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REVEREND SAMUEL RAMSARAN: HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY 1892-1960

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This paper will focus on the life of the Reverend Samuel Ramsaran whose ministry was mainly in the North-East of the island.

Rev Ramsaran firmly believed that the responses to the Christian message of relating the Gospel to culture had to be redefined more clearly, in that the essential tenets of Christianity had to be clearly understandable to both the "giver" and the "receiver". He was very aware that many members in the communities were in the process of working out new ways of economic livelihood in a fairly new situation. He himself had experienced that. If the Gospel were to be understood, it had to be communicated meaningfully in the languages, mainly English and Hindi, and in the social settings of the people to whom he was to minister. In the secular field Rev Ramsaran was also in contact with the owners of estates, labourers of non-Indian descent, and government administrative bodies.

One of the greatest influences was the Halkorees, his grandparents, who were strict Hindus. Ramsaran was baptised in 1898 by Dr. John Morton, left school in1908, followed Hinduism closely but eventually practised Christianity and attended Guaico Church. Samuel was literate in Sanskrit as well as in Hindi. In October 1922 he was persuaded to become a catechist by Rev George Murray and in July 1924 was appointed to that position at Sangre Chiquito. He was ordained into the ministry in 1943 and in 1945 was appointed to the Guaico Pastoral Charge and was Moderator from 1946-1956. During his ministry he built the church at Biche and was host to the famous Rev C. F. Andrews. He retired in February 1957 and was on the Board of Governors at St Augustine Girls' High School.

Introduction

India, which had been the home of newly arrived indentured immigrants, had been a pluralist society, and within the caste system there was a freedom to choose any religious persuasion. Religious pluralism and cultural pluralism were inter-connected and up to a certain degree, the cultural society, especially in Trinidad, was pluralist and would be more so, now. Cultural pluralism was already a syncretism of a variety of cultures in the island life of Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed would be so increased, as seen in the arts, food and festivals and more. Religious pluralism was seen to be multicultural, as Christianity certainly was, - moving from the Middle East, across Europe to the West and the East. To many Christianity was viewed as different perceptions of the same Truth. For the East Indian settlers acquiring education was a process of Westernisation, a process of enculturation, which entailed the adoption of non-Indian customs, including the

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use of the English language and the Christian religion. The opportunity soon came for some Indians to move away from rural areas to towns after a period of Indentureship; they came into contact with the emancipated Afro-population whom they, the East Indians, had replaced. Samuel Selvon, who was taught at Naparima College by John Ramsaran (son of the named title), has described "an early model of Caribbean society based on a threefold structure of European proprietorship, African slavery and Indian Indentureship. This power is used against the Indian, Chan goo, who is both welcomed and suspected by Afro-Trinidadians, because he is the reason they are no longer slaves, and the possible reason for them becoming slaves again" (Birbalsingh, Frank, 1988, *n.a*).

In this exciting developing multicultural society H. Richard Niebhur's five variations of Christian theology, in his study of *Christ and Culture*, could be applied[1]. Niebhur who was concerned with social ethics, analyses several aspects that the Christian may adopt from society – from the hostile rejection of cultural influences to something like a complete adaptation of them. He also recognised that attitudes were also conditioned by the historical society in which people lived.

In the North East of Trinidad's East Indian rural communities Reverend Samuel Ramsaran fervently believed that the responses to the Christian message of relating the Gospel to culture had to be defined very clearly, in that the essential tenets of Christianity had to be understandable to the "giver" and to the "receiver". The members of his local community and the wider communities, to whom he was to communicate the Christian message, were members who now shared the common languages of Hindi and English and an almost now common Indian culture in a new and evolving society; many had come from varying Motherland cultures. He was very aware that many members were in the process of working out new ways of economic livelihood in this fairly new situation. He himself had experienced that. If the Gospel were to be understood, it had to be communicated meaningfully in Hindi and English, and in the social settings of the people to whom he was to minister. It was vital that the message of the Gospel had to make sense in the total context with the community.

