO documents and application to the San Francisco processing center. I paid my fee and Express Mailed a 4-inch stack of documents.

### **AFTER ALL THE TRAVEL, RESEARCH & FEES, MY PIO APPLICATION WAS REJECTED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

1. I do not have my great grandparents' India issue documents (passport, birth certificate);
2. Parents' documents of being Indian; &
3. My documentation of being Indian.

**THE BRITISH STARTED INDIAN INDENTURED SERVITUDE** and transported hundreds of thousands Indian labourers to British Guiana (Guyana) starting in 1838. No former records were kept for most Guyanese Indians. Yet, we are required to prove we are Indians. All around the world, we are identified as Indians **YET INDIA HAS SET THE BAR SO HIGH THAT NONE OF US CAN EASILY PROVE OUR INDIAN HERITAGE. SO SAD!**

Sincerely,

*Brian Ramphal*  
Chairman  
Mango Solutions Ilc.  
San Diego, California

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### **ACCESSIBILITY TO OCI CARDS BY FRANCOPHONE PIOS**

There is an urgent need for petition to the Government of India for OCI cards for those in Francophone territories and France who cannot prove linkage to India with archival documents. Due to lack of records in Francophone countries showing heritage to India by most of the descendants of Indian indentured labourers, the petition is for the Government of India to accept verifiable and authenticated alternate documentation as evidence of Indian heritage to qualify for OCI cards.

"The Indian government wants the PIOs to furnish documents that prove the Indian origin of their ancestors. This is especially difficult for the PIOs living in Reunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique as all the archives of records and data have been destroyed in natural catastrophes like volcanic eruptions, floods and fires. This has left the diaspora in a lurch as almost none of them have been able to provide these documents...The Francophone Indian diaspora counts nearly 1.2 million and, of this, nearly 500,000 live in overseas French territories (former French colonies) in the Indian Ocean as well as the Caribbean. The Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean and neighbouring French territories like Mayotte and Comores account for over 400,000 PIOs, while the Caribbean French territories like Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana account for about 100,000 PIOs...Most of these people are descendants of the indentured workers taken by the French in the mid-19th century to work on sugar plantations, replacing the slaves after the abolition of slavery." (*Indian Sun article on January 20, 2014*)

Jean Regis Ramsamy, President, IDC Reunion Island stated, "Mainly we aim to have more information and ease for our people to get their PIO cards. The Indian government has made some moves and made it easier to an extent as now the fourth generation is allowed a PIO card. But this is not enough for us as in our island we have PIOs stretching six or seven generations." **IDC has agreed to take up this matter in collaboration with IDC affiliates in France, Reunion Island, Guadeloupe and Mauritius. Francophone territories impacted include: France, Reunion Island, Guadeloupe, Seychelles, Martinique, French Guiana and others.**

# Glimpses of IDC

## PHOTOS OF RECENT EVENTS



# Arts & Media

## EXCERPTS OF POETRY BY JANET NAIDU

### Pardesi

We were on another boat, returning  
to quench this thirst, utterly alone.

Always a *pardesi*<sup>1</sup>  
in speechless contemplation.

A bird charted its music between us,  
like a satellite in cosmic range.

A man counted coins in his corner,  
as if gold measured his reason for leaving.  
Ahh, the length and breath of his contract  
provided sustenance for awhile.

The granite pace of cloud  
made my body ache.  
I yearn for the spring of liberation  
to be near *Durga*<sup>2</sup>.

Again we are on the turbulent sea  
returning, breath and life  
to retrace sacred rituals  
to reinvigorate with mother earth.  
Will there be a familiar being  
to open the gate? ...

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Traveler

<sup>2</sup> Hindu Goddess

### Destination

...Ponderous now. Will someone tell me  
where the voyage ends? How will I know?

This new appendage begins  
like weeds on the seashore.  
We know the hardening would come  
in a lurking storm ready  
to withstand strikes in the fields.

Creek water drives home  
the rock like a compass.  
I see the old cutlass firmly planted  
in this land, its sharpened edge  
ready for new marks.

I join you now *oh baabula hamaar*<sup>3</sup>  
revered, visible along creek water,  
to march in the heat of our own ship,  
to chart our own course

in this bloody sea of revolution.

