

Personalities come and go as they flicker and glow for a few moments in time, but true icons stand the test of time and events, transcend time, place, personalities and politics, and forever become enshrined in the annals of history. Dr. Yesu Persaud is such an icon - our icon, the nation's icon - one who stands tall among men anytime and anywhere; one who will always stand prominent in history.

George Bernard Shaw said, "Some men see things as they are and ask why". Dr. Yesu Persaud dreams things that never were and asks "why not?" I am proud to acknowledge that my wife Camille and I have been blessed to know Dr. Persaud and his family. Dr. Persaud is a dear friend and mentor to me and I have learned so much from him – what to do, to aspire for as well as what to avoid, although he says nothing is beyond reach if the cause is just, you are determined and get the right people involved.



How does one pay a fitting homage and tribute so well deserving of such an outstanding citizen, humanitarian and high achiever who knows no limit? Try as we may, such an effort is daunting due to the long journey Dr. Persaud travelled, the obstacles overcome, the extra-ordinary level of accomplishments and remarkable achievements. However, we need to express our kinship, respect and gratitude for the pioneering steps he took for common good of people, for the pedestals he has built for others and his broad shoulders on which we can stand with pride and reverence.

I feel privileged to have shared many notable events with Dr. Persaud: In Georgetown, Highbury, New York, Toronto, New Delhi, Port of Spain, Paramaribo and cities. Due to an unforeseen setback, I missed the Warwick doctorate honours ceremony but was there in spirit.

Dr. Persaud is a man who was destined for greatness. It is said that life does not come gift wrapped nor tied with a bow, but it's still a precious gift to be nurtured and cherished. Dr. Persaud views life in that way and strives to make the most of that gift. While most people are like candles of light in their lives, Dr. Persaud is like a luminous megawatt bulb, a beacon shining at 360 degrees night and day – and instantly very visible from near and far. And, his example is tremendously contagious.

“Work your tail off” is so aptly applicable to Dr. Persaud, literally in every sense. He is an extremely hard worker, a man of discipline and appreciates things done to specifications with a sense of order that defines life itself. He insists on performance and results by which achievements are measured,

Wrapped in this bundle of a person is a man of wisdom and purpose, one who works hard and strives to preserve, promote and sustain Indian culture in Guyana. His exemplary efforts helped enormously to sustain the Indian culture in other places in the Caribbean as well. And it was not an easy task as we all know how many obstacles, difficulties and roadblocks people of Indian origin face in the multi-ethnic societies of the Caribbean region – and elsewhere too. When the subject of Indian culture in Guyana is discussed, now and in the future, it cannot be effectively and accurately done without Dr. Persaud being the focus of a personal, enormous preservation effort throughout the years

Dr. Persaud is truly a man of passion, strong beliefs and conviction. He is a man of courage, taking risks in business and in life -- with inner strength, fortitude, courage, perseverance and determination unmatched in our region and in our lifetime. The most admirable attributes which reflect the person of Dr. Persaud include dignity, determination, with purpose, humility, respect and generosity of heart.

True to his nature, Dr. Persaud can dine with princes but is considerate of the needs of the poor, under-served, and ambitious young people to assist and nurture so they can pursue better livelihoods.

Dr. Persaud was in charge of the 150<sup>th</sup> Arrival Day celebrations in Guyana in 1988 and he founded the Indian Commemoration Trust (ICT) which worked to obtain the land for the Indian Arrival Monument – Monument Park in Georgetown. The commemoration of Indian Arrival with the symbolic ship will be a lasting tribute to our ancestors who braved all kinds of obstacles and pain to make our lives better and more secure. He worked hard to locate the documents, list the many ships and document what he could to preserve the history of our arrival. For the 175<sup>th</sup> Arrival Day celebrations in 2013, Dr. Persaud, ICT and I collaborated on the installation and unveiling of the Indian Arrival Monuments at Highbury and Monument Gardens. For these many noble efforts, sir, we are all very grateful.

Dr. Persaud is a founding life member of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) and he collaborates with the Indian High Commissioner in Guyana, as well as civic and cultural organizations. In recognition of his long and continuing effort to preserve Indian culture, he has been accorded an enormous array of recognition and awards, most notably the Government of India Pravasi Samman Award -- only 97 persons have been so recognized at that time.

