

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY SIR SHRIDATH RAMPHAL AT THE ANTHONY N SABGA CARIBBEAN AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE AWARDS CEREMONY ON APRIL 11, 2015 AT THE HILTON TRINIDAD & CONFERENCE CENTRE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.**

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This is, as you have heard, the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of these Awards; and I am the Third Chairman of the independent Panel that makes the ultimate selection. The founding documents describe us as the ‘Eminent Persons Panel’ – the ‘EPP’; but we make the Awards from nominees put forward by Country Nominating Committees who are therefore integral to our work, and whose presiding officers are here with us tonight.

On this, our 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, I want to acknowledge the provenance of the Awards. First of all, my predecessors as Chairman of the EPP – Sir Ellis Clarke and Mr Michael Mansoor – whose leadership established the standing of the Awards as a Caribbean Mark of Excellence. Their colleagues, the members of the Panel and all associated with the Award, invite your respectful remembrance of their pioneering efforts as we reach this first milestone.

And so too should be recalled the sterling service rendered by the Country Nominating Committees over the years, and all associated in the Region with their manifold efforts. Essential to all this, has been the ANSA McAL Foundation under the Chairmanship of Dr Anthony N Sabga and the Program Office of the Awards led by its Director Ms Maria Superville-Neilson. With my Colleagues on the EPP I invite you to acknowledge the superior quality of these efforts that have together brought us here tonight.

Last year, as the Awards approached their 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Foundation added to the categories of excellence to be recognized *ENTREPRENEURSHIP*, and it has been reflected in tonight's Awards. It also reinforced the basic objective of the Awards to honour not lifetime achievements – and there is, wonderfully, plenty of that in our community – but *excellence* in its prime (between roughly 35 and 55 years) the recognition of which may itself help to further its gifts to our region.

You will recognise that we have not this year made an Award in the category of *Public and Civic Contributions*. This is not because such contributions are scarce in our

region – on the contrary, they proliferate; it is because by their own worthiness they have lifted the bar of excellence to ever higher levels. Attaining those levels must continue to be the hallmark of these Awards.

As I emphasized in my introduction to the publication that commemorates this anniversary, striving for excellence is not new to the Caribbean. It never was enough for our people simply to get by, since our deepest roots lay in conditions of deprivation from which it was compelling to escape. The urge to excel is the very essence of that compulsion for self-improvement. With betterment as the driving force of Caribbean civilization, excellence had to be the ultimate goal of our most ardent endeavours.

In no society is it given to all to reach that goal; but our Caribbean culture of striving ever upward makes the attainment of excellence in any quarter an achievement in which all our community shares; it is a regional achievement in its truest sense. Within our small Community of the Caribbean the attainment of excellence in manifold areas of activity has been phenomenal; but we have not always acknowledged it in public ways that would

further such effort itself. We have long needed to do more through recognition and reward to enhance the culture of excellence itself.

So, beyond this Hall and this moment, we must all take satisfaction in Caribbean excellence as honoured by these Awards over the last 10 years: Awards so well symbolized in the First Awardee, Monsignor Gregory Ramkissoon, who is here with us tonight. Over those years, and in tonight's Awardees, the Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Awards for Excellence have identified men and women of our Region in their prime who by the standards of excellence they attained in the fields of Arts and Letters, of Community Service, of Science and Technology, and now of Entrepreneurship, have entitled the Caribbean to be proud of our human resources.

By their stands of excellence they have set the bar of achievement and of service at levels that are high even beyond our Region. We do not fail at self-denigration when we stumble; we must not fail to recognize high attainments when they are reached, particularly when they are reached out of the limelight. Above all, we must not

believe that the highest of human achievement is beyond our capacity. These Awards testify that they are within the reach of all our Caribbean people. Let us salute those who have excelled!