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Conflict and collaboration : tradition and modernizing Indo-Trinidadian elites (1917-56)

History of the competition in the Indo-Trinidadian community between the modern-izing élite and the traditional élite. The first aspired to adapt the Indians to the political and cultural environment of a predominantly creole/Western society. The second wanted to preserve the existing culture and religion. Since the mid-1950s the traditional élite has achieved ascendancy at the mass level of Indo-Trinidadian community organization.

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CONFLICT AND COLLABORATION: TRADITION AND
MODERNIZING INDO-TRINIDADIAN ELITES (1917-56)

When the census of the twin-island colony of Trinidad and Tobago was taken in 1921, the system of Indian indentured labor in Trinidad, as in other parts of the British Empire, was virtually at an end. The Indian indenture-ship system had come under increasingly bitter attack from Indian nationalists, who in 1916 succeeded in having legislation passed in the Indian Parliament committing the British imperial government of India to abolish that system of labor within five years (Singh 1986:50-57). In 1917 war conditions led to the suspension of voyages of immigrant ships from India to the British Caribbean, and Indian indentured emigration was not resumed thereafter. In Trinidad only a few hundred Indians who were still fulfilling their contracts remained as bonded laborers on the plantations.

The 1921 census revealed that of a total Trinidad population of 342,523 souls, approximately 121,420 or 35 percent were natives of India or their locally-born descendants. In terms of religious persuasion, Hindus made up 82 percent of the Trinidad Indian population: Muslims 16 percent; Presbyterians 5 percent; Catholics 4 percent; Anglicans 2 percent; Parsees 0.5 percent; and Buddhists 0.3 percent (Census of Trinidad and Tobago 1923: 18, 34). The remaining Indians were numerically insignificant in terms of religious persuasion. The censuses of 1931 and 1946 would show the Indian population of the island varying between 33 and 35 percent of the total population, with Hindus remaining the numerically largest religious sector of the Indian population (approximately 77 percent), followed by Muslims (20 percent). By the time of the 1946 census, Buddhists and Parsees would virtually disappear from the classification.

The largest sector of the non-Indian population were of African ances-

try, comprising by 1946 approximately 47 percent of a total Trinidad population of 530,809. By that year the island's Indian population had risen to 35 percent of the total population; the white population was put at 2.7 percent of the total population; the Chinese were calculated to be 1 percent of the total population; and the Syrians were a mere 0.2 percent of the population (West Indian Census 1949: part G; Census of Trinidad and Tobago 1948: 9).

In the period under study, from the end of indenture in 1917 to 1956, the year that marks the beginning of a new epoch with the coming to power of Eric Williams's People's National Movement, the Indians were in the process of social emergence from the legacy of indentureship, as reflected in their predominance as agricultural laborers and the social stigma attached to their indentureship experience, and their cultural heritage, in particular their non-Christian religious background. Between 1921 and 1946 Indians comprised the most illiterate sector of the total population. In 1921 over 87 percent of the Indian sector ten years of age and over were illiterate. By 1946 this figure had declined to 51 percent, but it was still disproportionately high. With such a high level of illiteracy, it is hardly surprising that the Indian middle class, and especially its professional vanguard, was extremely small. Up to 1931, the last year in which the official censuses give a break-down of the Indian population by occupation, there were just nine Indians in the legal profession and seven in the medical profession (all males), while there were 368 males and seventy-two females in the teaching profession (mostly in Presbyterian schools). Another sixty-eight males and one female were classified as public officers; while 123 males and four females were retail merchants and shopkeepers. In contrast there were 24,638 males and 11,326 females engaged in agricultural labor, while another 6,784 males and 863 females were classified as general laborers. Indian peasant proprietors consisted of 3,303 males and 755 females (Census of Trinidad and Tobago 1933: appendix B).

The small Indian middle class that emerged from the indentureship experience had to undertake the burden of a modernizing elite within the Indian sector of the population that would help to adapt that sector to the political and cultural environment of a predominantly Western/creole colonial society and to provide it with some degree of political and social leadership. Though not disposed to completely reject their Indian cultural heritage, the emerging Indo-Trinidadian modernizing elite¹ would find itself in increasing competition with an Indo-Trinidadian traditional elite, led by Hindu and Muslim religious leaders. The traditionalists' major preoccupation was to vindicate their religions from the slurs and denigration by Christian evangelists, as well as to preserve their traditional ceremonies,

their languages, their forms of dress, their music, and their dance forms. Indeed, some members of the Hindu traditional elite would even attempt, as we shall see, to re-establish the *varna/jati* (caste) system which, in its Indian social and ritualistic forms, had already been largely, if not entirely, subverted by the capitalist relations of production of the host society and replaced by an essentially race-based system of caste relations, mediated by the emergence of class-based relations generated by the limited educational and economic achievements of Trinidadians of African, Indian, or mixed ancestry.²

Throughout the period 1917-56, both the modernizing and traditional Indo-Trinidadian elites focused almost exclusively on matters of concern to Indians. The most notable exceptions were F.E.M. Hosein, C.B. Mathura, and Adrian Cola Rienzi, who at some point in their public careers did identify with, and participate in, political movements that transcended exclusively Indian concerns. Even with them, as indeed, with their black and colored middle-class counterparts, there was always an ambivalence or duality in their political and social concerns. Eventually circumstances would conspire to propel them back into their ethnic fold.

There were, of course, quite understandable reasons for this pre-occupation with ethnic interests. In the colonial society of Trinidad, like most other Caribbean societies, race and/or ethnicity was the fundamental organizing principle adopted by the white ruling class, and the consciousness of race permeated the whole society. In the case of the Indians, their initial entry into the society as indentured laborers, despised even by the recently emancipated slaves and their immediate descendants, coupled with the Indians' equally despised "heathen" or "pagan" religious beliefs and practices in a period of fervent Christian evangelization, inevitably made all Indians acutely aware of their degraded social status. Education and conversion to Christianity did not significantly diminish the Indian consciousness of the modernizing elite. They were largely educated and converted under the auspices of the Canadian Mission, which had targeted the "heathen" sector of the population, which was almost exclusively Indian. The converts, therefore, retained within the Canadian Mission schools and churches their strong Indian identity. Unlike those converted to Christianity under the auspices of the Anglican and Catholic churches, they did not feel as culturally alienated from the Hindu and Muslim sectors of the Indian population. Indeed, some of the Canadian Mission churches were given Indian names such as "Susamachar" (Good Tidings) and "Aramalaya" (Place of Rest), while many of the hymns were rendered in Hindi. The modernizing elites were also aware that so long as the mass of the Indian population remained in a socially degraded con-

dition, their own status within the larger society would continue to be adversely affected.

