

# **Abolition, Indentureship and Creoleness:**

## **Reflections on the Indo-Grenadian Predicament**

**By**

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This effort is dedicated to the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the African slave trade and, coincidentally, to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of East Indian indentured servants to Grenada

## **Abolition, Indentureship and Creoleness: Reflections on the Indo-Grenadian predicament**

### *A Meeting of cultures*

The abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 signaled the end of the trade in African slaves and the beginning of the trade in Indian indentures. As such, it meant the continuous intermixing, or creolizing, of cultures that would eventually place the Grenadian Indian in a position of cultural vulnerability. When Indians arrived in Grenada in 1857, they found themselves in a position subordinate to a dominant Anglo-African creolization. The occasion of the abolition of the slave trade should be commemorated neither as spectacle, nor as a mere dramatization, but as a marker which from year to year will chart the progress made towards mitigating the hegemonistic tendencies within Grenadian creolization. Hegemony is the tendency of one group to exercise dominance over other groups, even without the threat of force. In hegemonies, the espoused beliefs, values and philosophies of the dominant group are empowered, almost to the exclusion of others. In Grenada, Indians have functioned within and alongside the dominant Afro-Grenadian cultural formation for 150 years now. So, as we commemorate the abolition of the slave trade, we must simultaneously commemorate the addition to Grenadian culture of an indispensable East Indian component. Today, as we remember the perils of the slave trade, so should we also remember the perils of the journey from India. As we remember the end of the slave trade, so should we also remember the beginning of indentured labour. Today, unfortunately, we must lament the absence of any monuments to Indian contributions to Grenadian nationhood and culture. Hopefully, through the lamentation, a solution may appear.

The event of 1807 brought the Indian cultural experience to the ongoing process of Grenadian creolization that was already influenced by the Caribs, the French, the Africans and the English. Without a properly negotiated role in the intermixing process, a minority culture can suffer irreparable losses, not to speak of their being silenced under the dictates of the dominant cultural formation within that creolization. Indians in Grenada, despite some brave efforts, suffered the loss of the culture they brought from India, primarily through proselytizing schemes by the English Churches; whatever was left of their weakened culture, was absorbed, or subsumed, in the dominant Anglo-African culture. Indian culture in Grenada was weakened for other reasons, too, including an eventual apathy by Indians, themselves, in continuing to asserting their cultural privileges. Experience has shown that attachment to one's inherited culture makes for a stronger contribution to nation building; when there is not that cultural attachment, education in culture and history should commence in order to fill the attachment gap. Noorkumar Mahabir in his study of East Indians in Grenada, begins with a quote from Jomo Kenyatta's 1938 "Facing Mount Kenya," where Kenyatta powerfully describes the value of one's inherited culture:

"It is the culture which (a man) inherits that gives a man his human dignity as well as his material prosperity. It teaches him his mental and moral values and makes him feel it worthwhile to work and fight for liberty." (Mahabir in Bahadursingh, 370)

At one time the Indians of Grenada were significantly equipped with their inherited culture, but after conversion they were not to look favorably upon their Hindu and Muslim traditions. Religious conversion was not the only condition adverse to Indian cultural survival, but it had the most profound effect. Since the traditional Indian religions were the gatekeepers of culture, Christian conversion meant the quick



**Belair Presbyterian Church (updated)**

One of the original Church locations used by English colonialism in their successful bid to convert the early East Indians

decimation of the Indians' inherited traditions. Indentureship lasted for 33 years (1857 – 1890) and in that period more than 70 percent of Grenadian Indians were Christianized. The question remains: Is it possible, or even worthwhile, to resuscitate Indian culture in Grenada?

I believe it is possible, and worthwhile, to resuscitate Indian culture in Grenada. Obviously, resuscitation will neither be aided by a simplistic reversion to traditional Indian religions, nor by merely learning the old languages, but by a

historical awareness of Indian cultural expression in Grenada. No method of cultural resuscitation will succeed, without an associated focus on the history of that culture to be resuscitated. I agree with Merle

Collins when she recommends an associated teaching of the history of the krio languages, as well as of the history of the imported communities, along with their grammars. Likewise, because culture experiences the same creolized process as language, there may be a need for an associated teaching of Indo-Grenadian cultural history, along with any attempts at resuscitating, or even just evaluating, Indian cultural practices that are now submerged in the African-dominated creolization of Grenada.

The creolizing process does not occur without bargaining and concessions. In fact, it is in the bargaining process that an education in history becomes advantageous. The bargaining process may have ensured the Indians their physical survival in exchange for the surrendering of their cultural capital. But, by any standard of conscience or social justice, the imbalance in such an exchange cries out for rectification. In fact, in the creolization process, there were outright dictatorial forces to which the minority Indian culture inevitably succumbed. Therefore, in a contentious cultural environment, Indo-Grenadians will need all the informational input they can muster in order to strengthen their stance. John Ford observes the contentious nature of the creolization process when he asserts that:

The process of negotiation, jockeying for social position, struggling for material advantage and cultural expression has not, of course, taken place in a context of democratically agreed reforms. (Ford, 3)

Ford, further, agrees with Nigel Bolland that:

Creolization should not be understood as a homogenizing process but as a process of contention. (Ford, 3)

For each cultural community it will take education, thought and discursive contention in order to decipher and appropriate the culturally distinct elements of its Grenadian identity, that are typically buried somewhere within the misperception of a monolithic Grenadian culture. Grenadians generally appear as 'one' people, based on a careless assumption that the nation is all-African. We are not, regrettably, united on the true basis of our cultural plurality. For a validation of our plurality there must be an identification of the singularities that constitute that plurality, or there is no plurality. Palpably, and quite fortunately, there are still cultural areas where heterogeneity explodes in its full splendour.

One such explosion of heterogeneous plurality is at carnival. Carnival is an experience that provides a working basis for an investigation of our Grenadian heritage(s). At Carnival, the imitation of Caribs, as *Wild Indians*, by both Africans and East Indians, occurs even as we use African melodies that are expressed in Grenadian Patwa (same as *Patois*). Another explosion of heterogeneity is where at a Grenadian party, for example, one does not find the insularity in musical selections you would find in North American parties. A North American party may consist of Hip Hop, and only Hip Hop; R & B, and only R & B; Rock, and only Rock; even Jamaicans often give you Reggae, and only Reggae; and, Trinidadians often 'jam' with only Soca. In a Grenadian party, there usually is an eclectic mix including all of the above, and more. Dances can range anywhere between Passa Passa and Waltz. The reason why this 'mix-up' occurs, is because Grenada is actively engaged in the negotiations of a heterogeneous creolization. In the creolization process, the results are not the hegemonic pretensions to completeness, definitiveness, perfection and closure. There is no homogenous totality in our negotiated cultural forms. The result is always open-ended, in progress, allowing for the entry of new cultural negotiators.

I believe an increased knowledge of our Indian heritage will result in an enrichment of the negotiation process in a significant way. I think conscious agency will benefit the marginalized Indian voice, especially since Grenadian Indians have been silenced to the point that there has never even been an Indian holiday in Grenada. Where is the support for a celebration of Indian Independence, the way African Liberation Day is celebrated? Where is the recognition of Hosay or Divali, consistent with our recognition of our Christian holidays? Again, where are our Indian monuments and heroes? We should, at least, re-commence our Indian Arrival Day celebration in Grenada. I believe in the long run many Grenadians including 'half-Indians' (douglahts), and others, will benefit from an increased understanding of our Indian heritage.