Background

Samuel Ramsaran was born in Maracas where he attended the Canadian Mission (CM) School and learnt English and Hindi. He learnt about India and Hinduism from the Indian teachers, notably from David Lakhan, and from local pandits as well as from his grandparents, the Halkorees, who were strict Hindus of the Vaishnava sect. An incident described a day when Samuel was caught playing with a friend of the *Sudra*caste. Appalled, his grandfather Halkoree took him home where he was scrubbed and washed thoroughly, after which, both grandparents sat with him before their shrine; there they earnestly implored the Lord Bhagwan to forgive them all.

Halkoree's grandfather was Parsan who was a landowner in Arrah in the state of Bihar. He and his descendants were Zamindars[2] in India, where they employed labourers for farming. Parsan's son Jailal (Jilal) followed in his father's footsteps, but Halkoree accepted the British offer of indentureship and left for Trinidad with his wife, Lowngi, three sons and a neighbour's son. Halkoree's brothers, Rambalak and Sibalak remained in India; one of them later fled to Nepal due to local unrest. Halkoree and his small group sailed from Calcutta on the Humber in May 1866. Sadly it was a tragic journey. Two sons, Rajkumar and Havaldar were lost at sea, but Jimdar, and Bharat, the neighbour's son survived. After his contract of indentureship had expired Halkoree decided to settle in Trinidad. The picturesque Northern Range of Trinidad's mountains may have reminded the family of the foothills of the Himalayas in Uttar Pradesh, their former homeland. The Halkorees were granted some land in Maracas on the Aranguez sugar cane estate and he gradually bought lands all along the foothills of the Northern Range from St Joseph in the West, to Caura and Valencia in the East.

Mr. Dukhan an old school friend of my grandparents had mentioned that as a boy he would watch Halkoree race, riding on a horse, dressed in Western clothes and leather boots, making the rounds and checking on the workers on his lands. The wearing of leather was against Hindu culture and religion, but culture and religion seemed to have been subsumed in the throes of the grief because of the tragic loss on the sea journey. The determination to be successful was a zest in this new life. Perhaps he was the last Zamindar in the family who lived in style, and my great grandfather, who was given the name Jimdar (a possible corruption of the term Zamindar) after his brothers perished, lived to carry on the family culture, tradition and livelihood.

Early Life and Family

Samuel was baptised in 1898 when he was six years old, -"Something I remembered well", - by the pioneer missionary Rev Dr John Morton. He was baptised in the old school house in the valley of Maracas, where he attended the Maracas Canadian Mission (CM) School. His mother, who it is believed was Muslim, had died in childbirth; this he apparently kept to himself when he married his wife who was Hindu and whose father was a pundit. In 1898 his father, James Jimdar, who had re-married moved to the East of the island, where the family settled in Picton Trace in Sangre Grande. There were six children from the first marriage - Sukhram, Raghunandan, my grandfather Ramsaran and Charles; the sisters were Catherine and Sukhari (Sukwari). From the second marriage there were two sons, Prabhudas and Dindayal. Samuel's brothers and sisters were Christians and spoke English, as did the Lakhans, their relatives, who were Hindus.

He left school in 1908 and up to 1916 he was unsure of which faith to follow. Ramsaran (his Hindu name by which he was known), visited neighbours who were

Brahmans and took part in *Ramayana* recitals where he chanted the Epic in his strong clear voice. These recitals were held at the home of BhavaniDayal, (one of three brothers, Krishna and Prem being the other two), twice a week and lasted until ten or eleven at night. He was invited frequently by other Hindu families who lived in the district to chant the Scriptures at their respective homes.

His brothers and sisters who were Christians frowned on his association with Hinduism. My mother, Bertha Sankarsingh, related the incident when her aunt decided to take some action. This aunt was so appalled that her brother, my grandfather, was so lax in his duty of having my mother, Gauri, her brother, Ansuman, and Ramsaran's wife, Sookdai baptised, that she took it upon herself to have them baptised. "She [Catherine] got us all dressed up in our best clothes, and marched us down to church where we were christened." They were given Christian names – my mother, Bertha; her brother, John and their mother, Martha. Although Ramsaran had married according to Hindu rites, the marriage was later solemnised according to the Christian faith in 1923.