Up to about 1930, the modernizing elite retained considerable influence over the leadership of the two major Indian representative organizations, the East Indian National Association (EINA) and the East Indian National Congress (EINC).³ Though both organizations contained within their leadership Hindu, Muslim, and Christian elements as well as emerging professionals, merchants, and landowners, the traditional elite generally deferred to the leadership of the Christian and Western-educated elements in these organizations. The traditional and modernizing elites were driven initially to cooperation by, among other things, the consciousness of the social stigma attached to the status of indentured laborers, which they felt was carried over to all Indians, particularly through the indiscriminate use of the designation "coolie" by officials and lay persons alike.⁴ They were also concerned with the special disabilities Indians were subject to in civil matters, especially with respect to Indian marriages performed under traditional rites, which in India received automatic recognition by the state as legitimate and legal, but in Trinidad did not receive such recognition unless subsequently registered at the Registrar General's or a Warden's office. This required the reappearance of the bride and bridegroom with relatives and witnesses at the place of registration, which the parties to the marriage often considered an embarrassment and humbug, from which Christian marriages were exempt because of the legal right of Christian priests to function as registrars of the marriages performed by them.⁵ This issue of the legal status of Indian marriages performed under traditional rights would be an on-going one for Muslims until 1932 and Hindus until 1946, involving both the modernizing and traditional elites in considerable controversy. The modernizing elite also addressed the plight of canefarmers, predominantly Indian after 1920, and street vagrants, almost exclusively Indian, in the two main cities of Port of Spain and San Fernando.⁶

When in 1922 the commission of enquiry headed by Major E.F.L. Wood visited Trinidad and Tobago to examine the feasibility of reforming the Crown Colony system of government, the first signs of fragmentation began to appear within the Indo-Trinidadian modernizing leadership. The EINA and the EINC, while retaining their separate identity, had generally collaborated before 1922 on matters affecting the Indian population in Trinidad.⁷ But on the issue of introducing the franchise into the colony, the EINA, heavily influenced by the mercantile and Presbyterian elements of San Fernando and Princes Town, opted for the retention of the Crown Colony system on the grounds that the majority of the Indo-Trinidadian population were illiterate in the English language and not sufficiently

educated to participate in politics. This, they felt, would put the Indo-Trinidadian population at an even greater political disadvantage than they were under the Crown Colony system, which had by then partially accommodated Indian interests via the nomination system. It is likely that the EINA was anticipating that an English language test would be made a condition for exercising the vote (Singh 1994:49). In contrast, the EINC adopted the strategy of supporting reform of the Crown Colony system, but on the basis of communal/proportional representation, which the British government had applied to India and Ceylon. The EINC also wanted the payment of taxes, no matter how small, to be the basis for exercising the franchise. The EINC was confident that if its proposals were accepted, Indo-Trinidadians would have no need to fear that they would be under-represented in the reformed legislature. The campaigns mounted by the two organizations to persuade the Indian middle class and the Colonial and Imperial governments to accept their positions were attended by much recrimination and marked the beginning of the eventual demise of the EINA (Singh 1994:50-52).

The visit of the Wood commission, however, inspired the formation of a new Indian middle-class organization or political club, based in Port of Spain, and led by the lawyer F.E.M. Hosein who by virtue of his Bachelor of Arts and law degrees from England enjoyed considerable prestige among the middle class, both Indian and non-Indian, during the 1920s. The new organization called itself the Young Indian Party, with Hosein as its leading light. It explained that it was not so much a party of young men as a party of young ideas, and its main interest was in carrying through a process of political education among the Indo-Trinidadian population, who were largely ignorant of politics and whose involvement in political movements therefore was minimal.⁸ With the prospect of electoral politics being introduced at the level of the central government, it felt that such a program of political education was essential. But what made the Young Indian Party really distinctive from the EINA and the EINC was its position on the issue of the franchise. It was critical of both the EINA for supporting the retention of the system of nomination and the EINC for proposing communal or proportional representation. Hosein, speaking for the party, argued that both these organizations feared that the identity and interests of the Indian population in Trinidad would suffer if not protected by nomination or by communal representation.

Against this view, Hosein contended somewhat disingenuously that "hitherto there has been no legislation which affects one community more adversely than another"; that the majority of Indians would still be "engaged in agricultural pursuits with the rest of the community"; and that

the introduction of the elective principle would not produce more class legislation than hitherto or adversely affect the agricultural interests of the colony. He therefore failed to see how the welfare of the Indians in the colony would be prejudiced. For him “communal representation would remain a phrase to conjure with. It cannot be translated into practical politics in Trinidad.” As for proportional representation, Indians could not expect to have on that basis more seats in the legislature than their proportion of the population warranted; that is, one third of the seats. And if, as the advocates of communal or proportional representation seemed to believe, the non-Indian population was hostile to Indian interests, such a form of representation offered no real protection for Indian interests. Further with the passage of time, Indians would be subjected to the process of “denationalization” and “will be completely assimilated with and absorbed by the Coloured race.” Therefore such a form of representation was unlikely to strengthen Indian interests in the future.⁹

The imperial government eventually settled the issue in a manner consistent with its own interests and those of its principal colonial ally, the white ruling class: a franchise restricted by property, income, and language qualifications, which, combined with the retention of a majority of nominated members in the Legislative Council, guaranteed the supremacy of imperial and local ruling class interests. The Indian middle class was upset. It felt that the Indian population was badly done by, especially in the light of their contribution to the economic development of the colony. Nevertheless, it began participating in the limited electoral politics for representation in the Legislative Council. An Indian middle-class proprietor of Couva, Sarran Teelucksingh, captured the leadership of the EINC, which was then converted into an electoral machine. Until 1930, he collaborated with the urban-based Trinidad Workingmen’s Association (TWA) led by the French Creole Arthur Andrew Cipriani. Subsequently both men fell out over the divorce bill of that year. Another Indian businessman, Timothy Roodal, emerged as a collaborator with Cipriani and the TWA in the later 1920s. F.E.M. Hosein was likewise elected to the Legislature in 1928 with the support of the TWA. Krishna Deonarine, the later Adrian Cola Rienzi, became an active organizer for the TWA in the southern portion of the island. The journalist C.B. Mathura by the later 1920s had also become actively involved with the TWA (Singh 1994:135-37).

In the second half of the 1920s, therefore, it appeared that the Indian middle class was joining the mainstream of nationalist politics, as advocated by Hosein. Perhaps no one articulated better than Mathura, through the columns of the *East Indian Weekly*, the feeling of optimism and confidence that the Indian modernizing elite was beginning to experience. In

an editorial written in early January 1929, Mathura showered praise on Hosein for the political stance he had adopted at the time of the Wood commission's visit, convinced in retrospect that Hosein had "rendered a signal service to the whole Indian race in the colony." Mathura further elaborated:

In a community of this sort where all races are interdependent; in a community of this sort where the Indian people have so much to learn from the other races; in a community of this sort where the progress of one race is inextricably bound up with the progress of all the other races, a policy like that of the upholders of Crown Colony government could never have worked satisfactorily. The three Indians who are now members of the Legislative Council do not claim to represent, specially, Indians. They represent all races, all creeds, all colours. Similarly, non-Indian members of the Council indirectly represent a great number of Indians, and he would, indeed, be very bold who should affirm that the Indian people of this colony are losing their identity.¹⁰

In other words, Mathura was arguing that their participation in national politics in no way threatened the ethnic identity of Indians, though he was clearly over-optimistic, if not naive, in believing that the interests of all the races were being thus reconciled. He also evidently did not appreciate that he was implicitly repudiating Hosein's prediction that the Indians would be completely absorbed and assimilated over time by "the coloured race."