Let us take for example, and this is where a confluence of purely incidental factors has resulted in my added interest in the cause of Indian cultural resuscitation, the event marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coming of Indians to Grenada:

The Indian Centenary celebration was held on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1957 in an elementary school in Belmont, St. Andrews. It was an occasion which drew Indians by bus, car and foot to honour the surviving ex-indentured immigrants. Indians were dressed in *dhoti*, *sari* and *ohrini* and were informed about Indian history in Grenada and about the significance of Indian Arrival Day. There were songs dance and music. (Mahabir in Bahadursingh, 387)

Let me correct an error from the above excerpt: The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary was not held in the elementary school at Belmont, St. Patrick's, where my grandfather was the head teacher. The elementary school Bhadursingh was referring to was Belair Government School in St. Andrew's parish.

I was born in 1957, the same year of the Indian Centenary celebration. Prior to learning of the centenary event, I had been fascinated by other 1957 trivia: in that year Johnny Mathis made the song *Chances Are*; *Bridge Over the River Kwai*, which presented multiple perspectives of WWII, was one of the top movies of the year; I think I was fascinated to learn that Elvis' *Jailhouse Rock* topped the charts that year. And, it was always memorable to me that in 1957 Eisenhower sent troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to ensure school access to African Americans. Also, I learnt from my mother, who is a douglah, that on the day I was born in 1957 the nurse, after delivering my three-and-a-half pound frame, went across nearby Camel River, to deliver another baby who unfortunately died at birth. On my birthday, I sometimes remember that that little child was also given my name. Now, in my mind, the Indian Centenary celebration has upstaged all these other 1957 events because it celebrated, in the Callaloo section of my home village of Hermitage, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Indian arrivals in Grenada aboard the ship, *Maidstone*. But, the confluence of events continues.

My paternal Grandfather, the mulatto son of a Grenadian white from Mt. Moritz, for almost twenty years starting before World War II, was then principal of the same Hermitage Government School where the Indian Centenary celebration was held; he was deceased for about a year prior to the Centenary celebration. Both my parents attended Hermitage Government School. On the same piece of land with the school, was my grandmother's house. In fact, hers was the closest building to the school. It was from my grandmother, and her family, that I saw Indian Dinners and Mundans (celebration of a boy's first hair cut), learnt words like *belangene*, *bodhi*, *seem*, *curry*, *tarkari*, *dahl* and *mahr*. My grandmother must have been bold, as she married my Afro-Vincentian/Grenadian grandfather, the grandson of Vincentian slaves, even against a backdrop of prejudices and taboos at that time. Together, my maternal grandparents had ten children, my mother being the one before the last. It was from my grandmother that I learnt poignant lessons about what 'vice' meant, after she caught me smoking a cigarette; and about saving money, which she conveyed to me as literally 'hiding' your money.

Many Indians changed their names in the course of cultural absorption, but my relatives never did. For example, in Hermitage there was an Indian, surnamed De gale, who was once a Jagoo; likewise, there was an Indian, surnamed Thomas, who was once a Mahadai. Indo-Grenadian society is replete with such name conversions. I found out that my grandmother was a byproduct of Bobogee and Haroo. My great grandmother was called Mama Gooya and my great great grandmother was called Ms Bobogee. I inquired further and found that the name Bobogee is common in the Kashmir area of India and that it possibly means “sister.” Regardless, I believe our Indian citizens should be encouraged to salvage as much of their roots as they can, so that they do not have to be a silent cultural entity in Grenada.

I have volunteered this much, because I value the circumstances of creolization that have produced my mongrelized Grenadianness. I am overwhelmingly, and proudly, African in my appearance, but my particular mixed-up Caribbean circumstance, bearing African, Indian and European culture, has caused me to appreciate the need for the preservation of our nation’s cultural heterogeneity. When we assume that we have a homogeneous society, it is often patterned on North American notions of a “color-blind” society, which I regard as dangerously deemphasizing of cultural difference. Requiring color-blindness is actually an acknowledgement by a hegemonic power of the color burden with which it has saddled itself, and that it now needs to forget. The marginalized subaltern community has to be cautious in its acceptance of the terms of cultural reference dictated to it. Even extremely wealthy African Americans will tell you that parity with whites in wealth and class does not translate into cultural parity and respect; it does not alleviate their cultural silencing, especially when it concerns concrete steps, like the exploration of *Ebonics* as a linguistic model in buttressing the English competence of some African American children; in these circumstances, the dominant American English machine kicks into full gear, influencing even African Americans to thwart the *Ebonics* effort.

The Centenary events and Indian Arrival Day declined in significance, with time, because of the absence of conscious Indian agency. Indians, like African Americans, will find that there is no automatic support from the dominant culture, where it concerns minority attempts to ensure their own cultural survival. Indian Arrival Day, I believe, is a good re-starting point from which our 150-year-old Indian community can culturally re-negotiate its presence in Grenadian society. African Grenadians have had the benefit of cultural affirmation, thus strengthening their voice and presence in society. Shango, Obeah, Saraka, Carnival, black power, Rastafarianism, etc., have all helped to reinforce African pride and presence. Now, I think the African community is sufficiently evolved to appreciate the Indian endeavor to bolster his/her pride and presence, too. Grenada will be stronger when its Indian population is no longer relegated to cultural silence.



**Virginia Haroo-Lewis  
(1900-1973)**

On a personal level: the abolition of the slave trade, which led to the abolition of slavery and the coming of indentures, also led to my chance at life through an East Indian grandmother, above, and her indentured parents.

The end of the slave trade in 1807 portended the 1838 emancipation of the Afro-Grenadian from British West Indian slavery, and the beginning of a quasi-slavery, an indentureship, for the Indo-Grenadian. In some ways the end of the slave trade meant the cessation of new African arrivals to Grenada and, following soon thereafter, the beginning of new Indian arrivals. Yes, in just nineteen years after the 1838 abolition of Grenadian slavery, the 1857 trade in East Indian indentures started. Indians were imported to work the plantations that freed slaves had understandably abandoned. It seemed, then, that Indians and Africans were poised for both cooperation and contest in the formation of Grenadian culture. There were contesting attitudes to plantation life, with Indians approaching,

and Africans retreating. Yet, together, they were equally dispossessed and had no choice but to cooperate. In the process, Indians and Africans together laid the foundations for today's Grenada. However, time has shown that the cooperation and contests were not productively guided, evidenced by a tacit omission of Indian cultural contributions, whenever national pride and culture are celebrated.

