

# FUNERAL ORATION AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

MARCH 10TH, 1997

**P**residents and leaders to come can give the people houses and cars; can build palaces for the people but none will have such outpouring of grief in this land!

President Sam Hinds, Distinguished Guests, Members of Parliament, the Diplomatic Community, the Guyanese people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those individuals and organisations involved in my father's funeral arrangements - and to thank all those who expressed their love and appreciation for his life's work on behalf of this nation.

In particular, I would like to express my deepest love and affection to all of our family whom have always stood at the doorsteps of love for my father. They weep for him the strongest. My mother, my sister, Nadira and her husband Mark who has been a bedrock of support; my wife Nadia who has stood unwaveringly by us; and the five grandchildren who were such a source of joy and happiness to my father. Love and affection to all the Armogans, the Rawanas, the Fries, the Persrams, the Allis, and all the Jagans especially my cousin Clive who has unfailingly loved and supported my father. Thanks to all my friends for their support in these trying times. Thanks to the Joint Services and especially to Commissioner Lewis and Brigadier Singh. Special thanks to the PPP/Civic organisation for their devotion to their comrade Cheddi. But most of all I thank the Guyanese Nation for its love and affection for my father. Special thanks to the Government and people of the United States for the highest level of affection, professionalism, respect and kindness which was rendered to our President whilst he was hospitalised in Washington.

Ladies and Gentlemen, brothers and sisters, friends, I did not come here to recite to you a long list of Dr Jagan's achievements, or to give you a history of his struggles as Father of this country. I've come here to share with you some thoughts I wrote down in the last few hours of his life as I sat by his bedside.

The following are some excerpts from ten pages of notes I wrote from 9 30 pm on his last day. These thoughts would reflect I think, my sister Nadira's sentiments:

"I sit beside your bed on this last day of your life. I grieve not so much, for your life is full and complete. My love for you is so deep and complete that I cry inside for the missed time which we never had. I look at you and I am talking to you but it seems that you don't hear me but I know that you do. I know that your mind is at peace for your work and experiences will live on for all time. I will never forget the essence of yourself and the things for which you stood - for the poor and oppressed. I hold your hand as I write these thoughts and the pain in my heart for you is not to be imagined. You have always been my inspiration in life.

In this eleventh hour I look at your struggled breathing and I touch your warm body and life is still within you - these last moments of your life I am here by you. You cannot see me, but feel me, for I know that God is linking us in concert - I remember the times when you used to toss me in the air and play fight; I remember how I used to massage you in Laluni Street and how you told me stories. I remember your bravery in going to jail - in standing up for what you believe in. I remember going to the surgery and seeing you work. I remember Red House and the tennis we used to play. I look at my wife rubbing Limacol on your forehead and she cries and says that you smell like Guyana. Your grandchildren cry for you - they will miss you forever. My God! You should not be going now! You should not! But here we are on this dingy dark March night counting out the hours to your final resting. I travelled today all the way from Guyana with trepidation but I am here with you now. As I hold your hand

I think back to the times you gave those lectures - Montreal in 1968, California 1972, Washington and New York in the 80's, talking about socialism - what a socialist you became: you mastered it; you lived it in theory and practice. You were the only true socialist in your time because you really believed in **DEMOCRACY** and you will die penniless.

Death is approaching, the end is near but your work is now started - it will be continued, I promise. I will always cherish the greatness of your life - your commitment to the poor and the impoverished. I rub your chest and it's still warm and moving and feels so beautiful. You just would not give up at all - you'll fight to the end. I know that you will travel to an oasis of contentment in your next life and I know that before I die I will see that re-birth of your soul. Your life is like the sunshine of a never-ending eclipse, and the prayers and soul-searching of the Guyanese nation have been with you.

You gave your best shot at life - a life of great sacrifice, of great sentiment, of great knowledge and of great importance. I cut off little pieces of your hair to give my children to keep forever - your hair smells so nice and the texture is so smooth. It is almost 12 o'clock and you are at peace in a world of sleep - deep dreams before you exit this narrow world. You have made your mark; you have tried your best. All hope is lost now and you are dying but I will stay with you to the end. You of all people! You were supposed to live much longer - to one-hundred years old!

How horrible! How terrible! How unfair! You tried so hard to bring a new frontier of energy to a picket fence of corruption, lethargy and despair. I will keep talking to you until the end . . . I love you."