Nana[3] had written that he was troubled by which was the true religion. He read intensively about Hinduism and indeed, felt a duty to practise it. He admitted that he felt no satisfaction and certainly felt that there was more which was eluding him. According to Uncle John he had "a nocturnal harrowing of the soul accompanied by thunder and lightning, though he heard no voice like St. Paul on the road to Damascus." Ramsaran wrote that he did indeed have a dream and reverted to his Christian name Samuel, and began attending church again. In December 1916 he accepted Christ and attended Guaico church as he was living on the estate of his brother James Sukhram, for whom he worked as an overseer. In the Eastern part of the island Sukhram had been the manager on his cousin's, Sagar, cocoa estate before he invested in his own lands which gradually expanded. In Guaico, he managed a cocoa field and kept cows.

Ramsaran managed a cocoa field for his brother James and was responsible for hiring workers who, under his supervision pruned the trees, drained the land and harvested the crops and managed a cocoa plantation. He also looked after cattle, and tried his hand at some free trading which was not successful.

It was to his elder brother, James Sukhram, to whom Nana turned for advice when he was finding it difficult to live on his pay as a catechist. Sukhram's response to his young brother, as my Aunt Jem related, was that there was no turning back now that he had fully accepted Christ. He also offered his young brother a share in his prosperity, but Samuel refused it, as he said that he would "work only for Jesus". During his life as a minister in the church, my grandfather found accommodation which was supplied by the Canadian Mission. No amount of serious urging by his sister and other relatives to acquire his own piece of land for his retirement deterred him from the fact that he was "working for Jesus" and that "He would provide." On his retirement it was Big Mausi, elder sister of my Nani who

helped him to acquire some land on which to build, and which was supervised by his son, George.

James Sukhram had been a schoolteacher with the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, and rode his horse to school in the Cunupia area. However he gave up teaching and went into business, acquiring lands on which he grew cocoa and coffee and other agricultural produce. He bought lands in Maracas and Caura and it was in the latter place where he met his Spanish wife, Barcelicia Hernandez. Caura was a little village inhabited by Spanish-speaking people who were originally from Venezuela, and there were also descendants of other Spaniards who had settled in the area since 1498 when Columbus discovered Trinidad. Sukhram and his wife (there were no children) moved to the eastern part of the island, on a small estate in Sangre Chiquito which later became part of the Estella Estate owned by Pacheo of Venezuela. In Sangre Grande he bought acres of land which he registered as Good Hope Estate, which later became known as *Sukhram Village*. Like the early American settlers, Sukhram was a pioneer. He cleared the land, built roads and introduced a system of water supply from a reservoir for the settlement. He was on the committee of various boards that were responsible for the building and maintenance of roads. Sukhram also owned horses which he raced locally and where he built a racetrack. He also developed a sports field, locally known as the Sukhram Athletic Grounds and Cycling Stadium. The house in which he lived with his Spanish wife had a spectacular view of this sports ground.

My brother Alan Sankarsingh wrote:

> I visited Sangre Grand and Suckhram Village, travelling up Ojoe Road which runs parallel to Foster Road. I was able to locate the abandoned ruins of the estate house of James Suckhram atop a hill just past Neil Street.
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> Enquiring about the whereabouts of any Castillos at a wooden blue parlour, I came across Kathleen, the daughter of Raimundo Castillo. She was in her 50s. She pointed out her sister who lived in a house adjoining the abandoned ruins and I spoke to her [Lynn aged 59]. Without any prompting, Lynn recalled the younger brother, "The Reverend" and recalled that a younger sister, Sukhari, also stayed with the Suckhrams for a substantial time; [Sukhwari's husband had drowned, and she stayed there with her children; Phillip Jankey, her son became a part-time secretary to Suckhram]. She also showed me at the next street where other relatives lived.
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> At this house I met Clive Sooknanan. His father, Patrick Sooknanan, had been adopted by James Suckhram as an infant, and had married Marcelina, the niece of Barcelina, (Mrs Suckhram formerly Barcelina Hernandez). Marcelina was the daughter of Valentina (sister of Barcelina Hernandez). Clive recalled my uncles Jacob and Phillip Jankey being present at his father's burial in 1984.
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> I then went to Kessonarine Street further up Foster Road and met Clive's mother, Marcelina, now 65, and who had remarried.
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> In all these encounters I was unable to obtain any photographs of the Suckhram family something I was hoping for desperately.