The first Ship to arrive in Grenada bearing East Indian Immigrants was the aforementioned *Maidstone*, which landed at Irwin's Bay in St. Patrick's on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1857, carrying 289 passengers, 86 having perished on the voyage from India. Irwin's Bay, sometimes referred to as the Bushiree in Sauteurs, is currently being developed as a heritage and tourist site. *Maidstone* arrived exactly half a century after the abolition of the slave trade and only nineteen years after the end of slavery/apprenticeship. In 1858 *Fulwood* landed with 362; in 1859 *Jalawar* brought 249. Between 1856 and 1878 approximately 3033 East Indians were brought to Grenada [figures, courtesy Mahabir]. Today, in a typical description of Grenadian culture, one does not immediately derive the understanding that Indo-Grenadians were significant in the formation of Grenadian culture. Homogeneous descriptions of Grenadian culture need to be deemphasized and to be informed by theories that reveal, rather than maintain silences about the distinctiveness of indo-Grenadians. While the silences, in themselves, do not invalidate presence they, nonetheless, fail to provide an inclusive enough portrayal of the nation. Based on their large minority representation and the uniqueness of their heritage and contributions, it seems odd that Indo-Grenadians can be described as Grenadians, when the very definition, "Grenadian," needs tweaking so as not to convey notions of an African-only population. One such theory that may help in establishing the true coordinates of our culture is that of **créolite** (creoleness), which seeks to validate all the cultural heritages that make up our community, without these cultures necessarily losing either their distinctiveness or their leeway to bargain, in the course of creating our national identity. Creolite is distinct from creolization in the sense that creolization, like mongrelization, is an inevitable consequence of any ad hoc mixing of entities; créolité, however, is the conscious effort to shepherd the direction of creolization so as not to

silence, or marginalize, any of its entities. Before returning to créolité, however, I will consider some other issues.

The Grenadian ex-slaves were too psychically degraded by generational slavery to have felt superior to the poor Indians who were now suffering in the same places where the indignities of 200 years of African slavery were still smoldering. There was at that time, then, no class basis for African-Indian ethnic discord. The major concern that time had borne out was the danger of Indian absorption into the dominant Afro-Grenadian culture. Absorption was dangerous because, in the process, Indian cultural currency, its cultural heritage, was lost. Afro-Grenadians can still point to Big Drum, Shango, Saraka, Limbo, Calinda dances, and carnival celebrations, all as locations of African cultural expression. But the Indians' once distinct cultural expressions have vastly disappeared. One thing Indians and Africans in Grenada share, however, is an equal estrangement from their motherlands, making Grenada their functioning motherland. As such, it is urgent that both groups explore and examine the ways in which, as exiles in the land of the obliterated Carib 'Indians,' they can culturally inform each other in the course of shaping Grenadian Creolization.

While not being chattel slaves like their Grenadian slave predecessors, Indians suffered mercilessly first through the tropical rigors of plantation servitude, then through the uncertainties following the economic collapse of the sugar plantations. It was said that the health of Indians on the estates was bad and that mortality rates were high, particularly on Mt. Alexander. It is believed that the majority of the early Indians were threatened by almost total extinction, as they were "abandoned to fate":

...kicked off the estates, and allowed to die of yaws and other diseases, conditions deteriorated on the [B]eausejour and La Fortune estates, the latter having indentured labourers looking like grinning skeletons. (Mahabir in Bahadursingh, 373)

There was no relief in terms of a return to India, because, as Professor Chandrashekar Bhat observes:

While it could be discernible that the British Raj had only the interest in replacing 'slavery' by recruiting 'indenture labor' from India, the policies it pursued were essentially to facilitate labor emigration rather than to mitigate the plight of their life in the plantation barracks. Not only there was 'encouragement' to renew the period of their contract under indenture system but the colonial rulers actively discouraged the labor from returning, charging heavy amounts of money for their return passage. (Bhat. 4)

Early Indian arrivals must have felt exiled on Grenada, just as the early Africans may have felt abandoned upon realizing that there was no return to Africa. There is no denying the degree of similarity in the historical experiences of Indians and Africans on Grenadian plantations.

I agree with the lamentation of Mahabir that the study of the Indians in Grenada is essentially one about a relatively weak minority who could not effectively resist

absorption. Gone are the celebrations of Hosay, an Islamic event celebrated by Grenadian Muslims, often attended by Grenadian Hindus. The Royal Grenadian Police Force, in the 1930s is known to have broken up a Hosay march from Grand Bacolet, upon entering Grenville. Hosay marches were held by the Indian Muslims to commemorate the heroic martyrdoms of Prophet Muhammad's Grandsons in Karbala, Iraq. The RGPF was, at the time, enforcing the anglicizing dictates of British colonialism. Today, Hosay is a lost cultural practice. In 1970s I remember the efforts of Doc Ragoobar on Gladstone Road in Grenville to celebrate Divali, the Hindu festival of lights, for which he did not receive support from our Ministry of Culture. I would not doubt that there was also complicity by the Anglo-religious establishment, in opposing Doc.

Continental family connections were lost, especially because the colonial authorities had no interest in repatriating indentured Indians. Indians also lost a sense of structure when the estate panchyats (village courts) ceased, as Indians began to leave the estates and migrate to their small land holdings. Overall, Indo-Grenadians did not face a family crisis. Despite the difficult circumstances stated, the early East Indians had the advantage of close family structures, as well as an actual knowledge of continental ancestry, which provided a stabilizing backdrop for their industriousness, as they sought to emerge with dignity from the losses suffered through indentureship. Unlike early East Indians, the early African slaves were always subject to family disruption by human trade and punishment. So, while the African did not have the initial family strengths of the Indian he, however, had the advantage of larger numbers, which meant that his cultural practices would predominate, even at the cultural expense of Indian absorption into the larger population. Individual Indians did elevate themselves in Grenadian society through hard work, and some became very prominent in the island's retail and other commercial trades. But their success could never surmount their loss of cultural identity, nor the fact that the masses of Indians in Grenada were still relatively poor.

Nevertheless, the Indian had a proportionally significant impact on what we have inherited as a composite Grenadian culture, a creolized culture of sorts. Indian indentureship not only completed the long practice of labour importation and plantation exploitation by England, but it also completed the sugar plantation era of Grenadian creolization. As Grenadian society progressed, Indians continued to be instrumental in the building of our post sugar culture. Because sugar was beginning to be a failed enterprise due to the emergence of alternative sources of sugar, the cultivation of nutmegs, cocoa and bananas accelerated. Jointly, Indians and Africans made the necessary transitions to that new era. The joint struggles of Indians and Africans on Grenada's plantations must, because of the rich ethnic interplay, be simultaneously commemorated along with the abolition of the slave trade. Yes, Indians are a distinct part of this 200<sup>th</sup> year commemoration, because the abolition of the slave trade was the seminal event leading to their arrival, creolization and citizenship in Grenada.

The productive relationships between Africans and Indians must be celebrated, today. There were pujahs (dinners) occurring in Grenada as late as in the 1970s. Residents of Ford, Maran, Samaritan, Clozier, Conference, Gouyave, Grand Bacolet and Belair would probably remember these dinners. These were dinners where the African population had

an opportunity to taste Indian curry dishes, roti, talkari, dahl, etc. Indian visitors sat on the ground and ate on bluggoe leaves rice, meats, stews and vegetables in the same fashion as in African *sarakas* where vast quantities of food were likewise served to the community on banana and bluggoe leaves. Accompanying the *pujas* were the drumming and dancing as one would find in the African *sarakas*. There was the fact, too, that on both occasions (*Saraka* and *Puja*) there were token appeasements of ancestral spirits. One of the common traits shared by some Africans and some Indians in Grenada, despite proselytizing pressures, was a fair disposition towards polytheistic expression. An inevitable creolizing force was occurring even among Indians, themselves; in Grenada Hindu and Muslim Indians would unite around Hosay, for example, which would have been religiously divisive on the Indian subcontinent.

