

**REMEMBERING THE HONOURABLE SIR SHRIDATH RAMPHAL,  
SON OF THE CARIBBEAN, CITIZEN OF THE WORLD**

**By**

**Dr. The Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves  
Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines**

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Sir Shridath Surendranath Ramphal, born on October 3, 1928, died on August 30, 2024, was one of the most distinguished persons to have come from our Caribbean. He was born in colonial British Guiana (now Guyana) but belonged, in his life, living, and work, to the Caribbean, the Commonwealth, and the world. His life and work were in quest of a further ennoblement of our Caribbean civilisation and humanity, globally.

Sir Shridath, affectionately known to all as “Sonny”, descended from indentured labourers out of India, who had been corralled to provide cheap labour in colonial British Guyana subsequent to the abolition of the enslavement of African bodies and the arrival of indentured servants from Portuguese Madeira.

From an early age, Sonny Ramphal embraced the process, and results, of creolisation and ethnic integration in Guyana and our Caribbean. He enveloped himself, too, from his university years in Britain to the end of his days upon this Earthly City, with the praxis of economic and political integration of the West Indies.

Sir Shridath’s profound understanding, derived from deep study and lived experiences, of colonialism, imperialism, globalisation, racism, monopoly capitalism, conflict, and war, shaped his political consciousness in pursuance of human dignity, social justice, equality, the bolstering of sovereignty and independence, fairness and equity in global affairs, democracy and freedom, dialogue and compromise, peace and sustainable development.

Sir Shridath’s scholarship, immense technical and diplomatic skills, capacity for hard and smart work, integrity and honesty, the uplifting core values of his persona, and his superlative accomplishments mark him as the most outstanding diplomat and negotiator to have ever emerged from our Caribbean. The various high offices which Sir Shridath held in Guyana, the Caribbean, the Commonwealth, and globally over his long and illustrious career, and his extraordinary endeavours, are testimony to his unparalleled greatness as our region’s premier diplomat ever, and his status in the front ranks of our great statesmen/women.

At first, I saw this great man from a distance; later I worked with him in the vineyard of regional integration, and in the process, became his student and his friend. I am unlikely ever to meet another statesman/woman and Caribbean man/woman of a higher quality than “Sonny” Ramphal.

Throughout it all, “Sonny” Ramphal exhibited his tried and tested values of humility, an amazing grace, an abiding faith, a refreshed hope, and an enduring love for people, especially the marginalized and the disadvantaged, and a patience and a calm.

Sir Shridath was a family man imbued with a profound sense of community and social solidarity.

Martin Carter’s “Looking at Your Hands” seems apt:

“No!  
I will not still my voice!  
I have  
too much to claim –  
if you see me  
looking at books  
or coming to your house  
or walking in the sun  
know that I look for fire!

“I have learnt  
from books dear friend  
of men dreaming and living  
and hungering in a room without a light  
who could not die since death was far too poor  
who did not sleep to dream, but dreamed to change the world!

“And so  
if you see me  
looking at your hands  
listening when you speak  
marching in your ranks  
you must know  
I do not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world.”

On behalf of the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, on behalf of my family and me, I express sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Sir Surendranath Shridath Ramphal.

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Dated September 2, 2024