<sup>3</sup> Oh my respected father

© Janet Naidu Published in the poetry collection, "Rainwater" (2005)

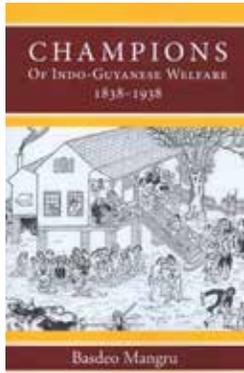
**JANET NAIDU** is a writer, poet, educator and author of three collections of poems *Winged Heart* (1999), *Rainwater* (2005) and *Sacred Silence* (2009). *Winged Heart* was short-listed for the Guyana Prize for Literature,



Poetry category, in 2000. All three collections contain poems that offer poignant experiences of Guyana, distant places, as well as migration and survival in Canada. Some themes include colonial confinement, struggle and longing, cultural identity, and the role of women in the world. Her writings also include "Indian Women of Guyana," "Transculturation of Hinduism in the Caribbean," short stories, and biographies of elderly Guyanese in Toronto. Janet Naidu earned a BA in Political Science and Caribbean Studies at the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Law (LLB) at the University of London (UK). She has made her career in a leadership capacity, promoting policies and educational programs to foster the value of human rights, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. Janet was born in Covent Garden, East Bank Demerara, Guyana and migrated to Canada in 1975. In 2005, she founded the Pakaraima Writers' Association in Toronto.

# Books & Films

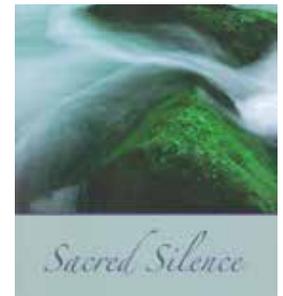
## PIO AUTHORS & FILMMAKERS



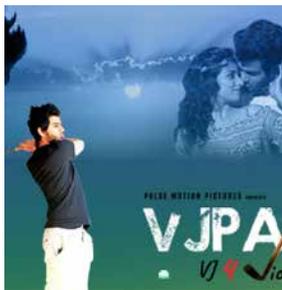
**Champions of Indo-Guyanese Welfare 1838-1938**  
DR BASDEO MANGRU

This book captures succinctly the valiant, sustained efforts of concerned officials and others to unearth, expose and ameliorate the servile working conditions of Guyanese sugar workers. It assesses the self-liberating activities of indentured workers, including Indian women, to free themselves from an exploitive system designed to control t and reduce them to a state of helplessness and dependence as in slavery.

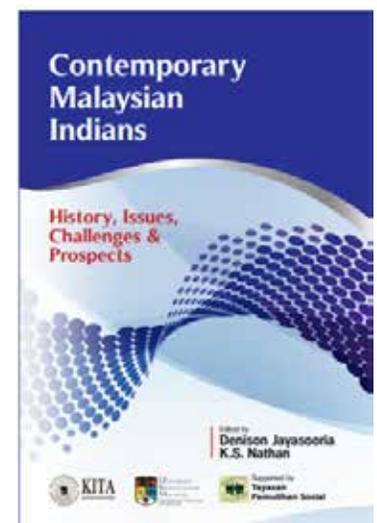
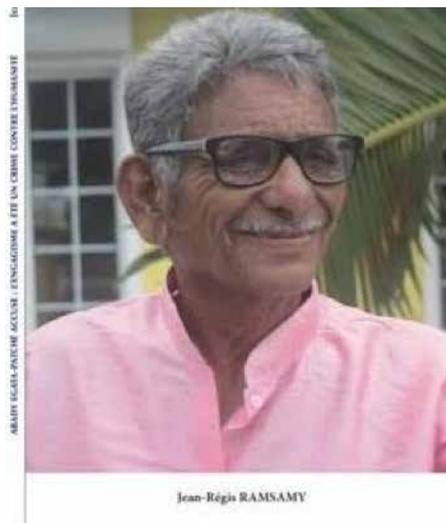
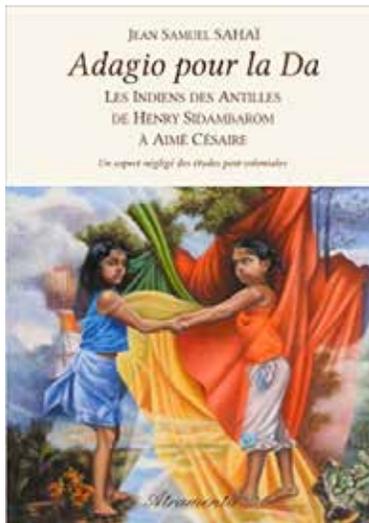
**Sacred Silence (2009)**  
JANET NAIDU