In the historical process, there may have been an absorption into the dominant culture, features that are formally Indian. However, I do not see absorption as an expression of finality or non-existence. Indian cultural features are still active at the core of Grenadian culture; they have not actually dissolved into a homogenized stew. Heterogeneity has taken place in Grenadian culture, and it requires our keen examination and representation, so as to correct the erroneous perception of Grenada as being an Africanized homogeneity. One of the goals of future research should be to investigate Grenadian history, so as to unearth the still active elements of prior Indian participation in our cultural negotiations.

Indo-Grenadians have left us more than just a legacy of cooperation in religion, music, dancing and folklore. Indians have forever influenced our food and vocabulary, because of their popular uses of certain foods with names like chutney, bhaji (bush), roti, tarkari (vegetables), dahl (peas), pomcythere (golden apple), bhodi (string beans), seem (flat beans), belangene (egg plant) Roti, and even our much-loved curried goat are of Indian origin. Indians left us lessons that in some respects may still be valuable. I do believe there are lessons of resourcefulness resident in Indian heritage, which would have aided their proportionately high rate of commercial success. Ultimately, African Grenadians owe to their Indian countrymen much more than what our pedagogy and representations have yet conceded to them.

## *Language, culture and the State of creolization*

The Christianizing impulse, especially after the end of Indo-Grenadian indentureship in



### **A Hosay parade in Jamaica**

(With the permission of the Jamaica Gleaner)

Grenadian Indians also, despite police interruptions, once had their own Hosay celebrations:

“The last remembered Hosay procession in the 1930’s started from Mohan’s yard at Grand Barcolet and continued up to Grenville where it was checked by the police.”

Mahabir in Bahadursingh (380-381)

1885, helped in totally effacing several expressions of ‘Indianness.’ African identity suffered, too, under the Christianizing impulse, especially when we consider that both Africans and Indians arrived in Grenada with substantial traditions in Islam, polytheism, animism and other non-Christian value systems. Hosay celebrations are still held in Trinidad, Guyana and Jamaica, where there are larger East Indian communities. At one point, Hosays were also celebrated in Grenada.

The French first, subjected Africans to Catholicism, while the Indians were subject mainly to Anglicanism and Presbyterianism, by the English; Grenada had finally changed hands from French to English by the time the Indians arrived. Even in the context of Hindu practices,

there was evidence of a healthy appropriation of African culture by Indians in Grenada. Patois, which was a healthy slave adaptation of formal French, bore linguistic elements from France and Africa, and was then enriched by the continental tonality and rhythms of Grenadian Indians. Revered Indians helped in the validation of Grenadian Patois, as is substantiated in this interview with Phillip Balwant, who recounts:

A pandit [pundit] by the name of Pariagh who wore dhoti (loin cloth) and Kurta (shirt) and who spoke Hindi, English and patois, is known to have existed in Grenada. (Mahabir, in Bahadursingh, 375)

The pandit, Pariagh, also spoke patois because it was the functional language of his congregation. It is noteworthy that the shared use of patois occurred even against the anglicizing backdrop of anti-patois campaigns, further complicating the creolization process. Despite the overall acquiescence of the Indian community, there were elements

of resistance. The patois competence of the Indians was evidence of their willingness, against the campaign of Anglicization, to embrace the common language. Generally, Indians made many attempts to cultivate cultural and social organizations, but were discouraged even by other Indians from so doing in order to avoid the perception of segregation. The Indian population in Grenada, estimated at some 9,700 (out of a national population of 95,000) in 1983, is significant, and deserves to have a more distinct cultural representation. In comparison to other large minorities like Native Americans, whose population percentage is significantly less than that of Indians in Grenada, or even to African Americans whose percentage is only slightly more than Grenada's Indian percentage, it seems that Grenadian Indians have been a silenced minority. Indians did not sustain their cultural fight, and were terribly set back in their negotiating capacity. Today, I believe an opportunity still exists to recover some of the losses attributable to their earlier lack of commitment to cultural self-definition.

Today, Afro-Grenadians are matured enough to recognize the pride and stability that Indians can achieve through an improved knowledge of the deep roots that still keep them standing. Yet, the efforts made by Indians to survive the New World cannot be dismissed. By 1885 Obeah and Shango had survived, but manifested themselves through the tint of Christianity. Many Indo-Grenadians became trusted practitioners of Obeah, as a new culture was creolized from the interaction of the Indians and their African countrymen. In many ways Indians used their own particular skills in their adaptation to the dominant culture. In the process, they have created something that is more than mere adaptation; they created legends:

The specific narrative forged out of each migration is best told and understood when filtered through the prism of the "intangible heritage(s)" which in the face of the conquering hegemony of colonizing powers have catalyzed sense and sensibility and shaped in large measure a distinctive "Caribbean" ethos/aesthetic through a process that scholars often refer to as creolization. (Nettleford, 3)

I believe the grand narrative, within which all other Indian narratives are circumscribed is: there were once a people who braved the high seas to get to the other side of the world in search of a future, and who helped to build a nation in the process, but they encountered the worst possible hardships, the worst of which was a lack of national recognition, attributable to their loss of cultural history and identity.

When Nettleford mentions the intangible heritages, he is talking about:

...the myths, folk philosophies, oral traditions, religious rituals, traditional medicine, festival arts and such other products of the collective creative imagination as music, dance and orature. 12

Sometimes African Grenadians view Indo-Grenadians as displaying a penchant for secrecy, which I actually believe to be a consequence of the intangible elements of their heritage, which must also have aided their survival, as well as having positively affected the overall creolization of today's Grenada. Many Indians had relied on a fierce protection of their family, business and trade secrets, in carving their way out of plantation servitude. I think the practice of arranged marriages was another of the intangibles that not only helped to identify the Indian community; it probably helped in physically preserving them as a Grenadian demographic entity. Nettleford represents the intangible heritages as elements of culture that are not in the open, somewhat subversive, that I believe more readily lend themselves to a truer constitution of our Caribbeanness. Indian 'secrecy' is, in no way, different from the protective mechanisms traditionally employed by besieged minorities throughout the world, nor does it suggest an anti-African bent. In fact, there is more than ample evidence of Indians who have shared their 'heritages' with the African population. Often, when there were marriages between

Africans and Indians, the couples seemed to have successfully engaged in some element of commerce. Overall, Indian-African relations remained rich and varied.