By 1929, however, it was already becoming evident that the limited electoral participation conceded by the Colonial Office to the colony made little practical difference to the working and living conditions of the mass of the non-white inhabitants, and especially the African and Indian working classes. Cipriani's reliance on the British Labour Party and peaceful agitation for constitutional reform to improve their lot was proving to be futile. The professional and mercantile leaders of the Indian middle class had thus far steadfastly avoided any embroilment in religious controversy and focused their attention on those issues that they felt degraded the whole Indian population in the colony: the malnourished and ragged Indian destitutes on the pavements and squares in Port of Spain and San Fernando, for whom they demanded that the Government provide night-shelters; and when their pleas failed to move the government, they engaged in voluntary efforts to construct the night-shelters. They continued, as well, to protest the indiscriminate use of the word "coolie" by colonial officials, including governors, and lectured them on what the word really meant and the social stigma it attached to Indians in every occupation.¹¹ The Indian middle-class leadership also protested against what appeared to be a deliberate policy of the colonial government to severely restrict the

entry of qualified Indians into the Civil Service, the Magistracy, and the government-controlled schools. Breaking with tradition, they began to advocate the cause of Indian women, stressing the need to improve their status through education and training in skills other than those of housewife and laborer.¹² They likewise became involved in the campaign to legalize traditional Indian marriages, an issue in which the traditional Indian elite had a vital interest, and, especially in the case of the Hindus, proved to be a complicating and obstructionist force, enabling the colonial government to postpone the implementation of the needed legislation until 1946 (Jha 1975).

The modernizing elite recognized the importance of adapting to the demands of a society dominated by Western social and cultural values, and they consistently praised the work of the Canadian mission schools,¹³ tending to overlook the role that the Christian missionary zeal associated with these schools played in the negative portrayal of Indian religion and philosophy – one of the major reasons why the traditional elite resented the mission schools. Like every upstart elite, and especially one engaged in combatting the negative stereotyping of their race and ancestral civilization, the Indo-Trinidadian modernizing elite, especially those based in Port of Spain, wished to imitate the social life style of the upper class, largely the white elite, something which the Portuguese and Chinese in Port of Spain were already doing. At a time when the mass of the Indian and African working classes were experiencing harrowing conditions of life, some leading members of the Indian modernizing elite remained pre-occupied with the issue of erecting a club house, which, among other things, would be provided with such facilities as tennis courts, cricket grounds, a boxing gymnasium, and a golf course.¹⁴ But even in this limited objective the modernizing elite could achieve no unity in the 1920s and 1930s. One of the fundamental sources of division was the still prevalent view that it was in San Fernando that the cream of Indo-Trinidadian society was to be found. There was an emerging Indian professional elite in Port of Spain, however, and it was their contention that, since Port of Spain was the capital of the colony, the location of the club there would be more strategic in terms of social and political influence.¹⁵ It would not be until 1945, in the context of the mass mobilization of the Indo-Trinidadian population on the issue of the language test for the exercise of the franchise, that the struggle over the location of the club would be resolved in favor of Port of Spain.

In the meantime historical circumstances were conspiring to provide the traditional elite with the opportunity to reassert their authority over the social life of the non-Christian Indians. Until the end of the 1920s, they

had found it expedient to collaborate with the modernizing elite because of the latter's Western education, their ability to articulate Indian grievances in the English language, and the higher moral status which Christianized Indians received within the larger society. With the arrival in the Caribbean of educated emissaries of the Indian nationalist movement, who were able to give public lectures vindicating Indian civilization, the traditional elite received the morale booster they were lacking before. Indeed, these Indian emissaries even heavily influenced the modernizing Indo-Trinidadian elite.

The initial and later reaction of the *East Indian Weekly* to the arrival of the Vedic missionary Mehta Jaimini in Trinidad in early 1929 gives some idea of his impact. The *East Indian Weekly* at first thought that Jaimini's arrival might have a negative influence on the process of acculturation that Indo-Trinidadians were undergoing. It argued that the latter had discarded some of their Eastern customs for Western habits and manners, and that this was not inimical to their interests; that indeed, Indians were "infinitely happier" than they would have been in India, enjoyed "the goodwill and affection" of the other races, and were "part and parcel of the harmonious whole." This rosy picture of Indian existence in the colony was quite inconsistent with its sordid reality, which was propelling thousands of Indians in this post-indentureship period to seek to return to India.¹⁶ The editor of the paper, C.B. Mathura, probably feared that the links that were being forged by middle-class Indians like himself with the Cipriani-led TWA would come under threat by an appeal to Indian ethnic solidarity. A few weeks later, however, a feature columnist writing under the pen name of Diogenes, whose style bore a marked resemblance to Mathura's, had this to say of Jaimini's visit:

To use a happy expression, Pundit Jaimini's coming has changed the whole aspect of Indian thought in this island. Whereas previously there has been some sort of losing of ground, a new spirit of renaissance or race determination or race consciousness has gone forward throughout the whole Indian community. This is a healthy sign and a happy augury.¹⁷

One of the middle-class converts to the Indian nationalist cause was Adrian Cola Rienzi, who throughout most of his political career would do what most black middle- and working-class leaders were doing in the colony, that is, alternating between a concern for the welfare of their race and participation in middle- and/or working-class politics, sometimes combining both. At the time of Jaimini's arrival, Rienzi was being marginalized within the TWA because of his pro-Soviet sympathies. After absorbing some of

Jaimini's lectures, he became an ardent convert to the Indian nationalist cause, and at the same time revealed something of the alienation and schizophrenia the Westernized Indian elite in Trinidad were suffering. He credited Jaimini with helping to erase "the last bit of inferiority complex" among local Indians. The latter were now walking "with a feeling of pardonable pride, realizing that they are the inheritors of a sublime literature, a philosophy unrivalled, and that they belong to a race whose mission in the future, as in the past, is again to be the torch-bearer of the world."¹⁸