Sacred Silence traces past and present in one's journey, exploring the mysteries of love, despair and endurance, attachment and departure, longing and fulfillment. The poems are situated within the scent of the rainforest of Guyana and the delicate snows of Canada, reflecting universal themes with a meditative appeal.



**Raivision Academy of Film** is Sydney, (Australia) film, TV, music creation and e-publishing enterprise that has been operating successfully since 1998. It has produced 11 films 150 TV programs, original Bollywood songs & published books on AmazonKindle. Dr Satish Rai is Sydney based academic, film/tv producer, journalist and community development worker. He was born in Fiji where he received his primary education.



# Letters to the Editor

## WORDS FROM THE DIASPORA

This IDC Journal will, no doubt, go a long way to create a forum where the Diaspora can communicate and publish relevant news and events that are of interest. It will allow us to create awareness of current and historic events of a people who have forged a unique identity born out of a common heritage; i.e., the GIRMIT system.

It is self-evident that the descendants of this abhorrent system are now a proud and progressive people who have been cultured and conditioned by adversities to be responsible, law abiding, and inclusive in their outlook on life with compassion and care for all of humanity and, for that matter, the world.

—CLIFF RAJKUMAR, PRESIDENT,  
IDC, CANADA

Greetings from Paris.

We were thinking with Ashook to do also a French version of this IDC Newsletter, because many IDC readers are also in French colonies and not all of them read English language. For example in Reunion Island, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Mayotte, etc. Very few people of Francophone persons will read in English.

Let us start with a first shot as decided in English and then I will help technically to see how we can insert a "URL Link" or "French Flag Icon" which will redirect the readers to the French version of the Newsletter.

You are doing a very nice job, carry on... We'll help to attain more readers of the IDC Journal around the world.

—RAGINA ARASEN, EDITOR, FRANCE

I am extremely proud of the collaborative efforts that have been made to put this journal forward. I look forward to the progression of our people's intelligence and resilience and join with each of you to pay it forward.

—SHARLA MADHO-KHARGI  
IDC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY-BASED  
REHABILITATION

The renaming to "IDC Journal" is an excellent idea. I also suggest we include a sub section "opinions/letters" where members can make suggestions. The editors will however have to be careful and not overburden the publication with issues that are not important.

—OSCAR RAMJEET, DIRECTOR,  
LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, IDC INT'L

We take much pride in the publication of IDC Journal on the 20th anniversary of the founding of IDC to engage, embrace, and enhance the worldwide Indian Diaspora community. The IDC Journal news and editorial teams are dedicated persons with the shared interest to make a difference.

We encourage readers' feedback, comments and suggestions so that IDC Journal can be more responsive to current, critical issues, as well as be more effecting in advancing the interests and issues of the Indian Diaspora—as well as providing valuable input to IDC for further engagement and improving IDC service to the global Indian community.

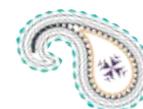
Thanks to the news and editorial teams and congratulations and best wishes for continuing success of IDC Journal.

—ASHOOK RAMSARAN, PRESIDENT,  
IDC INTERNATIONAL

Dear Editor,

May I suggest also a graphic, like a world map (simple graphic) with ID countries highlighted, plus link from each to an item of either or: news/story. A feature that might be worth considering is: ID of each main country or area ex: Europe -very brief outline of how they got to that country -where/when they came and where they got to today. This piece could be spread over several issues of the newsletter, or condensed into one.

