Clarion Review

Biography

Guyanese Achievers, USA and Canada: A Celebration

Vidur Dindayal
Trafford Publishing
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Four Stars (out of Five)

An encyclopedic collection that deserves attention beyond the scope of its intended readership, *Guyanese Achievers, USA and Canada* comprises stories of people who came from a beautiful but deprived country to overcome the odds and garner success in a new homeland. A sterling example is the author himself. Vidur Dindayal was born in what was then British Guiana (now Guyana). He was raised in a small village and later emigrated to the UK, where he became a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Guyana was the only British colony in South America, a lush land of jungles, waterfalls, savannahs, and rain forest. It was developed by colonists for rice and sugar cultivation and for mining. Populated by Amerindians, colonial Europeans, and guest workers from Asia, it was an amalgam of cultures and races with English as its official language. “The Song of Guyana’s Children,” quoted by Dindayal, contains these inspiring lines: “So like the mountain, the sea and the river / great, wide and deep in our lives would we be.”

The book, a reissue of a 2007 volume of the same name, contains more than one hundred short portraits of notable Guyanese transplants to the North, many of whom have achieved high recognition and fame in their respective fields. Among these are artists, business magnates, politicians and statesmen, and scientists.

Though all the people listed in the book deserve attention for having overcome great barriers to reach their current stations in life, some stories are unusually colorful. Nesbit Chhangur is Guyana’s beloved “singing cowboy.” As a child, he learned to play guitar from an elderly neighbor and listened to the *Grand Ole Opry* and other country music radio shows. An accomplished singer who could faithfully recreate the songs and sounds of artists such as Hank Williams, Changgur became popular among American sailors during World War II. He recalls that they “were so pleased to hear their cowboy songs so far away from their home,” that they

willingly arranged to have then-scarce guitar strings brought to him from the US.

Dindayal has researched his subject matter well, quoting from lectures, websites, biographies, family writings, and memoirs. The material is presented in a clear and scholarly manner.

It is worthwhile for the Guyanese population in North and South America to have this gift of recognition. Furthermore, this well-organized reference work will help Americans and Canadians appreciate that among their fellow citizens are remarkable people such as these Guyanese achievers.

Barbara Bamberger Scott