This very resurgence of ethnic pride in ancestral India gave to the traditional Indian elite the moral authority they were previously lacking in the Eurocentric, Christian-dominated colony. They had made sporadic attempts previously to move beyond priestly rituals and to re-establish their social influence on the traditional Indian basis. An example of this was the attempt by some Brahmins in the town of Tunapuna to mediate in 1918 in a family conflict involving a lower-caste couple. At the urging of the estranged wife, Goolbie, who had eloped with another man, with whom she subsequently had a child, a *panchayat* or traditional village council was summoned to hear her request for a divorce from her husband Outar. Ramoutar in his capacity as *Maradge* (Maraj), a member of the Brahmin caste, presided over the *panchayat*. After hearing both Goolbie and Outar state their cases, the *panchayat* decided to grant Goolbie a divorce because of the treatment she suffered at the hands of Outar, her long separation from him, and her bearing a child for her lover. Outar's response to the decision, however, indicated how difficult it was to have the *panchayat*'s authority re-established among Indians in Trinidad. Outar stated he would have accepted the decision of the *panchayat* if the latter had been held in India, but in Trinidad he did not feel bound by its decision. Eventually Goolbie's case had to be heard at the Tunapuna Magistrate's court, where Goolbie was granted a divorce.¹⁹

There is no evidence that the traditional elite made any concerted effort to re-establish the *panchayat* as a judicial institution among Hindu Indians in Trinidad after this case. But with the new wave of Indian nationalism lapping the shores of the island in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the traditional elite became more assertive and confident enough to challenge the Western-oriented modernizing elite for social control over the mass of the Indian population. The first significant sign of this was the formation of Hindu and Muslim religious organizations on an island-wide basis, which posed a challenge both to the older secular/political organizations, like the EINC, and to the newer middle-class organizations which were beginning to mushroom in the two main towns. The establishment of the Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat to represent orthodox (Sunni) Muslims and the Sanatan

Dharma Board of Control to represent orthodox (Sanatanist) Hindus in the early 1930s represented the most powerful potential challenges to the modernizing elite.²⁰ Their principal interest was in reasserting the moral validity of their respective religions against both evangelizing Christians and Hindu and Muslim reformers.

Sarran Teelucksingh, who was able to use the EINC as his political base, apparently interpreted the establishment of the Sanatan Dharma Board of Control as a potential threat to his social and political influence, and he immediately moved to form a rival Hindu organization under his control based in the town of Couva. The meeting of Hindus that he summoned at his Couva Electric Theatre in January 1932, reveals the growing assertiveness of the local Brahmins in this period against the social leadership of the Western-oriented Indo-Trinidadian leadership. The meeting reportedly included "Hindus of numerous castes," and on the stage where the leading figures sat a screen separated Brahmins from the lower castes. Teelucksingh in his opening address emphasized the need for Indians to be organized in order to secure their rights from the government. He claimed that he was fighting for the cause of the Hindus, since the Hindu religion was that of his forefathers.²¹ Upon which Teelucksingh, an Anglican with a Christian surname, Michael, was reproached by one Jairam Gosein for his conversion to Christianity and told that he must accept the Hindu religion in order to be identified with the cause of the Hindus. Asked by Teelucksingh what he meant by "accepting the Hindu religion," Gosein replied: "You must hear Katha and Bhagwat. You must come to our church. You must marry according to the rites of our religion if you want to be heart and soul with it."²² Dispute further developed as to whether the High Priest and Secretary of the projected organization should be practising pundits or simply Brahmins. The subsequent election of Teelucksingh as president of the new religious organization, which was registered as the Sanatan Dharam Association, provoked the wrath of the more orthodox rival body. The latter was affiliated to the Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha of Lahore, India, which engaged in a prolonged campaign to discredit Teelucksingh's organization. Quite clearly what Teelucksingh was attempting to do was to capitalize on the resurgence of traditional Indian values generated by intelligent and articulate emissaries from India. But he did not have the credentials for assuming a leadership role in what was supposed to be a religious organization, which he evidently intended to use as a reinforcement for his secular political organization, the EINC. The on-going rivalry between the two leading Sanatanist organizations would extend into the early 1950s, when a political leader of Brahmin stock, Bhadase Sagan Maraj, would preside over the merger of both parties.

The rivalry of the two leading Sanatanist Hindu organizations was just one manifestation of a fissiparous tendency among Hindus, and to a less extent Muslims, during the 1930s. During this period the modernizing Hindu religious movement, the Arya Samaj, claiming to base its authority on the most ancient of Hindu religious texts, the Vedas, established a base in Trinidad. Its repudiation of caste and social segregation provoked criticism from the orthodox Sanatanist Hindus of the upper castes and led to much bitter disputation. This was matched by similar disputation between the Muslim Tackveeyatul Association and the more recently formed Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jammat. In a period when the Indian masses in the plantation sector and in the main towns were experiencing economic hardship, religious controversy rent their traditional social leadership.²³

The divisions, however, were not confined to the religious organizations. Within the modernizing middle class, several small factions, each claiming to be interested in forging Indian unity, emerged. There was Rienzi's Indian Nationalist Party, A.C.B. Singh's East Indian League, C.W. Julumsingh's Colonial Indian Committee, and the San Fernando-based Trinidad Indian Union Club, all of which were formed in opposition to Teelucksingh's EINC, which by the early 1930s was being perceived by the younger members of the Indian middle class as having failed effectively to mobilize and organize the Indo-Trinidad population in order to improve their lot.²⁴ The Indian middle-class leadership recognized the organizational fragmentation of the Indian population into "pocket bodies" but demonstrated their incapacity in this period to do anything beyond engaging in premonitory declamation and self-reproach. Their assimilation of Western values and their limited upward mobility, coupled with their awareness that the socio-economic status of the Indian masses had not improved, made them sensitive to their threatened marginalization as Indian leaders.

Nothing demonstrates this better than the All Indian Round Table Conference held in San Fernando in August 1936. A.A. Sobrian, a close friend of the white planter elite and highly regarded in official circles, presided over the meeting. He warned that Indians were in danger of being "denationalized" and if that happened "there was nothing the West could give that would compensate for it." This was an unusual statement from a Southern-based middle-class Indian, and indicates the impact the Indian nationalist movement was having. If, however, Sobrian expressed apprehension over the process of Indian "denationalization," M. Hosein, who was elected pro-tem secretary of a projected organization, focused on "the degradation and disadvantages under which the Indian masses laboured." He recalled his own childhood experiences when he was subjected to

“despotic taskmasters” and pointed to the growing skepticism with which working-class Indians were viewing the Indian middle class as social leaders. The latter, he reproached, were Indians only so long as they were poor and helpless. Once they had become lawyers, doctors, and schoolmasters, they regarded themselves as Sahibs and did nothing to help lift their unfortunate brethren from the gutter. He also warned that no matter how much the upwardly mobile Indians distanced themselves from the Indian masses, they would still be called coolies. R.B. Ramkeesoon spoke in a similar vein of middle-class self-reproach: individual Indians like himself had done well, but not the Indian community as a whole, and that was due to the failure of “the Indian intelligentsia.” Not to be outdone, T. Parasram lamented that no matter how much individual advancement he had made, in the eyes of the public he was still a coolie and concluded that “the only time I am not going to be a coolie is when the vast majority of my countrymen stopped being coolies.”²⁵