—VIDUR DINDAYAL, IDC JOURNAL  
CONTRIBUTOR, UK



**Letters to the Editor (Cont.)**

Hearty Congratulations to Ashook Ramsaran, the founder of the Indian Diaspora Council International, under whose hard work, untiring efforts and watch, this organization has flourished and grown to such a grand-scale establishment with widespread, intricate communications links that webs the assemblage of various valuable articles of our ancient art and heritage depicting some of the depressing and degrading conditions and treatment meted out by the overlords to the Indians—many of whom were shipped out as indentured labor.

One may argue that these GIRMIT personnel became de facto “sons of the soil” of the lands they toiled, inasmuch as their sweat and blood enriched the virgin land they tilled sometimes with their bare hands. Unlike volunteers, such as tourists, explorers, businessmen or immigrants who came here to improve their self-bid and social status, the indentured laborers were brought there, then treated harshly and subjected to severe physical pain and suffering due to overwork, malnutrition, fatigue and exposure to overheated climatic conditions. Moreover, in many instances, the soil they worked on was untouched and laden with huge rocks and arid land that often lacked water resources nearby. Even where nothing would grow in some areas, the overlords would nevertheless demand of the labor to miraculously make things grow.

Their history and contributions must be preserved for posterity and to remind some of the new immigrants turned citizens who are quick to talk of immigrants in disparaging terms or rudely want to throwback some new immigrants such as those that come to USA recently under the DACA program.

Happily, IDC has an ambitious program going forward supported by a strong cadre of highly qualified professionals and researchers. These inspired and committed officers and members are diligently working on a variety of fields of human activity to address all the possible needs of diaspora. They have rolled up their sleeves and are already digging at the trenches. So please join in the march.

**—HARBACHAN SINGH, DIRECTOR,  
DIASPORA OUTREACH, IDC INTERNATIONAL**

I really applaud the idea of Vidur (Dindyal). That would encourage inclusiveness, create purposeful linkages and enhance our historic existence.

**—SYLVIA GILHARRY PEREZ,  
PRESIDENT, IDC, BELIZE**



On occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Indian Diaspora Council, I congratulate Shri Ashook Ramsaran for creating a global platform for the benefit of the Old/Plantation/Girmit Indian Diaspora. This diaspora forms the largest component of the Indian diaspora. I believe that this diaspora has been neglected by the Indian diaspora organisations for many years. Ashook and his team across the globe will surely make amends to this significant commission and I feel confident that now the voices of the approximately 15 million plantation diaspora will also be heard in the Indian diaspora as well as in India. On behalf of the Indian Diaspora Council of Australia Inc. I congratulate the Chief Editors of the first Indian Diaspora Journal for publishing the first issue for its global readership.

**—SATISH RAI, PRESIDENT, IDC AUSTRALIA**

I like the inclusion of the Events Calendar to include a global calendar for the following reasons:

1. It portrays the association as a world family with international reach
2. It encourages international team-building and networking because if I am in Guyana or Florida and have prior knowledge of a meeting I will attend thereby fostering a closer connectivity
3. It help build a closer network and affinity

In addition the newsletter should show association/meetings/events at work which can include photos of past month or quarter meeting, which will also add faces to the names.

The PIO of the Month in each issue is good and should also highlight persons/organizations that have helped our association achieve its goals. E-newsletter can be very helpful to grow the organization, and careful planning and branding are very important for longevity.

**—DEO GOSINE, PRESIDENT, IDC  
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**

For the IDC News Journal 20th Anniversary September Issue:

A birthday is important to mark how strong the publication is. In Indian Ocean it's much more useful because we don't have such a publication. IDC Journal news is also this platform to share views in our fighting for recognition among the Indian Diaspora over the world. Long life to IDC Journal News.

**—RAMSAMY JEAN-REGIS,  
PRESIDENT, IDC REUNION ISLAND**



## Letters to the Editor (Cont.)

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The Indian Diaspora torch has been blazing for the last two decades and getting stronger. Thanks to hard work and dedication of the IDC today the world knows a lot more about the descendants of indentured Indians in mostly forgotten places like the small islands of the Caribbean.

