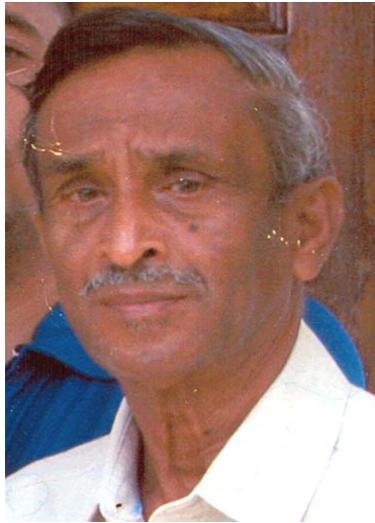


In the immediate wake of Indian Arrival Day 2010, BIGDRUMNATION'S Raymond Viechweg and Caldwell Taylor "spoke" with Wilbur Adams, President, Indo-Grenadian Heritage Foundation (IGHF). The interview was conducted via the Internet. BDN submitted its questions on May 6, 2010 and Brother Adams responded on May 12, 2010.



Wilbur Adams
President, Indo-Grenadian Heritage Foundation

BDN: Tell us about your ancestral connections to India, as far back as you can trace.

WA:My father was Adam Jawahir. His mother, my grandmother, was Virginia Palton. Her father, my great grandfather, was George Palton. George Palton was the first of my Indian forbearers to come to Grenada. My mother's last name was Gunpot and she, too, was an Indian.

BDN: You are retired from a career as an insurance salesman in Grenada. Now, your interest is in the preservation of indo-Grenadian culture and history? Is it safe

to say that in insurance you sought to secure life and property; now you seek to secure history and culture?

WA: This is true, but the key here is that I made a living in the people business. I had to attend very closely to the concerns of people when I worked in Insurance. Now, I am motivated by a concern for generations to come, as to the knowledge they are provided.

BDN: What does India mean to you?

WA: Mainly, the country to which I connect my ancestry.

BDN: How were this year's Arrival Day celebrations?

WA: They met our expected objectives. A plaque has been made to mark the Irwin's Bay landing site; the Gov't has declared May 1st as Indian Arrival Day in Grenada, in conjunction with Labour Day; the Indian High Commission in Trinidad has developed cultural interest in our Foundation; efforts are afoot to incorporate into Grenadian education, the overlooked elements of the Indo-Grenadian experience.

BDN: What events were on the agenda this year?

WA: There was dancing by an Indian group from Samaritan and one from Trinidad. There was a luncheon at Belmont Estate. There was a thanksgiving service. The Plaque was dedicated and Maidstone Road sign was installed.

BDN: Are we certain that Maidstone landed at Irwin's Bay and not at Gouyave?

WA: Considering the distribution of Indians to the various estates [Wilbur is here referring to the fact that most of Maidstone's Indian 'cargo' went to St. Patrick's/St. Mark's estates, closer to Irwin's Bay than to Gouyave (see next question)].

BDN: Is there any written or oral evidence that verifies Irwin's Bay as the first landing site?

WA: Written, I would say. Actually, the record of Indians distributed to nearby estates demonstrates that no Indians from Maidstone were distributed on the Estates of St. John's parish.

For emphasis, BDN has attached the following record, provided by Wilbur:

Maidstone 1857

The **Maidstone** left Calcutta, India on Jan 27, 1857 with 375 East Indians. It was the first ship with East Indian labourers to Grenada; arriving there on May 1, 1857 with 289 laborers. Ninety-two passengers died during the voyage.

DISTRIBUTION OF EAST INDIAN INDENTURED LABORERS IN GRENADA FROM THE MAIDSTONE

	Plantation	Number approved for	Males	Females	Total	Pudars
1	Grand Bacolet	15	9	2	11	
2	Hope	15	9	2	11	
3	Thuilliries	10	7	1	8	1 for all 3
4	Upper Latante	10	7	1	8	
5	Crochu	20	11	2	13	1 for both
6	Carriere	20	11	2	13	
7	Conference	15	9	2	11	1 for both
8	Belmont	15	10	2	12	1
9	Mount Rose	30	17	3	20	1
10	Mount Reuil	20	11	3	14	
11	Chambord	20	10	3	13	
12	Plain	20	10	3	13	1 for all 3
13	Morne Fendue	20	10	3	13	
14	Lafortune	20	10	3	13	
15	Snell Hall	20	10	3	13	1 for all 3
16	Rivier Sallee	20	10	3	13	1
17	Marli	20	10	3	13	1
18	Mount William	20	10	3	13	
19	Duquesne	20	10	3	13	
20	Samaritan	20	10	3	13	1 for all 3
		370	201	50	251	10

BDN: What do you know about the circumstances which brought your Indian fore-parents to Grenada?