**A Grenadian of East Indian descent shares a light moment with his African Grenadian counterparts**

Only last October I attended the funeral of a family friend from the Indian village of Ford. The deceased was an Afro-Grenadian man, who was married to an Indo-Grenadian woman. From what I experienced, I believe inter-racial harmony in Grenada is good. I was more than pleased to see such a large assembly of Indian sympathizers. For many years, I had not seen so many Grenadian Indians in one location. At the wake, prior to the funeral, I was treated to stories, including one about a diminutive Indian man from

the village who, in the old days, was an expert in the African stick fighting art, Calinda (French spelling). The story of this small-statured Indian man is somewhat mythical, in his unusual ability to fight off entire villages of 'bad johns.' Reportedly, he would stay on Paradise Bridge and put up a fight in which no intruder could cross the bridge and head towards Ford. Some of the older Indians at the wake could speak French kriol, but the story of the stick fighter was narrated in Grenada's day-to-day "broken" English, what Merle Collins identifies in Grenada as Kamau Braithwaite's coinage of *nation language*. Even then, I detected speech patterns unique to that group, which will make for valuable linguistic study. I believe I detected a variation of the same sing-song (my impression) phonetics that some English-speaking comedians sometimes imitate when making fun of Indian speech. I think the average non-Indian realizes that there are traits and dispositions

common to Indians that, while not ‘essentializing’ them, suggests the continuity of a presence and identity beyond physical appearances. But, the work on identity rectification will have to be spearheaded by indo-Grenadians, hopefully with the understanding, encouragement and co-operation of the larger population.

Speaking of the creole (Kriol) language of her native Grenada, Merle Collins identifies two variants. 1) Kamau Braithwaite’s *nation language* often referred to as “bad English,” and 2) “*Patwa* [otherwise spelt *patois*], which was a more French syntactic base, with rhythms and structures of various African languages” (91). Collins thinks that if the grammars of our Kriol languages are to be taught in Grenadian schools, so as not to be reduced to a “merely exciting aberration,” they should be taught:

in association with the history of the African and Asian communities imported into the region so that, understanding, people will begin to develop a pride in the fact that new languages were forged in what might euphemistically be termed difficult circumstances. (Collins, in Balutansky and Sorrieau, eds. 91)

With a strategy as suggested by Collins, the mere focus on Indian history will, in itself, allow us to more accurately examine and identify language, speech patterns, taste, dispositions and a host of other unique cultural features that describe our Indian community. The whole nation must stand up in support of such efforts, because it will make us a stronger nation by emphasizing our heterogeneity, instead of the pretense that we have a tightly knit, homogeneous culture in Grenada. Indo-Grenadians have participated in all facets of our dominant Afro-Grenadian culture for one hundred and fifty years now; maybe it is time now for cultural reciprocity, even if it is only at the level of encouraging educational diversity to include Indian Studies.

Grenadian Ron Sookram, in his PhD dissertation, where he addresses the culture and identity of the Indian community in Grenada between 1857 and 1960, also points to Indian appropriation of the Afro-French creolization that was called Patwa, which actually was a linguistic formulation of the Afro-Grenadian in his response to the dictates of French hegemony. Patwa endured, and it deserves recognition for its past prominence and reliability in day-to-day conversation. Patwa survived, in spite of formal efforts by colonial governments to discredit and stop it. Up to a significant part of the 1920s, the majority of Grenadians continued to speak French patois.

... the majority of Grenadians continued French patois up to the 1920s. With the daily interaction between Indians and Africans the Indians adopted this language as their main mode of communication. Nevertheless, by the 1950s English had replaced French Patois as the main language of communication. (Sookram 5)

Indians arrived in Grenada, and entered straightaway into the creolizing speech process. From personal experience as a child in the 1960s, I remember that my Indian grandmother, like many elder Indians at the time, spoke French patwa expertly. Even my mother, who was born in 1937, was quite conversant in patwa. Under English pressure to replace all things French, patwa gave way to the other creole, *nation language* (‘bad English’) in the 1950s. But the changeover was not sudden. British anti-patwa efforts

may have encountered popular resistance, because although they were still suppressing patwa in the 1950s, their efforts at suppression date as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In June 1882, the president of the Board of Education, Honourable E.K Moylan, attempted to encourage the speaking of English in schools, and the abandoning of the “barbarous jargon called patois so much spoken in Grenada, which was neither French nor Spanish and which was unintelligible to the Frenchman as it was to an Englishman” (Sookram 5)

The period of French patwa resistance had to have made its imprint on the emergent English *nation language*. There inevitably would have been a substantial contribution by Indians to our speech and cultural formulations as they, along with their Afro-Grenadian countrymen, endured colonial pressures to shift from French patwa to nation language.

But this English replacement was an English patois, produced under similar conditions as the English patois that Indians would have brought to Grenada. Our English patois is exactly what Sookram continues to describe as:

...the emergence of a reformulated creole formation [what Collins identifies as kriol (‘bad English’)] which, driven by hegemonizing power, was creating a common platform for communications between, and among, Indians and Africans (5-6).

I think a study of the ensuing linguistic negotiations between Indians and Africans is worthwhile, especially when we consider the variety of languages and heritages that would have influenced Indian performance in the dominant Afro-Grenadian creolization. These negotiations would have provided vital insight into the stories of Indian excellence.

In the course of these difficult negotiations Indians also had to make adjustments, *because* they had to culturally adjust to a dual-power thrust, one being Anglicization and the other, Afro-creolization. The Indian response to these conditions produced a uniquely different narrative, one experienced within the linguistic mix of Grenadian creolization. Because India was also a British colony, some Indians, in addition to their continental language(s), also brought to Grenada their own version of English patois. I admit that I have not fleshed out all the specific elements of Indian identity and culture that should be evident in a modern representation of Grenada. However, I have attempted to locate some of the cultural coordinates within which the dynamics of creolization occurred. Hopefully, I would have helped to open, and complicate, the discourse on abolition, indentureship and creoleness.

If Nettleford is correct that there are “intangible heritages” underlying the forged narratives, then there are certainly facets of Indian culture in Grenada that are yet to be identified. There must also have been culturally unique elements that inspired the bravery of Indians to voluntarily embark on the high seas, especially when the odds of survival were about five times worse than that for a military tour of duty in Iraq, today. Grenadian Indians did not merely adapt to Grenadian conditions; together with Afro-Grenadians, they jointly constructed the Grenada we know today, using their unique cultural capital. Certainly, in the language formulation process, Indians would have had an impact on the

formulation of Kriol. I think we need to initiate the studies and strategies that would help us identify the exact locations of Indian influence on our linguistic culture. Have Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati or Arabic had an impact on the syntax, semantics, phonetics, or morphology of our *Kriols*, for example?

Despite the concessions made in language, it was ultimately in the realm of culture that the outcome of the creolizing process was most crucial for the Indian. Despite their versatility and competence in language, departing from their native languages had a culturally weakening effect. It meant that the languages that preserved their cultures were soon to be forgotten:

What was happening with language was also in process across the entire cultural spectrum, but much to the disadvantage of the Indian cultural formation which, locked in a position of subordination, assumed a defensive posture as Indians were drawn further into the reformulated cultural formation with limited cultural supports (Sookram 6).

Like language, a syncretized culture was formed in these difficult circumstances, one that now requires a new pedagogical approach, in order to fathom the absence of “supports” that led to the omission, or overlooking, of our Indian population. To understand the significance of Indo-Grenadians to Grenada, consider again that their percentage in the Grenadian population, (9,700 in 1983, according to Mahabir), from a 95,000 population, is just a little less than the percentage of African Americans in the U.S. population. Given the extent of Indo-African interracial mixtures in Grenada, the significance and complexity of Indian cultural representation is heightened. Yet, all cultural representations of Grenada still omit, bypass, or sidestep the historic contributions of Indo-Grenadians. In fact, the studies of Indians in Grenada, some of which I have cited, have both concluded with the view that an almost effacing absorption of the Indian population has taken place. This is the way Mahabir summarizes the cause of this absorption:

The agents of absorption have been identified as smallness of numbers, evangelization, fragmentation of the Indian community into castes (at first) and class, westernization, an alien educational system, bias media content, disorganization, lack of genuine leadership, breakdown of the extended family, break in the link with India, political bias, etc.396.