> James Suckhram died in 1933. After his death, Barcelina sold parts of the estate to "a gentleman from San Fernando, a Mr Mootoo."
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> Barcelina died in 1953/4.

Hindi was spoken in the home, as my grandmother, Sookdai, a young bride of fifteen, spoke little English. She was fluent in the reading and writing of Hindi, and so were her sisters and brothers as expressed in letters written to my mother, Bertha by her brother, John:

> I feel it is a pity we did not learn to write in Hindi early enough to communicate with Ma in the mother tongue by letter. And I consider the few letters [written] by Bap to me to be a precious record of our language at home. (5th November 1985).

An earlier letter, March 1974 also spoke of one of his aunts who read Hindi fluently; so in my grandfather's generation of relatives, although the speaking and writing of English was encouraged, the speaking and writing of Hindi was equally important in their lives.

My Nani's[3] father (my maternal grandmother's father), who was a pundit, and her mother, had left Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh with their two children, Ragunath and Subhagia; the other brothers were Deonath, Ramnath and Ramdat, and her younger sister was Popti. Their reason for leaving India appears to be political, as her mother clammed up whenever the 1857 Mutiny was mentioned. Family rumours have it that her uncles had been soldiers in the British army and had fought in that war; another rumour was that there were Rajputs in the family. Of all her relations MamooRamnath (my Nani's brother) was the one I remembered best as my brother, my cousin David and I spent idyllic times there, almost free of any adult supervision.

MamooRamnath

I remember spending delightful breaks in Morang where MamooRamnath, with his very large family of eleven lived in Mungal Road. His mother owned some lands which the expanding Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (ICTA) purchased from her. As a horticulturalist, Mamoo's skills were highly regarded by Professor Purseglove of the ICTA where Mamoo was first employed as a gardener. Mamoo's speciality was in the cultivation of orchids. On her frequent visits to ICTA, HRH Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone who was the first Chancellor, always greeted him as a familiar face as he proudly showed her his recent cultivars.

The manicured grass drive leading to his house was lined with different coloured ixora bushes and a variety of Joseph's Coat shrubs, palm trees, a well-tended lawn and roses which were frequently picked for puja (prayers). Both Mamoo and his brother Ramdat were self-educated and went to night school to learn to read and write in English.

Mamoo and Nana were great friends and often spent hours chatting as they walked around his garden, or sat on a bench near the open-shed kitchen as the sun

was setting. It was with Mamoo that Nana discussed the potential costs of a girls' senior school to be built in the vicinity, and later to become St Augustine Girls' High School (SAGHS), as there was one already in the south of the island, La Pique, or Naparima Girls' High School. Mamoo agreed that there should be one in the local area, and readily helped to finance it, and so on 19th September 1950 SAGHS was opened with Miss Wager as headmistress, and Mrs Undine Gillespie as its deputy head. For the villagers who had occupied the land in the area, a "Sukhram-type" village settlement was developed near the school and on the south side of the Highway.

Ministry

After his acceptance of Christianity, Samuel continued as an overseer at his brother's estate and attended Guaico church, but this was to change. In October 1922, Rev George Murray, from Canada, persuaded him to become a catechist, and in July 1924 he was appointed catechist of Sangre Chiquito where he had been an overseer from 1911-1916, and where he used to recite the Ramayana. What a shock it must have been to the villagers when he returned as an ambassador of Christ. After the questionings had died down, there was no animosity, as the extended concept of *JahajiBhai* or "boat brothers"[4], appeared to extend to and permeated many relationships.

Samuel's rapport also extended to new Christians and to those who were already in the faith. On accepting Christianity, Samuel burnt all his books pertaining to the Hindu Scriptures. He had decided to imitate the people of Ephesus, as related in the Bible, after they had been converted to Christianity. It must have been an extremely sad moment for my grandmother as she may have silently stood nearby watching the burning of these books, which were the holy scriptures of her childhood. It was part of my grandfather's impetuous character, and one act which he later regretted as he told my father, Leslie Sankarsingh, and when John, his son, showed an interest in both English and Hindi literature[5].