Congrats and best wishes for the future,

**–DR. ARNOLD THOMAS, IDC  
PRESIDENT, ST. VINCENT & GRENADINE**

Congratulations to Ashook and the IDC on the commemoration of the landmark 20th anniversary of IDC. Ashook has dedicated his time to the preservation of our Indian culture and heritage, the advancement of Indian diaspora issues and people and to the education of the world on Indian Diaspora awareness. He has been a mentor and motivator to me and to so many others to follow his lead to greater awareness, participation and contribution in the Indian Diaspora movement. His passion, dedication and commitment is an inspiration to all. The Grenada Chapter of the Indian Diaspora Council congratulates Ashook Ramsaran and the Indian Diaspora Council and pledges our continued support as we collaborate to share heritage, aspirations and interests.

Kind regards,

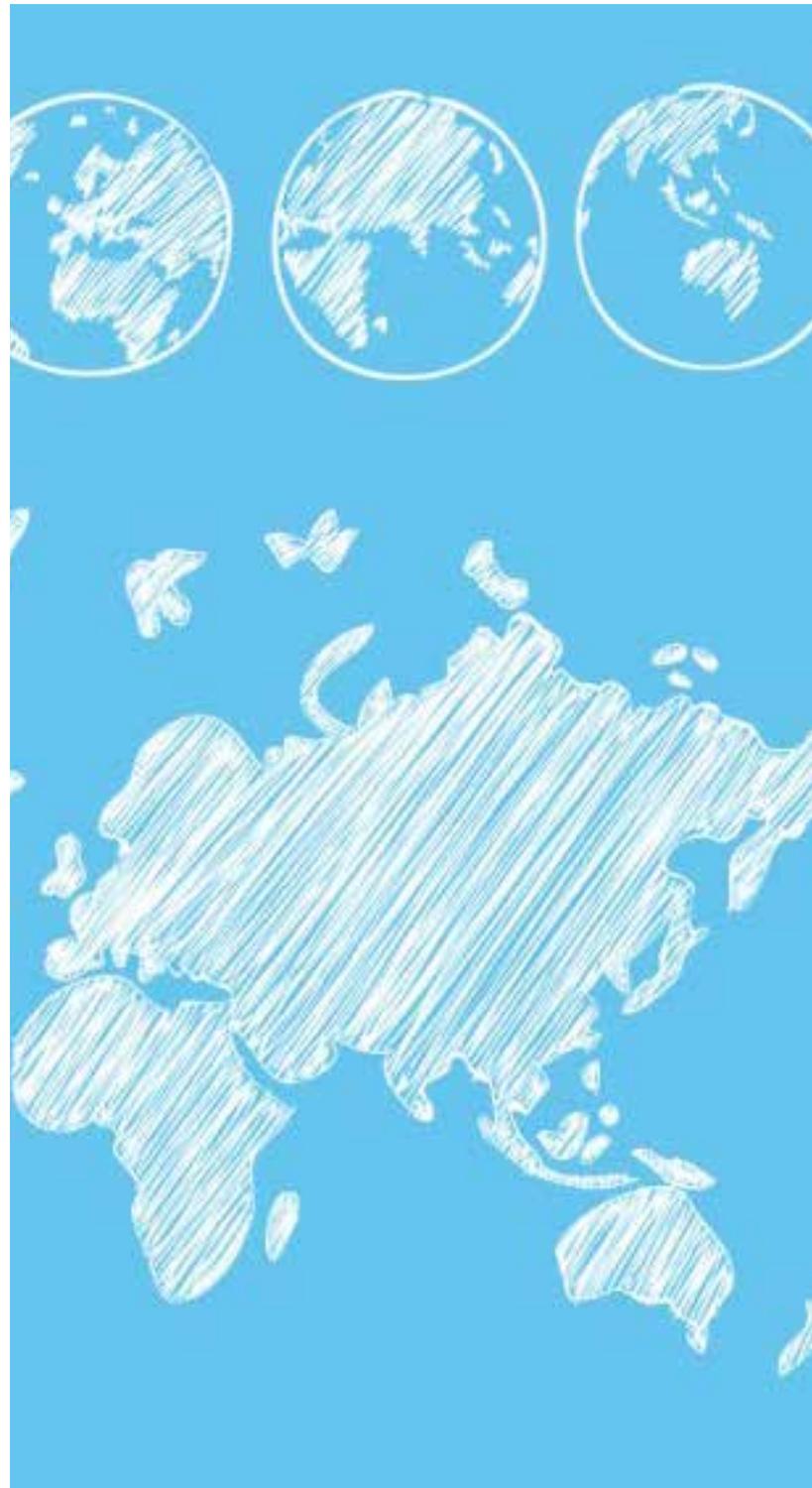
**–SHADEL NYACK COMPTON  
PRESIDENT, IDC GRENADA**