And from Sookram, further:

It is a fact that in Grenada Indian culture is often not represented at the national level. While it is true that a few Indian items, like food, music and dance are visible most aspects of Indian life are not given any recognition (11).

Mahabir, in assessing the role of politics in compounding Indian cultural absorption, notes that:

No Government in Grenada has developed a theoretical framework of cultural pluralism or a heterogeneous and differentiated social and cultural system... (Bahadursingh 391)

Mahabir is indicting all political authorities, including the Peoples Revolutionary Government. He thinks that “the pivot of the Black Power ideology and later the PRG as it relates to Indians, was a total denial of Indian racial and cultural identity,” and that “it was to Bishop’s advantage to see the Indians completely ‘creolized’ so that they could easily be united with their African counterparts to fight against white American imperialism.” (394). But the creolization of which Mahabir is here lamenting, is not the heterogeneous *créolité* of *Confianté*, but of a homogenizing totality, one that silences and subordinates cultural difference to social class. The problem for the Indian in such a totalizing scheme is that he will never be able to fulfill his unique cultural dreams in a way the African might. In hindsight, it would seem that the PRG was not, then, fully attentive to the abiding dynamics of indigenous culture that now seems to outlast revolutionary upheavals. To underscore his point, Mahabir quotes PRG theoretician Bernard Coard from a 1979 interview with Chris Searle in which Coard revealed his stance with regard to minorities like the black population in England:

A population of black people comprising about 2 percent of the total population has no hope whatsoever of ever achieving its just rights, of being treated equally, unless there is forged an alliance of all working people regardless of race. (393).

Mahabir proceeds to complain about the silence in the collected speeches of Bishop, where he never even makes mention of Grenadian Indians nor their culture. But cultural factors have proven to be more resilient, more subterranean, and too dynamic for the broad classifications than many political ideologies have devised. Look at Grenada, Russia and Eastern Europe and we would see that there were post-revolutionary explosions of culture, not all of which could be deemed ‘constructive,’ however. Throughout, the lesson we have learnt is that a political alliance must interrogate itself as to its embrace of hegemonism or its disavowal of heterogeneity, without which, the cycles of political oppression will continue. Even if it seems idealistic, we still have to proceed from the premise that a cultural group that constitutes only 2 percent of the population still deserves independent recognition for its contribution to nationhood and citizenship. A minority group, regardless of its size, should not have to depend on a subordination of its culture in order to gain recognition.

Mahabir recognizes the complacency of Indians, as complicit in their cultural absorption, but Sookram more squarely places the onus on the Grenadian Indian population. He thinks that:

One reason for such an attitude by Grenadian governments over the years might well have been because little effort was made by Indians themselves in advocating for the promotion of the elements of their culture that had survived. Further, most Indians did not consider themselves as culturally Indian but as Grenadian (11).

But, there is hope that one day there will be renewed interest in the Indian cultural heritage of Grenada. There must be a start to all movements, and it seems that the re-valuation of Grenada’s Indian heritage begins at the level of discourse, in the re-positing of the facts of our history. I hope I am helping in the advancement of such a re-valuation.

Offering guidance against slippage into a kind of complacency and easy recourse to a homogeneous, totalizing view of nationhood, Homi Bhabha suggests that:

Despite its firm commitments, the political must always pose as a problem, or a question, the priority of the place from which it begins, if its authority is not to become autocratic.  
65.

At no time must our nation be satisfied with its definitions of nationhood, as we stand the chance of exercising hegemony over areas of marginal existences within the nation. Bhabha posits a necessary instability, in order to ensure that at no given moment, would a heterogeneously total nation slip into the oppressive state of homogeneous totality. Even when Grenada attempted to embrace an advanced notion of nationhood under the PRG, it still fell short, because of its embrace of an idealistic notion of proletarian globalism, where sub-cultures like Rastas, Muslims, lumpens, and others were being systematically silenced, without realizing that that silence ultimately acted against the interests of the revolutionary nation. Self examination to the PRG seemed not to have involved a questioning of the very ideology they espoused. Post colonial theoreticians like our Caribbean Créolistés (proponents of creoleness) are different in, that, they have required an on-going and necessary questioning of the theory and application of Créolité (creoleness), itself, which is consistent with the instability inherent in heterogeneity.

### *Towards a solution: Creoleness*

As a solution, Créolité (creoleness) seems to suggest a role for active agency and, distinct from spontaneous creolization, it is best defined in contrast to *négritude*, an earlier literary movement spearheaded by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas in the 1930s. Négritude emphasized cultural, racial and historical ties to Africa. Négritude also helped in establishing racial pride, and in recouping the damaged post-slavery psyche of blacks. But Négritude would not have addressed the plight of the Indo-



**An Indian bus conductor on “Liberty”**

Traces of Indian descent is everywhere in Grenada, today

Grenadian, who was also wounded by colonial hegemony. I think *négritude* sufficed as a blanket ‘Caribbean’ race phenomenon, only in so far that the Indians and others were assigned an ‘absent’ status. By describing Grenada only as a black country, to the exclusion of Indians and Grenadian whites, we are not doing justice to the complexity of our nation. Asserting blackness as the common descriptor of Grenadian people implies an antithesis of whiteness, which dualizes the arena of cultural contention, making the Indian an ‘absent’ entity. Beverly Ormerod, studying West Indian blacks who went back to Africa under the *négritude* influence, thinks:

Africans tended to consider West Indians as foreigners, judging them on their national origin, religion and customs, rather than their skin colour.” Ormerod. 2

Moreover, the defining characteristic, “blackness,” would never have accounted for the Indians, who did not see themselves in terms of color, but in

terms of nationality, religion and caste. Martinican Edouard Glissant advanced the concept of *Caribbeanness* (Antillanité) as an alternative. In this view, the role of coolies (a pejorative for indentured servants), Aboriginal Caribs, and African ex-slaves were to be considered in syncretization. There is a language focus in Glissant’s Martinique, to remove the hegemonic French, and to replace it with Creole as the language of culture and literature. He seeks to valorize the role of Antillean Creole in literary, cultural and academic applications.

But later adherents of Glissant like Chamoiseau, Confiant, and Bernabé described the concept of “creoleness” (créolité) as:

...the heterogeneous nature of West Indian Society, whose differences of ethnic origin had been extended by the many mixtures between racial groups. 3

And, as she cites from an even earlier proponent, René Ménil, a creolism in which he views French Caribbean culture as:

...neither African nor Chinese, nor Indian, nor even French, but ultimately West Indian. Ormerod 3

Altogether, créolité stresses the unique history and culture of the Caribbean as being rooted in the Caribbean, itself. Créolistés envisage a Caribbean motherland.

