

PROFILE of The Week

By Dr. DHANPAUL NARINE

Tejsingh Kandhai

100 Not Out and a Keeper of Traditions!

Tejsingh Kandhai is 100 years old. He is sprightly, has a sharp memory and looks much younger than his age. His voice comes from deep within the memory of generations past and he is able to connect with three continents for the education of his 32 great-grandchildren.

Tejsingh Kandhai was born on April 5, 1916 at Uitvlugt Sugar Estate Logie and in a family of seven children.

His parents were from India and he was exposed to the teachings of Hinduism at an early age. His father Kandhai left Angadpur for Calcutta and thence to British Guiana when he was in his twenties. Kandhai was on the same ship with a young lady and her name was Laro. She too left Angadpur for Calcutta

were spent in the ricefields. The move to DeWillem occurred in 1958 and seemed to agree with Tejsingh. He went into agriculture and cultivated rice, fruits and vegetables. In 1935 his life was changed forever. Tejsingh got married to the beautiful Somwaria. It was a simple but beautiful ceremony that followed the rituals of the Hindu scriptures.

Tejsingh and Somwaria made a good team. She worked 'foot to foot' with him in the fields, at DeWillem, Hague backdam and other

of the family, left us in 2006 but not before she and Tejsingh had enjoyed 71 years of wedded bliss.

Tejsingh has put his father's teachings to good use. He reads fluently from the Ramayana and he became influential in his community. He said, 'I loved the satsangh. My father said that we should learn Hindi and I took him seriously. I was attached to the DeWillem Hindu temple where I became head of the Ramayana Gole.'

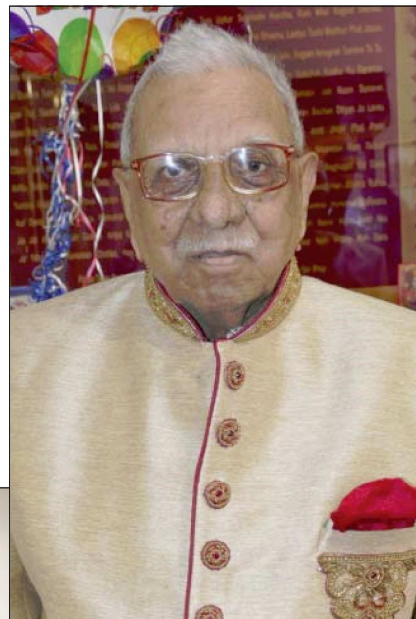
The DeWillem Hindu Temple was in the forefront of promoting Hinduism in the sixties. It worked well with other Mandirs in the area and a panchayat system was set up

Durpatty recalls fondly the impact her dad had in the community. She said that people would cook early and then they would go over to Tejsingh's home and people would spread sheets on the

services to culture. He was also honored by the Nirvana Humanitarian Foundation and the Rajkumarie Cultural Center for his contributions to the Arts.

These days Tejsingh watches the religious epics on television and his daughter Durpatty makes sure that there is a constant stock of religious DVD's at home.

But Tejsingh gives a laugh and says that he also watches 'the Young and the Restless' at times! When he was growing up at Uitvlugt he would play cricket and he followed the game but his duties at home took over. Tejsingh's favorite game is baseball and he is a fan of the Yankees. 'I live in New York and I have to support the Yankees', he says. The children have nothing but praise for their father.



Tejsingh Kandhai is 100 years old. He says the secret for a long life is 'go to bed early, be a vegetarian, read the scriptures and stay away from gossip.'

Muniram Tejsingh, a popular cricketer and singer, says that his dad is one of a kind. His

ground and Tejsingh would read from the Ramayana. What was refreshing was the fact that these readings would be applied to one's situation in real life and would not be seen as 'nancy stories.'

Tejsingh's life took a dramatic turn in 1978. He left with some members of his family for New York. It took him some time to adjust to a new society but this did not stop him from practicing his religion. He took up singing in the Ramayan Gole at the Mahatma Gandhi Satsangh Society and over the years he was able to influence a generation of performers. One of his ardent students, the drummer Rudy, compiled a Chowtal Book and presented it to Tejsingh as a token of his gratitude.

There were other honors as well. Professor Peter Manuel from John Jay College also presented Tejsingh with an award in recognition for his

father was strict and well respected. Durpatty Misir says that her dad remains a role model. He is kind and considerate and he shared his knowledge with all.

Rajaram says that he tries to live up to the high standards of his dad. Parbatty Tej Singh and her husband Ramesh Deochand say that Tejsingh is a cultural gatekeeper and that he is a strong and dedicated Hindu who has kept up the traditions.

What advice does Tejsingh have for those that seek longevity? He says, 'sleep early, be a vegetarian and tell the truth. Stay away from gossip and read the scriptures.' This is indeed priceless advice. Congratulations to Tejsingh Kandhai, a wonderful father and friend, who lives for his culture.

Best wishes to him for many more fruitful years.



Tejsingh Kandhai (seated) is surrounded by his ten children.

and eventually landed in British Guiana. Kandhai and Laro would later meet, fall in love and marry. Tejsingh remembers his parents Kandhai and Laro as hard-working persons that made Guyana their home. They never returned to India.

The young Tejsingh attended school at DeWillem up to the second standard. He recalls the logies at DeWillem and at Uitvlugt and the long hours that

places; some of the produce was sold to Saroop who had a restaurant in Robb Street in Georgetown.

Saroop was the brother of Somwaria. The union between Tejsingh and Somwaria produced 11 wonderful children and they are Boodram, Galo, Ballie, Muniram, Durpatty (Dru), Parasram, Rishi, Raja, Laikram, Paro and Harry. There are also 29 grandchildren and 32 great grandchildren. Somwaria, the mother

to handle disputes. Tejsingh played a prominent role here and devotees would meet with him to iron out problems that may arise.

Tejsingh's reputation for fairness and no nonsense grew and he was described as the 'tiger.' He said that in all his dealings, 'I wanted things to be done in the right way. What I had to say was done in a straightforward way. It made little sense to gossip.'

Tejsingh's daughter