In addition, he was accorded Honorary Doctorates from University of Warwick (UK) and University of West Indies (Trinidad) for his many outstanding years as a highly successful entrepreneur, civic leader and philanthropist. He is an ardent supporter of documentaries, books, symposia and series lectures which promote Indian heritage and culture. Examples: Film “Once More Removed”; Pradeep Samtani’s movie filmed in Guyana; writers, poets, historians.

Another significant attribute that we cannot forget: Dr. Persaud’s role with Guyana Civic and being instrumental in bringing back democratic elections in Guyana, for which we are all grateful. He took the risks for the larger good. He was hounded and attacked but he persevered for all our benefit. He continued his pursuit of justice as only a man of passion and ideals would do. There is the time when he narrowly escaped from a waiting band of soldiers and pursued by jeep. Dr. Persaud persevered. In fact, truth and justice preserved. And by his actions, we all persevered. Thank you, Dr. Persaud

Dr. Persaud often said, *“Boy, we all come is ships, but we are in the same boat”*. He worked hard for harmonious co-existence, in peace and understanding. He is a man of peace yet one with strong convictions of respect for culture and discipline.

On the philanthropy and the humanitarian side, his support of those in need, the poor, those in dire need due to circumstances are many fold. Example: The Bartica Massacre several years ago: He supported the families with food and funds for several months. This is the type of humanitarianism that is done quietly without promotion or fanfare but is done because of generosity of heart of Dr. Persaud.



## **Tribute to Dr. Yesu Persaud, Man of Honour & Distinction - by Ashook Ramsaran**

There is also the humorous side of Dr. Persaud that is not readily known: Examples are: The incident in Hyderabad, India in 2006 when he paid twice for the taxi ride yet was left stranded on the road. His explanation of the “Dharu” habits of our ancestors, a sort of justification for rum. The time when the Prime Minister of another country stayed overnight when he least expected it.

Dr. Yesu Persaud is a man with the highest order of humility: Tough -- yet he is humble; prominent -- yet he is humble; exemplary -- yet he is humble; high recognition worldwide -- yet he is humble; dined with lords and princes -- yet he is humble; noble in deeds and ideals -- yet he is humble; a man who has reached the pinnacle -- yet revels in simplicity, neither seeks nor relishes accolades. He is truly a man of humility who exemplifies humanity at its best, and for that we are grateful and proud.

Dr. Persaud, you are a truly remarkable person, a man of honor and unwavering integrity; an ardent advocate of noble and worthy causes for the larger good; a humanitarian at heart and in practice, with understanding and unmatched compassion; an authentic, self-sacrificing person of moral character with positive traits that manifest profound respect; a person of enormous talent, an agent of change, with spirited determination, resilience and endurance; a valiant protector and promoter of his culture, with nurturing and sustained beliefs in goodness, self and humanity; an innovator, a motivator and man of action; with tenacity and strong will power to do that which he knows is right; from humble beginning through hard work to become a shining beacon, a man of peace with conviction and ideals; one with broad shoulders that give us hope and lift our spirits high; internationally recognized and held in high esteem for his many accomplishments and achievements which have far reaching, positive impact on the lives of so many; indeed, a worldly personality, yet so humble; a person good at heart and in deed, of whom we are all so proud; a mentor and dear friend.

If these were colonial times, there is no doubt that he would have been knighted. In fact, that would have been done long ago !! He is our hero – and my mentor and my guru. It is fitting that Dr. Persaud is responsible for the successes of “El Dorado” which means “City of Gold”. The fact is, Dr. Persaud has a heart of gold, and in “*Reaching for the Stars*”, he uplifted all of us. !!

We also recognize the stalwart support of your life partner Barbara throughout the years and we wish her good health. May your beacon of light continue to shine and give us strength and courage to learn from you -- to emulate you and learn how we can be of help to our fellow human kind the same way you have shown us by your deeds Happy Birthday, my friend. God be with you always !!

*Ashook Ramsaran is president of Indian Diaspora Council International and former president of GOPIO International.*