WA: They were coerced into believing an El Dorado [fictional city of gold] existed over the kalapani (water).

BDN: Thus far, only a limited number of people are committed to the commemoration of Arrvival Day. What plans are in store to ensure that the event is sustained for generations to come?

WA: Development of the Heritage site, to include written and other visual representations of the Indo-Grenadian experience. Also, that Indo-Grenadian studies become a meaningful part of our school curriculum.

BDN: How does Indian awareness benefit Grenada as a whole?

WA: It brings helps to expand and enrich the overall character of Grenadian nationality.

BDN: Wilbur, Can you sum up the Indian experience in Grenada in a single word?

WA: Ignorance

BDN: Can you elaborate on that “ignorance”?

WA: Most indo-Grenadians are unaware of their history and culture before coming to Grenada. They are sometimes even unaware of their history since coming to Grenada.

BDN: Here is V.S Naipaul in a 2007 book called “A Writer’s People”:

I have said that I very early became aware of different ways of seeing because I came to the metropolis from very far. Another reason may be that I don’t, properly speaking, have a past that is available to me, a past I can enter into and consider; I grieve for that lack

Does any of this resonate with you?

WA: Not really. I am conscious of being a Grenadian and Caribbean person.

BDN: The bamboo firecracker (bursting bamboo) came to Grenada from India. For what other cultural gifts are we indebted to that great country?

WA: Indian bread, roti and thrift, to name a few.

BDN: Difference and diversity are defining features of the Caribbean condition: Do you see them as assets or liabilities? Why, why not?

WA: Assets. Because of our example of social coexistence, meaning coexistence between blacks and Indians?

BDN: The following words were spoken by philosopher Isaiah Berlin in a 1995 interview with Nathan Gardels....

....just as people need to eat and drink, to have security and freedom of movement, so too they need to belong to a group. Deprived of this dimension in life, they feel cut off, lonely, diminished, unhappy. To be human means to be able to feel at home somewhere, with one’s own kind.

BDN: How will you respond to Berlin’s comments?

WA: Indians of the Diaspora are at home in the Caribbean. They are unique in culture.

BDN: It has come to our attention that a local undertaker is donating towards the East Indian memorial site. We've also noticed that the same undertaker has donated the Carib monument at Leapers' Hill, which is dominated by a Christian cross and not the symbols of Carib religion and culture. Is that a concern of your group, or do you have some kind of pre-Christian symbolism in mind?

WA: The commemorative plaque was donated for (1) Publicity and (2) awareness of ancestry). Nothing to do with religion. The symbol endorsed is a ship, representing travel [of Indian indentures to Grenada]. By the way, the donor/undertaker is partially of Indian descent and is also interested in the preservation of Indian memory.

BDN: Names can be a fantastic starting point for building historical information, as descendants or bearers of a particular name may proudly seek to celebrate that name. If that effort is not made, over time a lot of memory will be lost. So, Wilbur, how do you feel about Grenada building a data base of its Indian names?

WA: Not a bad idea. Many names have been lost through proselytization into Christianity. Some names remain, even if ethnicity changed. The greatest assurance of retention of some names is by retaining property names that were named after their original Indian owners. Take my case: Even though my last name is Adams, I was able to trace my land inheritance through the Indian name Palton (sp?), which was the family name of my paternal grandmother and great grandfather. My grandmother and the other Indians on Samaritan Estate were sold small pieces of land when the outskirts of the estate were sold.

BDN: What Hindi/Bhojpuri words can still be heard in Grenada today?

WA: A limited few: Baghi, talkari, roti – just a few. Marijuana (Ganja) was brought to the Caribbean by the Indians. It was used as an anesthetic to recuperate after a hard day's work. The seeds were ground and mixed with milk, as a refreshing drink. This is information I received from my father.

BDN: What if after a while fewer and fewer people look ethnically Indian, and fewer and fewer Indian names remain?

WA: This is why I am engaged in the work of preserving our story, so that our life's effort will not be lost. I recently went to the funeral of an elderly Indian lady in Samaritan, and most of the relatives were what you may call Afro-Grenadians. Now, without the kind of efforts we are making these relatives may never know the truth of their ancestry.

BDN: Is there anything you'd like to say to our readers that we have not covered?

WA: With the establishment of Indian Arrival Day, the history of Grenada is also being focused as it relates to the Indians. This is something we are thankful for.

BDN: Thank you.