Many nights in the Manse at Guaico, neighbours and friends and visitors gathered downstairs to debate the merits of Hinduism and Christianity with the Bible ever present. Many of the Muslim faith also participated, as well as members of other Christian denominations. As a child, I used to listen to the banter of fierce debates, of which I understood nothing. It was later and with hindsight, I realized that the books which were always present at these gatherings were the Bible and the Qur'an. These meetings included the singing of *bhajans*[6], hymns and other sacred songs, and they were sung by all the villagers, no matter what faith they adhered to. Nana presided over these meetings and led with a strong voice. He also composed some *bhajans* for his flock, but alas, these were lost. Meeting or no meeting, the family always gathered for evening prayer in the very large drawing room at seven o' clock precisely without fail, and we knelt by our seats. Everyone

was expected to be there. This included any visitors, and to the grandchildren this meant a late night and some extra fun. Unexpected guests, who travelled from afar, were invited to stay for the night and a bed would be made available; cake, sweet drink and food would miraculously appear, and bedtime would be postponed for about half an hour for the grandchildren.

Samuel Ramsaran was also literate in Sanskrit, as well as in Hindi. He preached his sermons in the more formal language of KhariBoli, rather than the Bhojpuri variation favoured by the majority of immigrants. He taught young people who often asked for his help, many of whom went on to fill important posts in education and in government. He also groomed older candidates for posts in teaching, for the ministry and for interviews in Government. He was hot on Grammar and pronunciation (as my aunt remembers), and frequently corrected the way one spoke. He had written some *dohas*(couplets) in Hindi, no doubt influenced by the *Bhakti* poets of the seventeenth century. He also spoke some Spanish and French Patois. One episode, his son, John relates was concerning a visit by two women who commented in Patois on the sparseness of the accommodation of the home. Nani, who of course spoke mainly Hindi and did not fully understand what they were saying, smiled and nodded. Unknown to them, Nana was in the other room and overheard all. Some days later, he greeted them in their language and commented on the weather. My mother, his elder daughter, Bertha, also recalled another time when his knowledge of Spanish was useful. Her brother, John, who had befriended Ramon, a Spanish worker on the estate, invited him home, but he, Ramon, was too shy to accept. However he attended a church service, and when Nana saw him in the congregation, he preached his sermon that memorable Sunday, in English and Spanish, interspersed with Hindi; it was memorable for the fact, that not many of the congregation knew that he was conversant in those languages.

Samuel's status as a catechist, and later as a minister did not mean that he gave up living according to the Indian Hindu custom. I remember the time when my mother had cooked some food and left it for him, as she had to go to work. As we were both relishing the meal, he asked what the meat was. His horror when I innocently replied that it was "beef," shook me, as he violently pushed the dish away, exclaiming, "Your mama knows that I don't eat that meat!" On her return, the dismay showed on my mother's face as she said, "But you know that Nana does not eat beef." As a child, it had not occurred to me, and no one had thought to inform me of this. However, all turned out all right, as it was not "that meat."

Indian customs and daily rituals pervaded Rev Ramsaran's Christian life and family life. Diet was the same, although he was no vegetarian. He retorted to some that he did not become a Christian to be freed from the taboos of food and drink. To do so would be a scandal. It was a stumbling block of trust, as far as he was concerned, to the East Indian community to whom he owed allegiance. He felt that those Hindus, who had kept their faith, would feel that it was only for the sake of

changing his diet or having a drink of alcohol that he had converted to Christianity. An incident is told about the consumption of alcohol on my parents' wedding day. As Nana was busy preparing for the day, his brother, Charles, unknown to him had served each of the cooks a little glass of rum. They had been working the day before and all through the night as they prepared the food for the wedding feast, and naturally Charles felt they deserved a little something, "a bit stronger" to keep up the momentum and the jollity of the occasion, so he poured each a small glass of the forbidden beverage! This was done at the back of the tent where they thought that they were hidden and safe, as my grandfather had left that part of the preparations to his brother. As they were taking a break and chatting, Nana appeared. One can imagine the panic and confusion of the men as they tried to hide their drinks as they knew that "de reverend" strongly disapproved of this beverage. This disapproval and his anger were evident, as he must have felt betrayed. His brother held his ground as he firmly stated, "The occasion demands it!" Apparently, my grandfather accepted his statement for that time only, but one suspects that he had a few firm words with his young brother later.

