



## Kamaluddin Mohammed

*“Mudhe lak burah cha-hay to kya hota hai,  
wohi hotay hai jo manzuray khoda hota hai”*

*Chancellor, this is an URDU benediction that has echoed across the airwaves of Trinidad and Tobago since the 1940's. It was introduced into the local lexicon by a pioneering, self taught, polymath with a melodious and captivating voice.*

*Kamaluddin Mohammed was still a teenager when he entered into community service and became The Imam at the Queen Street Mosque, in Port of Spain. Though his formal education ended only at the secondary level, he was already fluent in Arabic, Hindi, Farsi and Urdu. At the same time when the Indian Motherland was being torn asunder by partition, it was ironic that a grandson of the Kala Pani crossing was uniting Hindus and Muslims in far off Trinidad and Tobago. What was his instrument of unity, you might ask? It was a radio show called “Indian Talent on Parade”. Using this medium he had produced a vent and vehicle for previously repressed cultural expression. But the radio station was too small for a man of such energy so he quickly turned to a much larger and challenging stage— the national political platform.*

*For 30 years continuously, he served the people of this fair land as a member of Government and Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, in portfolios as diverse as Agriculture, External Affairs and*

*Health. He brought tremendous energy to his work and performed with distinction. It was under his stewardship as Minister of Health that the Mt Hope Medical School was conceptualised and it was he who ensured that it was brought to fruition. Though there are many accomplishments that could be cited, Kamaluddin Mohammed believes that his election as Chair of the United Nations World Health Assembly for two terms is his crowning achievement. It was during his tenure in 1978 that the World Health Organisation adopted the very noble mantra of "Health for All" at the Alma Ata Conference, a slogan that emphasised health as a universal and fundamental human right.*

*Kamal was a close friend and confidante of the late Dr Eric Williams. From this association and vantage point he gained the opportunity to build friendships and relationships with influential men and women from around the world. These intimate connections were instrumental in our independence lobbying efforts which have inevitably shaped our destiny. Though he may have walked with kings, he has never lost the common touch. Take the words of his cabinet colleague, Errol Mahabir, "Kamaluddin Mohammed has always led a simple life and humility has been one of his attributes. He has served his country faithfully and with a great sense of dedication". And then at the passing of Dr Eric Williams, everyone expected him to succeed as Prime Minister but to many it seems that he was unfairly bypassed. Much has been written and said over this apparent slight, but there has never been a word of rancour or regret from this statesman! Whatever his weaknesses, being a victim is not one of them. With tools of a sharp mind and a broad intellect, this servant of the people has built a great life. It was hardly surprising therefore that he was awarded the Nation's highest honour in being conferred with The Order of Trinidad and Tobago in 2010.*

*Chancellor, radio announcer, Imam, politician, statesman and speaker of five languages; the common theme amongst all of this versatility is the gift of a sensitive communicator. Here is a man who possesses the great ability to connect with ease at a deeply emotional level with his fellowman – be he King or commoner.*

*This is his gift – a gift which he has put to extraordinarily good use. Our nation and our people have been enriched by him.*

*When you receive him Chancellor and confer upon him the title of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, in the ensuing silence these URDU words will reverberate around this hallowed hall and the wider world: Adha Barz Khoda Hafiz Phir Melinge.*

*St. Augustine Campus*

*Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2011*