Yet events were soon to overtake both the modernizing and traditional Indian elites. Like their African counterparts, the Indian working class was beginning to resort to direct mass action to draw official attention to their harrowing plight. In 1934 they undertook “hunger marches” along the main streets in the sugar plantation sectors and attempted to reach Port of Spain on foot (Basdeo 1983:103-23; Singh 1994:117-19). The following year African oil workers in the southern oil district of Fyzabad mounted a similar march, in which Tubal Uriah Butler, soon to emerge as the most feared working-class agitator, participated. Similar hunger marches were being mounted in Port of Spain by the urban unemployed. Of all the Indian middle-class leaders, only A.C. Rienzi understood that at the root of Indian working-class distress was the structure of the colonial economy, and that such a structure could not be effectively challenged without active collaboration between the African and Indian working classes. He had already begun to move in the direction of promoting Afro-Indian political collaboration when in 1936 he founded the Trinidad Citizens League. The strikes and mass working-class unrest of the following year catapulted him into a leading role in the formation and legitimization of trade unions (Singh 1994:170-77; 204-15). But while Rienzi in this critical period placed emphasis on the “class struggle,” the leading elements of the East Indian National Congress, still the officially recognized political representative for Indian ethnic interests, continued to plead separately for Indian interests.²⁶ For the next six years it would be Rienzi and the ideology of working-class solidarity that would be in the ascendant, until his political opponents based in Port of Spain began to collaborate with

the followers of the incarcerated T.U. Butler to discredit him (Singh 1994:208-22).

It was the issue of the language test, which began to receive prominence after the publication of the local franchise committee's report of 1943, that once again brought together the traditional and modernizing Indian elites. The white elite, headed by Governor Bede Clifford, made a language test a condition for the exercise of the franchise. This political manoeuvring finally forced Rienzi out of the working-class movement and once again into the ranks of the defenders of Indian interests (Singh 1994:208-22). In addition, the Indian middle class, led by professionals and merchants, resolved the long-simmering rivalry between its San Fernando-based and Port of Spain-based factions as to where a representative Indian club should be located. Premises were bought in Maraval and the India Club was established there.²⁷ It became the meeting place for the Indian Central Committee which the Indian intelligentsia formed to wage the campaign against the language test. The campaign lasted for approximately six weeks, in the course of which meetings and addresses were delivered at all the main centers of Indian settlement on the island and a spate of letters sent to the press. The campaign mobilized the Indian population as never before, incorporating for the first time Indian women in a political capacity.²⁸

The Indian intelligentsia had also in the meantime brought forth a journal, *The Observer*, which analyzed the Indian situation on the island and placed heavy emphasis on the need for Indians to educate both their sons and daughters.²⁹ The connection many members of the intelligentsia had to the Indian Nationalist movement added further weight to their campaign against the language test and the Colonial Office eventually deemed it expedient to order the Governor, despite the latter's own reluctance to do so, to use his reserve powers to override a majority vote in the Legislative Council in support of the language test. Announcement of the Colonial Office's decision to abolish the language test was deliberately withheld until the eve of the centenary of the arrival of the first batch of Indian indentured workers on the island.³⁰

The decision by the modernizing Indian elite to commemorate the centenary of the first arrival of Indians on the island, overlooking the fact that their arrival was on terms which led to the very degraded status of Indians against which they had so frequently protested, is partly to be explained by the intensification of race consciousness that the mobilization over the language test engendered, the manipulative role played by the white elites, and the final stage of the independence struggle in India itself, the historical significance of which both the traditional and modernizing Indo-

Trinidadian elites were fully alive to. Yet no attempt was made to capitalize on this racial euphoria to launch an Indian-based political party. This might have been due in part to the awareness that the still surviving East Indian National Congress claimed that role. But this organization had come under increasing criticism from both the traditional and modernizing elites since the early 1930s, and when Sarran Teelucksingh relinquished its presidency in the mid-1940s, it came under the leadership, not of an Indo-Trinidadian, but of an India-born British-educated engineer with police experience, Ranjit Kumar, who had entered the island as an Indian film distributor (Kumar 1975:2-12). Kumar was able to contest successfully for a seat in the Legislative Council in 1946, but his victory was probably due less to the support provided by the EINC than to his own personality and his Indian credentials in what was predominantly an Indian rural constituency, Victoria.

The majority of the modernizing Indo-Trinidadian elite remained uninvolved politically at this time, preferring to concentrate their efforts on promoting the educational and cultural development of the mass of the Indians. Such efforts were generally the work of Western-educated Indians who established cultural clubs and literary and debating societies, though some Muslim and Hindu traditional leaders since the early 1930s were also attempting to establish their own denominational schools that would teach Hindi and Urdu as well as English.³¹ But they did not yet have the government patronage that the Christian schools enjoyed. The historic opportunity for the traditional Indian elite to make a massive incursion into the educational system had not yet arrived.

While Ranjit Kumar was presiding over what proved to be the final rites of the East Indian National Congress, the majority of the politically active Indians, some professionals like the Sinanan brothers, Mitra and Ashford, others formerly working-class Indians who had risen into the ranks of the middle class through commerce and property, did not seek membership in the East Indian National Congress or propose the formation of any new Indian political organization.³² Instead they often entered into ententes with the Butler Party, named after the charismatic and daring African working-class leader who had been twice incarcerated, but re-emerged after the war, as defiant as ever, to galvanize the working class to renewed militancy for better working and living conditions. Among the areas targeted by Butler was the sugar plantation sector, where living and working conditions continued to be quite depressing despite the massive labor unrest of the middle and later 1930s (Dalley 1947: par. 68-69). At a time when the trade union movement was fragmenting, it was Butler who was perceived by supporters and enemies alike to be the most powerful threat

to the colonial establishment. The decision by many of the politically active Indians to refrain from promoting an Indian-based party in the period 1946 to 1954 and to align themselves with the Butler Party proved to be an astute one. It gave them more flexibility and leverage in dealing with the colonial establishment than would have been possible had they joined one of the middle-class factions or remained entrenched in an ethnic political enclave.³³ Had the alliance persisted beyond the mid-1950s the course of the island's political history might have been fundamentally different from that taken after 1956, that is, the consolidation of the two largest ethnic groups into separate and competitive political blocs.

