



Deokinanan Sharma

Water is life and nothing has greater transforming power than the availability of clean water. Deokinanan Sharma has spent his entire professional life as a civil engineer decontaminating wastewater and in the process, transforming lives. But Chancellor, man shall not live by water alone. Aren't we told in the Gita? "PAROPAKAARANYA SATYAM VIBHOOTAYANA – Good people always use their powers to serve others." This man will never be one to claim that he is good but he has certainly spent much of his life and time in the service of others.

In Hindu philosophy a devta is a supremely benevolent being. Such has been the quality and value of his work to this society that Pundit Hardath Maharaj, a noted elder in the Hindu establishment, describes Deokinanan Sharma as a devta – a devta in the mould of Hanuman – the very embodiment of service. His call to service was innate and by age 17 he was already mobilizing the youths in his community using the media of music and culture and steeping them into service through organisations like the Lions Club. A quiet and selfless man, he has been the backbone behind the development and evolution of Indian culture, first through the Sanatan Dharma MahaSabha and then for the last 44 years through the activities of the National Council of Indian Culture. He was a founding member of the organizing committee that was integral to the planning and initiation of the first Diwali Nagar in 1986. Diwali Nagar, now in its 26th year, is a much anticipated annual cultural event and always well

attended by all members of our society, not only those of the Hindu faith.

Chancellor, here is a man who was trained as a civil engineer but whose life's calling has been social re-engineering. He has committed his every nerve and sinew into building institutions of service. His receipt of The Humming Bird Gold Medal from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is recognition of this. Our Republic is not the only one to honour him for he has received several awards – from The National Council of Indian Culture, The Trinidad Sevashram Sangha Inc, the Hindi Seva Samman and the Penal-Debe Regional Corporation.

But Chancellor, the Gita again got it right:

*"VADAM PRASAADA SADANAM
SADANAM HRIDANAM SUDHAMUCHO VAACHAHA
KARANAM PAROPAKARANAM KESHAM
KESHAM NA TA CHANDUAAA"*

"Who will not honour such a person who always keeps a smile on his face, who has compassion in his heart, whose speech is controlled and who always helps others?"

*In honouring him today, our beloved University is recognizing supreme benevolence and exemplary citizenship. I therefore ask you Chancellor, to invoke the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of The University of the West Indies and confer upon Deekinanan Sharma the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.*

*St. Augustine Campus
Thursday 25th October, 2012*