There was another time when the drinking of alcohol was detrimental to the missionary cause. One of the Canadian missionaries had been invited to a party by some American militiamen on the Base. He returned somewhat inebriated to his home, and word spread quickly among the locals. He was chastised and dismissed, and sent back to Canada. No amount of pleading to the authorities for him to stay, because of his good work and character by my grandfather, and the apologies by the Americans concerned could forestall any decision made by the Canadian Mission. And so, it was a very sad day for all when the missionary was forced to return to Canada.

As some of his family kept cows, many times Samuel Ramsaran was approached by those who ate beef asking if he would sell them a cow, but this was refused. One night, hearing some noise he rushed out and saw some figures melting away into the darkness. In the morning, he found a cow dying. That same day he was made an offer by a butcher who had heard of the incident. To the man's surprise and chagrin, his offer was firmly refused. Although already a Christian, my grandfather was sensitive in his respect for the Hindu faith, as his relatives were Hindus, like the Ramlogans who were related to my grandfather's uncle, Lakhan of Tunapuna.

Dada Lakhan had been host to a very distinguished visitor, the Reverend C. F. Andrews, who was a close friend of Tagore and a confidant of Gandhi. Rev Andrews was interested in the conditions of the indentured labourers, especially in Fiji, Mauritius and Trinidad and was later to agitate for a better standard of living on their behalf, as well as for bonded labourers in India.

> I can never forget him. I can see him now in the pulpit of our Morton Memorial Presbyterian church in Guaico, a bearded Christ-like figure…Dressed in a long, white robe like an Indian sadhu he preached in English using some Hindi phrases…The Mahatma

> (when he was in prison) had asked the visiting Rev Andrews to sing for him "When I survey the wondrous cross." Dada Lakhan on this occasion went to hear Rev Andrews, who had requested his stay to be with Hindus. It was to Dada Lakhan's home, he went for the night, which was near Sukhram's home. Dada Lakhan had moved from Tunapuna near to the village of Coal Mine where he had a cocoa estate.

During his ministry at Biche the church was built by Rev Ramsaran and the villagers, and for this job, his son, George, was co-opted to help. When I enquired from him about this church, he wrote:

> I remember well the rocks and the boulders, sand and gravel, which they [the villagers] brought from the ravine and land nearby to use as road foundation and for the church building. I was a boy of 8-9 years old and attending Biche CM School.

Rev Ramsaran's peripatetic ministry in other areas of the island was an enjoyable Saturday or Sunday in his later years of life. Food was prepared and packed in dishes for our consumption during the long day from seven o' clock or earlier in the morning until dusk. His wife and his younger daughter, Jemima and her son David, and I crowded into a taxi or Uncle George's car to drive to distant places of worship. The services were held sometimes in a church; at other times worship was held outside, under a tree or near a river. On these occasions many people attended in their Sunday best, and listened to "de Reverend." I remembered it for the fun that I had- of visiting a "new" church, listening to Nana preach, and looking at the faces of people as he preached, the unaccompanied singing and of course, the people who attended.

Besides his ministry, Samuel Ramsaran read widely, and questioned sociological issues. He was concerned about the future of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago and strongly felt that the church should be an indigenous one eventually, and that trained East Indians should be an integral part to its development. The following is an extract from a report on an historical survey of the Canadian Mission work in Trinidad and Tobago which was written in 1949:

> About 84 years ago, Dr. John Morton … while his ship was making ready for the homeward voyage, went about the sugar estates in the south and saw the conditions and needs of the East Indians, and he was touched. He pressed the case of the East Indians, and the Mother Church responded and sent him to minister to us. We shall not forget the history and beginning of the work of the Canadian Mission in Trinidad.
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> Doctors Morton and Grant laboured well and faithfully and also their other successors, but my own opinion and conviction are that the task of Canada is not yet completed. Eighty years of toil on part of the Mother Church to see a strong and vigorous indigenous East Indian Church in Trinidad should be continued by her. This is not the time for her withdrawal.
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> We need all men and women and means that Canada can put at our disposal. We are proud, at least we ought to be proud of all the missionaries who were sent by Canada and who laboured amongst us and who are with us today. They are people who have earned the respect and admiration of the public, and we of the Church honour and regard them not a little.

