



Sanatan Dhama Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago Incorporated: Indian Arrival Dinner

The Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron,
President of the Caribbean Court of Justice

Indian Arrival Dinner of the Sanatan dhama Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago Incorporated

Radisson Hotel, Trinidad and Tobago
23 May 2014

The Sanatan Dhama Maha Sabha (SDMS), colloquially known as the Maha Sabha, is the major Sanātānī Hindu (Orthodox Hindu) organisation in Trinidad and Tobago. It operates 150 mandirs, over 50 schools, and has its own radio station, Radio Jaagriti 102.7 FM, and TV channel, TV Jaagriti. It was formed in 1952 when Bhadase Sagan Maraj engineered the merger of the *Sanatan Dhama Association* and the *Sanatan Dhama Board of Control*.

Remarks

By

The Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice,

on the occasion of

The Indian Arrival Dinner of Sanatan Dhama Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago

23 May 2014

I am extremely honoured to be invited to tonight's celebrations. I join in congratulating the Indo-Trinidadian community on this the 169th anniversary of the arrival of the ancestors from India. It has been a long journey from being landed indentured immigrants in a foreign land to being central to the development of a new civilization in the New World.

The ancestors have made a significant contribution to the economic and human development through their original work in the sugar industry; the opening up of land; the participation in the growth of small-scale farming; the retail industry; as independent cane and non-sugar farming. Today, you the offspring of the original arrivants have gone into industry and commerce, manufacturing, finance, engineering and infrastructure, construction and the professions, medicine, law, engineering and the financial sector. And in the arts there is the international recognition of Nobel laureate Sir Vidiadhar Naipaul. Indo Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam have been part of the move to attainment of political independence in the Caribbean region. Jagan, notwithstanding the interventions of the British and the Americans, played a significant role in Guyana's political independence. In Trinidad, Dr. Rudranath Capildeo and his delegation was central to the deliberations at Marlborough House and the achievement of political independence for Trinidad and Tobago. It is also well recorded that the legal brilliance of Tajmool Hosein assisted

the Trinidad delegation in creating the constitutional structure to ensure that the British were satisfied to make the final grant of independence to Trinidad and Tobago.

In more recent times the multi-cultural society of Trinidad has had governments led by Basdeo Panday and the Hon Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar. It was the Government of the UNC under Basdeo Panday that participated in the achievement of the important objective of the CCJ as a final court for the Caribbean. Mr Panday's government successfully competed to have the headquarters of the Court placed here in Trinidad.

Indo Caribbean attorneys of the ilk of Sir Shridath Ramphal, and Tajmool Hosein, Sir Fenton Ramsohoye, Sir Lionel Luckhoo and two Chief Justices of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Isaac Hyatali and Satnarine Sharma have been part of the legal history of the Caribbean.

If nothing else, the Caribbean is one of the most diverse regions of the world: ethnicity, culture, geographic spread, language: French, English, Spanish, Dutch and the admixture of Creole languages that have been created out of the melting pot.

It is inevitable that the CCJ will become reflective of that diversity of the region. Elevation to sit on the benches of the Court is not achieved through appointment and selective placement, but rather on the basis of application and merit.

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has said that it is inevitable that T&T will accede to the final appellate jurisdiction of the Court; indeed she has committed to doing so for criminal matters. Indo-Trinidad and Caribbean must become intrinsic to the diversification of the CCJ through indicating interest and ultimately applying to sit on the CCJ.

Already, the CCJ has had a Dutch and a British National on its Benches. Judges from the OECS, from Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica are also there. Given the wealth of legal capacity within the Indo-Trinidad/Caribbean Community, the need is for the community to pioneer in another area of human, national and regional development to shape the jurisprudence of the CCJ in all its diverse complexity. The ancestors laid the foundation and the generations to come expect it to happen.

The benefits of the CCJ compared to a far off Privy Council are many. Most important it gives ordinary folk an opportunity to seek final judgment at affordable cost. Appellants will benefit from a quality court of judges who have reached the top of the international legal and judicial professions.

The CCJ has financial and legal independence built into its structure and it is free from any connection with the national governments. This might well be a good time for Trinidad and Tobago to reap the benefits of all that the CCJ has to offer.

As we celebrate the East Indian Arrival Day celebrations, I will leave you with some food for thought from the teachings of Swami Vivekananda who observed that *“The great secret of true success, of true happiness, is this: the man or woman who asks for no return, the perfectly unselfish person, is the most successful.”*

Thank you.