Two other features of creoleness (Créolité) identified by Ormerod, that I see as bearing heavily on the make-up of Grenadian society are first, that “creole fiction should express the true experience and the collective voice...” and second, that “a revaluation of the *métis*, the person of mixed race,” be undertaken. The above two issues deal respectively with a) the valorization of local fiction in expressing the true national voice, and b) a redefinition of the mixed race citizen, especially since the ethnic make-up of the *métis* is emblematic of the mixture implicit in the mixed experience of the Caribbean. The progressively constituted concept of créolité will ultimately produce, being more a process than a product, its own description of the creolized nation that bears mixed-race citizens. In Grenadian terms, douglah (half Indian/half African) are the most abundant of the *métis* populations. In fact it is possible that the Metis has outnumbered Indians. Does the *métis* enjoy dual cultural status? How do we guard against his ascendance to privilege, or to ridicule? These and other questions are ones with which the agents of créolité will have to grapple. I do believe that under Créolité, unlike Western hegemonies, there will not be an inferior status accorded the *métis*. Even in Jamaica the douglah is referred to, as a *royal*. Wilson Harris, speaking from his family experience, looks positively at the *métis*, in terms of a *saving nemesis*:

*Saving nemesis* may also be a peculiar expression, but it implies recuperative powers and vision within a scale of violence that is dismembering societies around the world. (Harris in Balutansky, 26)

Creoleness, to Harris who is a mixed-race Guyanese, was a positive experience because his cross-cultural experience was cherished, compared to other parts of the world where race mixing would have meant his ridicule or, him possibly being caught between warring cultures. The Caribbean’s general tendency of not perceiving Creole in terms of negativity is the legitimizing basis for a créolité that embraces us all. Somewhere on the ignoble, yet fortuitous, plantation meeting place of our cultures, we valued each other’s uniqueness and the way that that value was shown was in our embrace of the byproduct, the *métis*. To the majority culture, the *métis* symbolized the best of both worlds, not bastardization. Ultimately, and more importantly, the symbol of the Métis is applied to our mixed-up culture, which is now being recast as the best of all involved worlds.

I believe the European influenced, color stratification of Grenada did the Indian some injustice, in terms of classifying the mulatto *métis* as higher than the douglah *métis*. The lesson coming from the plantation was that the douglah was black while the mulatto was a white “other.” Continuing in the vein of symbolism, it means then that the low rating of the douglah corresponded to the inferior way in which Indian culture was regarded. With all these factors acting against them, it is not hard, then, to imagine why Indians eventually suffered cultural absorption into the larger African population. Regarding this matter, Wilson asks these questions:

Does *black* hint at an involuntary association for many cultures? Does *black* reach beyond mere pigmentation along racial and tribal lines into densities and transparencies of tone, a layered wealth of tone—musical, rhythmic, poetic—in which diverse cultures may share?

Harris does not provide an answer to this question, but it occurs to me that answering this question in the affirmative can be a sure way of retrogressing into a kind of cultural globalism, another kind of homogeneity. I do not sense in the question posed, that there is an assumption of a black absorption of whiteness; the question does clearly presume the absorption of all non-white cultures into a Sargasso Sea of blackness. Nevertheless, I do not believe at this juncture the African communities of the Caribbean, including Grenada, should support this form of black homogeneity, especially when we have become so keenly aware of the validity and independence of other cultures and colors. In contrast to the paradigm of global blackness, the view of *créolité* will mirror the saving nemesis that our ‘metissaged’ culture represents.

As a saving nemesis for the nation, the experience of *créolité* will have to be viewed in its heterogeneous intent. When Mahabir speaks of “a theoretical framework of cultural pluralism or a heterogeneous and differentiated social and cultural system...” we get an understanding of the course of heterogeneity that must be pursued. Heterogeneity is the key to the newer approach towards accomplishing a fuller cultural expression, and a more all-embracing definition of Grenadian nationhood. So, today, instead of merely recounting the story of our coming to Grenada, it is worthwhile to consider new strategies for advancing Indian-African relations into a reformulated Grenadian nationality. I know Grenada is part of an overall Caribbean experience, but because there seems to be so many layers of syncretized experiences circumscribed in this overall Caribbean experience, it seems necessary to first define ourselves locally, before we can effectively attempt to define a ‘Caribbean’ regional identity. Regarding this first step of local definition, I believe the experiences of the Indian and African in Grenada are best represented in the current context of identity studies, particularly as is being pursued through the evolving concept of *créolité* and other forms of post-colonial criticism. Before I continue with the mitigating possibilities of *créolité* and creolist heterogeneity for re-defining our culture, I first want to visit a little bit of history, as it pertains to the entire span of Grenadian creolization.

The mistaken ‘Indians,’ the indigenous Caribs, in a most brutal way, shared the Afro-Grenadians’ plight under colonialism. Caribs had a worldview and a culture of

independence, which influenced their choices, prior to the coming of anyone else to Grenada. Undoubtedly, someday their contribution will have to be recognized beyond mere historical reference. I believe attention to the Indian question will cause deeper consideration for the Carib, whose contribution, too, cannot be dismissed. Reportedly, this is how a Carib complained to a Frenchman, regarding the first wave of creolization, as the French started to settle on Grenada in the middle of the seventeenth century:

Our people are becoming in a manner like yours, since they came to be acquainted with you; and we find it some difficulty to know ourselves, so different are we grown from what we were here-to-fore. (Kalinago man to M. du Montel 1665 (Davies 1666:250), in Honychurch)

From the Carib's statement, we have a clue that the Carib openly lamented the demise of his culture, and must have carefully considered his options, before settling for open resistance and even martyrdom. Have the Caribs influenced or complicated the extent and quality of Grenadian creolization? Have Grenada's successful uprisings in 1951 and 1979 been expressions of an insurgent Carib conscience still resident in Grenada's culture? Take for example these haunting words, documented from an interview between Father Beaumont and a Grenadian Carib (Kalinago man) in 1660, in response to the state of his people as they faced extermination by the French:

What is to happen to the poor Carib? Is he to go and live in the sea with the fish?  
(Kalinago man to Fr. Beaumont 1660, in Honychurch)

Lennox Honychurch, who did a wonderful study of Grenada's Carib cosmology, thinks that these words "could also have been spoken by an enslaved African or an East Indian indentured servant in the centuries which followed, for it expresses the psychosis of colonization and the process of creolization."

There were yet other aspects of Grenadian creolization that cannot be overlooked. There was the fact that Grenadians were:

...descendants of the invaders and the invaded, the enslavers and the enslaved, whose process of conflictual interaction laid the matrix of an emergent vernacular and existential culture... (Wynter, 1)

Sylvia Wynter, here, is also looking at the myriad of power positions that I believe have complicated the creolization of language and culture. Then there is this observation by John Ford:

The African-European encounter has passed through a complex web of economic, military, cultural and intimate domestic exchanges. 3

Ford, like Wynter, does not overlook the political, military and economic power relations that have added even more layers of complexity to the long history of Grenadian creolization. I believe that with the celebration of the end of the slave trade, an analytical consideration of the long history of confrontation and resistance underlying Caribbean.

We have to focus on the approaches that will allow us to broaden and complicate the range of possible voices available in our culture, Carib, Indian, African, European and others.