To a considerable extent the traditional Indian elite was responsible for this consolidation. It had since the early 1930s been assiduously engaged in mobilizing and organizing Hindus and Muslims in every major district and town on the island.³⁴ Their principal objective remained religious: to rescue and vindicate their Asiatic religions from the slurs of Christian evangelism. The majority of the Indians were Hindus, and the majority of the Hindus were Sanatanists. But the rivalry of their two major organizations, the Sanatan Dharma Board of Control and the Sanatan Dharam Association, still weakened the Sanatanists. It required the emergence of a caudillo-type leader, Bhadase Sagan Maraj, of Brahmin stock, but reared in the tough school of violent feuding during his boyhood in the cane-growing village of Caroni, to preside over the eventual merger of the two organizations in 1952, which henceforth operated under the name of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha.³⁵

We do not know all the inner details of the confabulations and motivations that led to this feat. Suffice it to say that by 1949 Maraj had become a wealthy man through speculation in surplus material left by the departing Americans at their military bases in Trinidad. With his wealth, he was able to play the role of patron to needy Hindus and in 1950 he successfully contested the Tunapuna seat. He next entered into an entente with the incumbent Minister of Education, the Syrian-creole Roy Joseph, who authorized the construction of a number of Hindu schools in the Indian populated rural areas of Trinidad (Maraj:39-40). Maraj justified this on the morally and sociologically valid ground that the rural Indians had remained the overwhelmingly illiterate sector of the population. In this educational drive he was probably influenced by the heavy emphasis put on education by the modernizing elite; indeed, as explained further down, the first Hindu college established by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha was the result in large measure of the support of Presbyterian leaders in the eastern town of Sangre Grande. Maraj concurrently entered into the field of trade unionism in the sugar plantation sector, where there was intense

rivalry for control over the sugar workers, though he did not emerge as the supreme leader of the sugar workers before 1957.³⁶

The establishment of the Sangre Grande Hindu College in 1954 is perhaps the best example of collaboration between the modernizing and the traditional Indian elites. In 1944, when the Indian nationalist movement was increasing its momentum and local Indians were accelerating the drive to educate Indians in the context of local constitutional reform and the widening of the local franchise, a group of local Presbyterian church elders of Indian ancestry, led by Kenneth Mahase, formed an organization they called the Bharat Sumati Sabha, embracing Indians of all religious denominations. It was intended initially to be a cultural association, blending both Eastern and Western cultural influences. Out of its own resources and using voluntary labor, the organization built on land donated by its secretary, James Ramdass, also a Presbyterian elder, a club house on Brierley Street, Sangre Grande. It became a major center for lectures and cultural events, including creole/Western dances. But by the early 1950s, as Bhadase Maraj was in the process of consolidating the Hindus as a religious and political force and began the drive to extend education to the rural areas, the leadership of the Bharat Sumati Sabha decided to donate its club house and the land on which it stood to the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha to be used for the purpose of secondary education. Thus was established the first Hindu college in the island.³⁷

The staffing and curriculum of the college reflected the continuing trans-denominational cooperation of the Indian elites. For the first five years of its existence, its principals were Christian, mostly Presbyterians. Despite its establishment in the heat of Indian nationalist sentiment, it never offered instruction in any Indian religion. Rather, its students officially studied the New Testament as part of the syllabus options for the Cambridge School-leaving certificate. Although aimed principally at serving low-income rural Indians, it never closed its doors to students of other classes and races. Culturally, many rural students were introduced for the first time to school uniforms, coerced into wearing socks with their shoes, and instructed by their Westernized teachers into Western social graces. Also a great deal of emphasis was placed on sports – cricket, table tennis, and volley-ball principally.³⁸

The college, however, suffered from inadequate financing and therefore the inability to keep good staff. This would be due partly to the determination of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha and its local governing board not to convert the institution into a government-assisted secondary school. Another reason was the distance of the institution from the dense centers of Indian population in the sugar zones and therefore the difficulty

of drawing financial support from a larger popular base. Also to affect the college would be the factional squabbles that later emerged within the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha.³⁹ Despite these difficulties, the college gave the children of hundreds of rural Indo-Trinidadians the opportunity to achieve a secondary education within an ethnically congenial environment. Several were able to move into the higher professions. Yet, ironically, the college's significance in a period when state-sponsored mass secondary education was not yet a reality has never been officially recognized by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, and the college today is a sad relic of its pristine days.

Since the mid-1950s it has been the traditional elite that has achieved ascendancy at the mass level of Indo-Trinidadian community organization. Now the traditional Hindu and Muslim leaders project the public image of the Indian population through their cultural activities. That public image is an alien image to the rest of the population and to the increasingly urbanized Indo-Trinidadian population, in that it is a pale reflection of the culture of ancient and medieval India, village India, in an environment that is overwhelmingly Western/creole. This partly explains the alienation of increasing numbers of younger Indo-Trinidadians from the traditional Indian leadership and their attraction to new Christian evangelical movements like Pentecostalism.⁴⁰ At the political level, the projection of traditional cultural images of the Indo-Trinidadian population, combined with the stark alternative of a political party with an overwhelmingly rural Indian base, has served to deter the non-Indian population, particularly those of African and mixed ancestry, from shifting their support away from the urban, African-based People's National Movement, even when the latter seems unable to solve the problems of massive unemployment and crime on the island.⁴¹

The ousting of the modernizing Indo-Trinidadian elite from positions of cultural leadership at the mass level since the mid-1950s has, in this writer's view, been a significant factor in the institutionalization of the bi-racial political system that has been effectively exploited by the political leadership of the two ethnically based parties and by the smaller ethnic groups. The white (English, Scottish, Spanish and French creole) elite has been historically the principal collaborator with, and beneficiary of, capitalist imperialism⁴² in Trinidad, as in the other former Caribbean colonies. They have since assimilated into their class and ideological interests the other small ethnic minorities, the Portuguese, Syrians, and Chinese, and, by playing the role of ethnic neutrals or mediators in the bi-racial politics of the island, have been able to retain their positions of economic pre-eminence in it. Moreover, since the concession of formal political independence to

the island in 1962, they have been reinforced ideologically by the majority of local professional elites of all races and the Indian and African economic bourgeoisie that have arisen in the private and state corporate sectors. The projection of the alien image of the Indian population by the traditional elite has worked at the political level mostly against the interests of the Indian and African working-class population, who are made to bear the burden of seemingly perpetual sacrifice prescribed by the dominant elites and their foreign allies for the effective operation of the local economy.

This is not an argument for the complete abandonment of traditional Indian cultural forms or the assimilation of the crude aspects of the creole cultural forms. Rather, it is an argument for the creation of new Indo-Trinidadian cultural forms that can meaningfully fit into the larger cultural milieu of what we might call Atlantic civilization, while at the same time maintaining the poise, dignity, and gracefulness that are characteristic of traditional Indian cultural forms.⁴³ Only then could the cultural barriers to effective political collaboration by the working classes of the two numerically larger ethnic groups in the island be transcended without either group feeling potentially threatened by the other.⁴⁴

NOTES

1. There is still much controversy about the concept of modernization. I think, however, it will generally be agreed that it involves the following changes: the emergence of popularly elected governments; the placing of high value on the natural sciences and technological innovation; the hegemony of achievement over ascription as the principal avenue to upward social mobility; and the practical separation of the secular from the religious spheres of life. As Western Europe was the first area of the globe to experience these societal changes, modernization is often associated, though not synonymous, with Westernization.