It is true that at times we have expressed dissatisfaction in certain things with our missionaries with whom we have not always seen eye to eye, but this has been because of our growth and development. Although some of us sometimes have over-stepped the limit, yet the Canadians and the East Indian fellow workers have understood each other.

It is a credit to our missionaries past and present when we ask for greater responsibilities. Should our aims and aspirations, our ambitions and longings to take upon ourselves full Church government, and become a strong indigenous church find favour with our missionaries and the Mother Church in Canada? Yes. But we need Canada's help in giving us all the missionaries, both men and women, for some time to come with all the financial aid and otherwise. It may be asked "Why?" My answer is, we have not yet reached the point when we can say, "Thanks, we need you no more."

It is often said that our present and local workers or preachers are not doing enough in the way of evangelisation or conversion of the masses of our Indian people, as the pioneers did, and their immediate successors who met with great difficulties, and that our work for evangelisation of the East Indian community has become easy. This is a mistaken view on the part of those who see it this way. Our difficulties are far greater to make converts today, as I shall point out briefly.

In the early days in the founding of the Mission, the majority of East Indians were illiterate and their leaders, the sadhus and priests, were few and far between. Today with the increase of literacy and with the revival of East Indian religion and culture our Church is facing a difficult and problematical task. In the pioneering days Mother India had almost lost all interest in her children domiciled in the colonies. Needless to say, that is not so today. With the reformation in Hinduism, the Vedic religion is shown in quite a different light. It is spoken of as glorious.

Hinduism, unlike before, has become an aggressively missionary religion with all the backings of scholars and scholastics. India, time after time has been sending to this Island eminent Hindu scholars who have succeeded in getting those of the Christian fold to join the ancient religion, and schools and colleges are built. Hindu customs have been changing to get the young to adapt themselves. Government too, have seen and are lending their aid to such movements and are recognising their work. And why not? We speak of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as a Christian Government, or a Christian nation. Christian religion, yes, and men of all nationalities and races and creeds can become Christians "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." There is need in the Mission for an educated preaching staff versed in the arts and sciences. There is a need for a missionary from India qualified in comparative religion. Meanwhile the work goes on with the materials available, trusting that Christ will use them for the furtherance of His kingdom, even as He used simple men of old for His kingdom- the Kingdom of righteousness and peace and love.

Retirement

After Rev Samuel's wife died, he moved to Evans Street in Curepe and was invited to be on the Board of the newly opened St Augustine Girls' High School. The motto for the school, *Per Ardua* ad Astra may have been suggested by him. It was the motto of the Royal Air Force in England which his son had joined in World War Two. A stream of visitors frequented his home – the Wager sisters, Rev Kitney and

Rev Sharma who discussed "greater" things; neighbours who came for advice or just dropped in. His niece (Ramnath's daughter) Violet, or Doodee, as she was affectionately known as, cooked most of the midday meals which we ate together, and he was well looked after by his son, George and his family who lived nearby.

In June 1959, a year before his death, he wrote –

> Would you please convey to Presbytery my sincere debt of gratitude for the opportunity given to me to serve my church for over a quarter of a century? I am also grateful to the men and women, both missionaries and fellow workers, who played their part in co-operation with God in the moulding of my Christian life.

Notes

1. Niebhur: (1) Christ against culture; (2) Christ of culture; (3) Christ above culture; (4) Christ and culture in paradox; (5) Christ the transformer of culture (Wainwright 1986).
2. A zamindar was a foreman who collected fees on behalf of a landlord.
3. I called him Nana which is the Hindi word for the maternal grandfather; Nani being the maternal grandmother. The paternal words in Hindi are Aja, grandfather and Ajee, grandmother.
4. *JahajiBhai* was the term used by the indentured labourers who sailed together from India to the land of their destination; in this case it was Trinidad.
5. See Ramsaran, John A. (1973) *English and Hindi Religious Poetry: An Analogical Study*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
6. See the author's book,*The Bhajan-Christian Liturgical Music in the Indian Diaspora* (2008). Melrose Books: U.K.

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