But as the largest ethnic minority in Grenada, Indians require a special focus. There is a need for Indo-Grenadian cultural assertion, but there is also a need for the Afro-Grenadian to not be complacent about his 'dominant' cultural position over other Grenadian minorities, especially since his perceived culture is still circumscribed in, and subordinated to, the values of English hegemony. While I agree with Ford about the fact that cultural negotiation does not occur in a democratic fashion, I believe, we can now be more pro-active, and less affected by the vicissitudes of history, as in the way that Indian culture was 'mis-integrated' into Grenada's representation of nationality. I believe we can improve the negotiation process, if Afro-Grenadians are better informed of the basis and value of Indian cultural recognition. Bhabha, in praise of Frantz Fanon's investigations of identity, thinks that Fanon's insight:

...offers the master and slave a deeper reflection of their interpositions, as well as the hope of a difficult, even dangerous, freedom: 63



**A Grenadian of East Indian descent, with hat-covered dreadlocks.**

It certainly enriches the discourse when we consider that the wearing of dreadlocks has a long history in India.

Obviously, in the African-Indian context, we do not have a master-slave relationship with which to contend; however, the interpositions of a majority-minority relationship are to be heeded. Both majority-minority and indenture-master relationships though freely entered into, are wrought with fetters. After victims are set free from the fetters cast by dictatorial relations they should, through introspection, seek to ensure that they, too, do not replicate the same old oppressive relationships that also limited them. Recognizing the problematics of freedom and introspection, Bhabha cites from Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, that:

It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world. 63

Grenadians must always reopen to debate, the very nature and progress of the freedom that was to soon follow the abolition of the slave trade; by the same token, he/she must repeatedly reopen to debate, the very nature and progress of our political independence and freedom. Ultimately, the hashing out of the tensions of freedom, i.e. between freedom and constraints, must be done in all quarters: among indo-Grenadians; among Afro-Grenadians; and among Grenadians at large. Also open to debate is a central

feature of Créolité: heterogeneity. Heterogeneous freedom, too, produces its own tensions that must also be periodically mediated by introspection.

Homogeneity is neither avoidable nor undesirable. Many elements of the national culture will inevitably be homogenous, just like others will be heterogeneous and others, probably mixed. However, when I show preference for heterogeneity above homogeneity, I am simply saying that heterogeneity should not be sacrificed for the homogeneity that effaces minority distinctions; or for the homogeneity that couches and sanctions majority dominance. I believe Selwyn Ryan aptly makes the case for heterogeneity here:

We must recognize that the Caribbean is a 'Creole' reality...one that is neither 'primordially' Anglo-European, African, nor Indian, but a mosaic of all in which the constituent icons and canons must remain recognizable and equally valid. Full cultural emancipation, if it is to mean anything at this point in time, must therefore involve recognizing hybridity and complexity and the tension that they generate, as our inescapable reality. (Express, August 15, 2004),

Ryan does not escape unscathed with the above view. Dr Selwyn Cudjoe takes issue with Ryan's use of the adjectives "true" and "full," essentially because he, Cudjoe, does not think we can get to a point of "full" emancipation, except but make incremental progress along that emancipation path. Cudjoe sees slavery and emancipation on the same continuum; however, he does not take issue with Ryan's creolized description of our societies in the Caribbean. I cite the above quote from Ryan because he talks about cultural elements that must remain "recognizable and equally valid," as distinct from elements that merge into one.

In the case of Grenada, I think if elements of Indian culture are made "recognizable and equally valid," that we would have made progress along the path of heterogeneous expression, heterogeneity and homogeneity being on the same continuum, I believe. I wish to clarify, here, that my use of the term 'heterogeneity' is more than the application of a potpourri analogy; I am thinking in terms of a concept more akin to the notion of a *bionic* human, where man and machine remain distinct and distinguishable, yet function interdependently for common purposes. Homogeneity, the notion of being of the same consistency, is more akin to a fruit punch in which there is a sense of uniformity of texture, where the constituent juices in the mixture are no longer recognizable. In Grenada, I think we are far from the point where Indians and Africans can be considered as living in a homogeneously whole nation.

I do not think créolité is to be looked at as a complete and final approach; créolité has to be seen in terms of an evolving approach that needs to be constantly interrogated to weed out its, and our, totalizing tendencies. To make the approach of creolité work for us, we will have to insist on retaining, and complicating, the tension between the theoretical urgency for a final definition (of créolité) and its functional need for more operational latitude. Of course, I am speaking strictly in terms of culture, but Maryse Conde seems to be concerned about this same tension between didactic definition and functional latitude, in the field of language:

The Martinican school of Créolité is singular because it presumes to impose law and order. Créolité is alone in reducing the overall expression of Creoleness to the use of the Creole language ... This implies a notion of “authenticity,” which inevitably engenders exclusion, as “authenticity” is based on the very normative ideology that for so long consigned us to the world’s periphery (Conde, 106.)

Language is important to Créolité because in the marketplace of ideas, translatability of language is central, and without a written grammar a language is not easily translatable for outside uses. We need eventually to entertain all ideas within our Grenadian krio language; in that sense, I think linguistic form has to be tentatively dictated at some point. Conde does problematize the language question in, that, Grenada will not want its creole grammar to describe an “authentic” language, for fear of essentializing such language, hence marginalizing other expressions. However, in disagreeing with Conde’s fear of authenticity, I think a culturally more ‘authentic’ voice should always be emerging to transport us to an ever more effective level of linguistic competence.

I look at the origin and evolution of the very term *creole*, coming from the Spanish ‘*criollo*’ and once used to describe the mestizo *métis*, and I cannot help but notice the difficulty that intermixing posed, even since the early contacts with the Caribbean. The cultural intermixing process continues in Grenada, today. Therefore, culture and nationality, likewise, are a process and not a finished experience.

The small-population problem of the Grenadian Indian, which is also symbolic of Grenada’s overall predicament as one of the tiniest nations in the world, provides invaluable lessons as to the intensity of effort that must be sustained by all Grenadians in order that we gain international respect. When we indict Indians for their failure of Indian advocacy, we are simultaneously indicting all Grenadians, to the degree that we need to ‘fix our house’ before we can take on the Hurricane Ivans of International politics; and before we can take on the bigger struggle for world relevance. The sheer smallness of population size, I agree, is the gateway reason for the eventual failures to retain a more viable Indian cultural presence. In contrast to Grenada, Indians in Trinidad and Guyana, where their populations matched the African populations, were successful in gaining cultural relevance. Irrespective of size, it still remains a challenge for Indian cultural advocacy within Grenada, in the same way that Grenadians are challenged to overcome the limitations and vulnerabilities of their small population in order to gain international respect.

Finally, not to lose sight of a significant question at this historic juncture in Grenadian history, namely: What are we as a national culture at the coincidence of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Indian arrivals to Grenada? Pursuing this answer is a responsibility of all Grenadians, if we are to effectively establish our identity coordinates in a cultural space where none is to be marginalized. The non race-specific, Caribbean concept of Créolité, supported by some post-colonial theories, offers a reasonable starting point, and a framework for investigation. In the process, the Indo-Grenadians, because of their significant minority status is encouraged to recoup, and exercise, all the cultural power consistent with their

status, and to work for a Grenada with an improved representation of cultural heterogeneity.

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