2. This is not to suggest that race or color did not play a significant role in historically shaping the Indian caste system. Sagar (1975:2-9) cites several verses in the Hindu religious classics – the Rg Veda, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata – to argue the contrary. But it is also known that as Indian society evolved from the Vedic age, the subdivisions of the four *varnas* (the *jatis*) were increasingly related to occupation and/or tribal affiliation rather than to race or color, which became incidental. The *varnas* and *jatis*, however, remained strongly ascriptive and endogamous. In the more recently formed plantation societies of the Caribbean, the lines of race/color stratification were naturally sharper, since Europeans and their descendants, until the last three decades of this century, have been in positions of economic, political, and social dominance vis-à-vis the numerically preponderant non-European peoples.

3. Before 1922 there existed no significant differences between the EINA, founded in 1897, and the EINC, founded in 1909. The former was based in the south of Trini-

dad (Princes Town/San Fernando) and the latter in Central Trinidad (Caroni/ Couva). Both took up the same causes. Probably distance in a period of slow communications led to the formation of two separate organizations.

4. *The Mirror*, May 10, 1916.

5. For an enlightening explanation of the issue, see F.E.M. Hosein's contribution to the debate in the Trinidad and Tobago *Hansard*, April 5, 1929. The EINC raised the issue as early as October 1919 because of its relevance for Indian rights of inheritance to property, including oil-bearing lands. See *Trinidad Guardian*, October 22, 1919.

6. As early as 1916 the EINC was representing the cause of canefarmers (*The Mirror*, January 7, 1916). On Indian street vagrants, see *The Labour Leader*, November 21, 1925; Letter from K. Deonaraine; *Port of Spain Gazette*, December 8, 1924; Letter from G.D. Mahabir; and the *East Indian Weekly*, June 15, 1929.

7. The decision to collaborate while preserving their separate identities was taken at a joint meeting at Chaguanas in October 1919 (*Trinidad Guardian*, October 22, 1919).

8. *Port of Spain Gazette*, July 28, 1922.

9. *East Indian Weekly*, January 12, 1922: Letter to East Indian Committee by F.E.M. Hosein. The *East Indian Weekly* described the letter as a "historic document." Hosein, however, later revolted against both the cultural and biological assimilation of Indians. In late 1928 he advocated the formation of Indian *sabhas* (councils), urged the teaching of Hindi and Urdu, and criticized educated Indian men for marrying outside of their race. *East Indian Weekly*, October 20 and October 27, 1928; see also Ramesar 1994:147.

10. *East Indian Weekly*, January 12, 1929.

11. *East Indian Weekly*, February 9 and June 8, 1929.

12. *East Indian Weekly*, February 9 and June 8, 1929.

13. Hosein, for example, was willing to excuse those Indians who had undergone some degree of Westernization on the ground that in a colony like Trinidad "western culture and habits are a passport to the best society" (*East Indian Weekly*, November 3, 1928). For favorable comments on the work of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, see Kirpalani 1945:53-55 and Ramesar 1994:144-45.

14. For reviews of these attempts to establish a club house, see *Port of Spain Gazette*, August 9, 1936: Letter from N.E. Ramcharan; and *Port of Spain Gazette*, May 9, 1937: Review by C.B. Mathura.

15. In 1921 Rev. C.D. Lalla, at the time the leading spokesman for the Couva-based EINC, told Governor J.R. Chancellor that Indians in Trinidad regarded San Fernando as in a special sense "the Home of the East Indian people", and he went on to say that it had produced the first Indian lawyer, the first Indian medical doctor, the first Indian minister of the gospel, the first Indian mayor, the first member of the Legislative Council "and possibly the first of everything noteworthy in the East Indian commonwealth" (*Trinidad Guardian*, May 19, 1921).

16. *East Indian Weekly*, January 5, 1929. The Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha of

Lahore, India, writing on behalf of the Sanatan Dharma Board of Control in Trinidad, reported that when an Indian commissioner of enquiry, Kunwar Maharaj Singh, visited Trinidad (in 1925) destitute Indians lined the streets with banners on which were inscribed "We are Starving"; "We have No Place to Sleep"; and "Send Us Back to Our Country." The Pratinidhi Sabha further alleged that Rev. C.D. Lalla, who chaired a reception committee for Maharaj Singh, prevented the latter from speaking directly to the people. Public Record Office, Colonial Office 295/575/9576, Letter no. 47 dated January 9, 1933, from the Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha of Lahore, India, to W. Christie, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India. As late as August 1936, large numbers of poor and destitute Indians were besieging the Immigration Office in Port of Spain to be allowed to return to India (*Port of Spain Gazette*, August 7, 1936).

17. *East Indian Weekly*, February 9, 1929.

18. *East Indian Weekly*, February 16, 1929.

19. *Trinidad Guardian*, April 24, 1918.

20. The Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat was established under Ordinance No. 24 of 1935. It became the major rival of the earlier Tackveeyatul Islamic Association, established under Ordinance No. 39 of 1931. The Sanatan Dharma Board of Control (SDBC) and its rival, the Sanatan Dharam Association (SDA) were both established in 1932 under Ordinances No. 19 and No. 15 respectively. Despite the numerical sequence of the ordinances, the SDBC preceded the formation of the SDA.

21. *East Indian Weekly*, January 23, 1932.

22. *East Indian Weekly*, January 23, 1932. Katha and Bhagwat are Hindu prayer-meetings usually of one day's and one week's duration respectively. The prayer-meetings are usually followed by a communal feast.

23. See, for example, the controversy over the celebration of the first day-time Hindu wedding reported in the *Trinidad Guardian*, December 13, 1933. But what generated the bitterest controversies among Hindus were the several attempts by the government to enact a Hindu marriage bill, leading one Westernized Indian to comment that "Hindu priests themselves jeopardize the moral, social and intellectual progress of the Hindu community" (*Port of Spain Gazette*, January 17, 1937: Letter from George D. Mahabir). On the disputes between Arya Samajists and Sanatanists, see Forbes 1979. The Muslims also had their controversies: for example, the challenge of the Ahmadis to the Sunnis (*Port of Spain Gazette*, February 13, 1937).

24. See for example, Rienzi's bitter attack on the EINC and its moribund counterpart, the EINA in *East Indian Weekly*, February 16, 1929. It was the growing organizational fragmentation of the Indians that prompted the Trinidad Government to establish in early 1937 an East Indian Advisory Board, whose composition led to new recrimination; see *Port of Spain Gazette*, February 6, 1937: Letter from George D. Mahabir; and *Port of Spain Gazette*, February 6, 1937: Article by C.B. Mathura.

25. All citations in this paragraph taken from *Port of Spain Gazette*, August 6, 1936.

26. *Trinidad Guardian*, July 4 and July 29, 1937. The EINC gave separate testimony before the Foster commission of enquiry into the labor unrest in Trinidad and Tobago in September 1937 (*Trinidad Guardian*, September 18, 1937).

