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"A work of scholarly distinction, this book sets a new benchmark in Indo-Caribbean scholarship. None has explored the Indian background in conjunction with the context and character of cultural change in the region with such multi-disciplinary rigour as this. It is peerless in its treatment of rites, festivals and sacred spaces and how they have shaped identity in Trinidad. The work is also informed by learning of a high order."

Clem Seecharan, Emeritus Professor of History, London Metropolitan University

"This interesting book, which crosses genres and combines disciplines, considers how Indo-Trinidadians have contributed to the rich mosaic of Trinidad culture and, especially, its national aesthetics, through the lens of religious rites and festivals. Its unique and original feature is the way in which the author systematically compares some of these festivals as they are celebrated and performed today in Trinidad, with selected areas of India, based on his extensive fieldwork there."

Bridget Brereton, Emeritus Professor of History, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago

"... very well researched and documented. From the very core of my heart, I am grateful to Satnarine for his treatment of Muharram or Hosay; the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husain with such deep insight and empathy. The citizens of Lucknow will no doubt agree with me ... that many may benefit from this book."

Nawab Jafar Mir Abdullah, V.P. of All India ex Royal Family Assoc. Sheesh Mahal, Lucknow, India

"This is a commendable academic study of religious and spiritual matters, and their evolution in Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension the Caribbean region, where indentured Indian immigrants were domiciled."

Pundit Uttam Maharaj, Dharmacharya of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago

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THE SHAPING OF A CULTURE
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Trinidad and Tobago reflects the dynamic rhythm of a cosmopolitan mix of cultures where the Indo-Trinidadian contribution is significant. This has its genesis in the 19th and early 20th centuries when more than 500,000 contract workers, from various regions of India, were shipped to the Caribbean to arrest the labour crisis in these plantation economies. These Indian indentured immigrants brought their religions, languages, rituals, festivals, cultural practices and other performative traditions and planted them in its fertile soil.

The Shaping of a Culture: Rituals and Festivals in Trinidad compared with selected counterparts in India, 1990-2014 uses a multidisciplinary approach to examine the changes being simultaneously experienced within these rituals and festivals in Trinidad and their counterparts in the respective geographical areas in the ancestral country, at the turn of the 21st century. It also examines the Indo-Trinidadians' influence on other festivals which they encountered in the local landscape.

The rituals and festivals examined are Ramleela, Divali, Christmas, Carnival, Shivaratri, Phagwa (or Holi), the observance of Muharram (or Hosay) and the Jhandi (or prayer flag) in its many manifestations and symbolic meanings. It identifies aspects of cultural persistence, assimilations, internal innovations and syncretisms taking place within these cultures. It presents for the first time, in a consolidated, integrated framework, multiple layers of fascinating images of some of these performative traditions as they contribute to the shaping of the cultural diversity of Trinbago and the Caribbean. It is a guide to understanding the ethos and collective consciousness of the Trinbagonian lifestyle and the Indo-Caribbean diaspora, now scattered across the globe.