Indian Diaspora Council (IDC) has been the true representative of Indian people around the globe for the past two decades. IDC stands for our shared values, that India has cultivated over the centuries and which are still practiced by the Indian Diaspora all over the world. IDC's decision to start a News Journal is the need of the hour and a welcome step in order to update all members of our Diaspora with regard to the activities, contributions and concerns that affect all of us. IDC's News Journal will surely provide a key resource through which we can strengthen the connections between us and uphold our shared values in the new global scenario.

My best wishes to the Editorial team and I'm confident that IDC's current president Mr. Ashook Ramsaran will provide excellent guidance and leadership in this key endeavor.

Sincerely,

**–PROF. GHAN SHYAM  
BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY, INDIA  
& IDC DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC &  
CULTURAL OUTREACH**



# Ode to President!

## GRATITUDE TO A HUMBLE LEADER

*Surprise thanks to...*

**Mr. Ashook Ramsaran**

**DEDICATED \* SELFLESS \* FRIEND & LEADER**



Using Gandhi words..In a gentle way Sir you shake the world. You are a true leader and mentor. Thank you for your endless efforts in teaching and honoring the strength that is truly ours.

—**DR. SHARLA MADHO-KHARGI**

I first met Mr Ramsarran at the EU/India Chamber of Commerce meeting in Brussels in 2006, and although I had done considerable research on the Indian Diaspora in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) since 1992 I had never gone to India. Ashook persuaded me to attend the upcoming GOPIO/PBD conferences in January 2007 which I did, and we had a great time together visiting the Golden Triangle areas afterwards. That was the beginning of a very close working relationship which resulted in, inter alia, the visit of an Indian delegation to St. Vincent led by Minister Vayalar Ravi in 2007 (and including Ashook and Inder Singh), the convening of an international Indian Diaspora Conference in St. Vincent in 2012 with the support of GOPIO and the Ministry of Culture, and recognition of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves for his very strong support of the SVG Indian Heritage Foundation. His commitment, dedication and hard work is unparalleled. My congrats and best wishes.

—**DR. ARNOLD THOMAS**

His sterling initiative, re: permanent memorial in Kolkata for Indentured immigrants, is a great honour to our revered ancestors.

—**VIDUR DINDAYAL**

Twenty years of dedicated and round-the-clock service of President Ashook is awesome and unprecedented. This gentleman hardly sleeps because of his IDC commitment.

—**OSCAR RAMJEET**

In 2011 he launch a Memorial for indentured immigrants with some high personalities in Kolkata, I sent him an email. He was fully agree with me to do the same in South india , because I have some relatives in this region of India. I was very happy.

—**RAMSAMY JEAN-REGIS**

Ashook Bhai,  
A true son of the Jihajis  
You labor incessantly  
To preserve the legacy of your ancestors  
You reached out across the oceans they journeyed  
To reconnect the disbursed offsprings  
Paying homage and honouring their sacrifice  
You keep the memory alive.

— **CLIFF RAJKUMAR**

I met Mr Ashook Ramsaran at PBD in Chennai, India in 2007. We share a good friendship of 10 years, meeting each other 2 or 3 times a year and very regular telephone conversation. I also had the pleasure of meeting his beautiful wife. Mr Ramsaran has all the right ingredients for the success of any non-profit organization: hard work, dedication, focus, perseverance, and encouragement to others, and the ability to help push them further. I have seen him hold on and work harder than the storm with great sacrifice and determination. Mr. Ramsaran, hold on to the kind of spirit you have and never give up. Your strength has brought you this far. For me, your work and deliveries were remarkable. May God continue to grant you the confidence and focus for the good work you do.

—**RITA ABRAHAM, SOUTH AFRICA**