27. Kirpalani 1945:79, 91. Also *Trinidad Guardian*, April 21, 1942.
28. *The Observer*, May, 1945.
29. *The Observer*, December, 1941.
30. PRO, CO 295/630/70097/44. Stanley to Clifford, Outward conf. tel. no. 1217, December 15, 1944. Also Clifford to Stanley, Inward Conf. Tel. no. 1426, December 9, 1944. And *The Observer*, May, 1945.
31. Ramesar 1994:142-46; Campbell 1992:60-63. As early as 1929, Pundit Gharbaran Doobay of British Guiana came to Trinidad to establish a school for the teaching of Hindi (*East Indian Weekly*, February 2, 1929). Later that year a Hindu School was founded at Marabella by Pundit Hariprasad Sharma (*East Indian Weekly*, September 21, 1929). By 1932 there was a Hindu-Muslim School at Chaguanas, with an Arya Samajist as principal; this provoked criticism from a Sanatanist (*East Indian Weekly*, February 27, 1932).
32. Up to 1939 Mitra Sinanan was associated with the EINC, but thereafter he became involved with T.U. Butler, first as his legal representative, later as his political collaborator. By 1953, however, he had begun to distance himself from Butler. Other Indians who entered into ententes with Butler in this period were Timothy Roodal, regarded as a financial patron of Butler, Ranjit Kumar, Chanka Maraj, Stephen Maharaj, and Bhadase Maraj (Cardinez 1990: 172-76; 181-82).
33. B.S. Maraj, as he was in the process of consolidating his own political following among the Hindus, made overtures to Butler for an alliance. The governing elite regarded such an alliance as "a dangerous and irresponsible combination." The proposed alliance never formally materialized, but it was in the context of that possibility that Maraj was able to extract from the colonial administration financial support for his Hindu school-building program; see Cardinez 1990:196-200.
34. Perhaps the most assiduous work was that undertaken by Pundit Dinanath Tewari, of the Sanatan Dharma Board of Control, who went to India in 1937 and enlisted the help of Dr. Parashu Ram Sharma. The latter accompanied Tewari back to Trinidad, arriving in early January 1938. He spent nearly two years organizing Hindus in Trinidad and British Guiana. By the time of his departure in late December 1939, he, Tewari and other members of the SDBC had established twenty-one district branches of the SDBC in major centers of Indian settlement in Trinidad, *Port of Spain Gazette*, January 22, 1939.
35. *Port of Spain Gazette*, June 10, 1952. Also Maraj 1991:12-13. Ranjit Kumar later accused Maraj of being behind the assassination of two opponents, a charge Maraj is alleged to have responded to by confronting Kumar with a drawn revolver (*Trinidad Guardian*, January 19, 1956).
36. Catchpole: pars. 12-39. According to Knowles (1959:84-85), "prominent Trinidadians" he had interviewed accused Maraj of "bringing Chicago-style racketeering methods to Trinidad and feared that he would succeed in joining together in Al Capone manner politics, business, trade unionism and religion."
37. *The Observer* in its May, 1944, issue gives the first notice of the formation of this organization. Details of its activities have been gathered from interviews with the following: J.N. Nath, of Brierley Street, Sangre Grande, who was the organization's

first treasurer; Dr. Anna Mahase, former principal of the St. Augustine Girls' High School, who is the daughter of the organization's first president; L.B. Mahadeo, of Guaico, Sangre Grande, who is a retired school principal, an Elder of the Presbyterian Church, and a former member of the Bharat Sumati Sabha; and Kissoon Ragoonanan of Boodooville, Sangre Grande, a Hindu gas station owner and also a former member of the organization.

38. The author was one of the first-generation students of the college, having enrolled in 1955. He received both his Cambridge School Certificate and Cambridge Higher School Certificate at this institution, and in the early 1960s was a member of its teaching staff.

39. In the 1960s a rival faction of the SDMS took the Maraj-led faction to court in a dispute over its internal elections. This resulted in the freezing for a number of years of the financial grant (for religious purposes) provided by the state to the organization, pending the settlement of the dispute.

40. Whereas in 1960 there were just 1,695 Pentecostals in the whole of Trinidad and Tobago, in 1990 it was estimated that the Pentecostals numbered 84,066 members compared to 38,740 Presbyterians in a total population of approximately 1,200,000. While there are no figures for the percentage of Indians within the Pentecostal fold, it is significant that the Pentecostals are most numerous in the regions where the Indians are most concentrated: St. George (27,354 members), Victoria (18,832), and Caroni (12,456). See Vertovec 1992 and *Annual Statistical Digest* 1966 and 1992, tables 13.

41. Middle-class professionals of African and mixed African ancestry have been frequently the most critical of Indian cultural activities. Thus in 1944 Henry Hudson-Phillips warned that Trinidad could become "a little India in the Caribbean". He was opposed to the teaching of Hindi and Urdu in schools (*Trinidad Guardian*, November 1, 1944). Both Eric Williams and C.L.R. James expressed opposition to this as well. Williams felt denominational schools made social integration more difficult. He condemned the SDMS school-building program, and denounced the teaching of Hindi (*Trinidad Guardian*, September 18, 1956). C.L.R. James, for his part, argued that "West Indians have to accept that the civilisation of the Caribbean, of Trinidad and Tobago, exists in a European framework and in particular ... a British framework. In search of our own identity we have to recognize ... that our language is that of the British people" (*Sunday Mirror*, July 10, 1966). A few years later, Dave Darbeau (now Khafra Kambon and a local Pan-Africanist ideologue) argued in a teachers' training college debate that "because of their cultural attachments, East Indians were not prepared to be assimilated into the society, and because of this political parties were organized along racial lines" (*Trinidad Guardian*, February 13, 1960).

42. One of the few instances in which I have seen this more accurate variant of the generic *imperialism* used is in the work of a former governor of Jamaica and later chairman of the 1930 commission of enquiry into the West Indian sugar industry; see Olivier 1929:14.

43. An attempt is being made to do so by local Indian musicians and other artistes, but often in a direction which has offended the sensibilities of those who wish to preserve the traditional Indian (upper-caste?) values of dignity, poise, and gracefulness. Thus the Lawa dance, which is performed as part of Hindu nuptial ceremonies, and is a sexual rite of passage dance, strictly in-house and confined to female partici-

pants and viewers, has been transferred to the public stage under the name of Chutney, with both male and female dancers engaging in what many Indians consider to be scandalous pelvic gyrations to the accompaniment of the frenzied beating of skin drums and other percussion instruments.

44. This is not to suggest that cultural barriers alone create political division between the working classes of these two numerically largest ethnic groups, who, at the time of the last censuses in 1990 each constituted approximately 42 percent of the island's total population. But the cultural factor cannot be underestimated. Perhaps no one has stated this problem more cogently than Afro-Guyanese novelist and social commentator George Lamming: "A perception of the Indian as alien and other, a problem to be contained after the departure of the imperial power, has been a major part of the feeling of West Indians of African descent, and a particularly stubborn conviction among the black 'plantation' middle classes of Trinidad and Guyana" (*Sunday Express*, September 6, 1992).

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