

The Difficulties and Challenges in Practising Festivals

Introduction:

Difficulties and obstacles faced by the organizers and participants in their attempts to practice these festivals.

1. As more and more persons became converted to Christianity the number of Indians in particular who were willing to participate in the festival dwindled. This was because of the Christian leaders' condemnation of some of these festivals which they saw as wrong. As a result the organizers lost the financial support of some of its most faithful supporters.

2. Wages were kept deliberately low. Some of the festivals required funding such as the tazias building and the gift giving. This prevented some of those who would have wished to participate from becoming involved.



A Tazia

3. There are particular cases to consider. For example the **1860's was a difficult time** for the entire Caribbean. It all started with the American Civil War (1861). There was a massive increase in the price of imported foodstuff. Flour, a main meal item for the masses rose by eight three per cent! (83%) The cost of living rose by sixty per cent (60%). In order to cushion the blow for themselves, the authorities imposed heavy and new taxation on the masses. For example, carts were previously untaxed but after 1864 the owners (who are obviously those of the poorer class) were required to pay eighteen shillings per year on their carts! You can well understand how, in the context of low wages, this would result in their inability to buy gifts for festivals or sponsor tazia building and so on.

4. The Caribbean **region is prone to droughts and hurricanes**. 1862 and 1863 saw a series of droughts throughout the region. This was followed by heavy rains the next year. The result? Flooding and destruction of crops, roads bridges etc., You can well imagine that the harvest festival would either have to be postponed or cancelled for that year.

5. Each **successive generation** became less and less interested in the culture and practices of their forefathers. This was partly because they spent more and more time at school. As they became more and more educated and exposed to other cultures they became more and **more integrated**, they made friends with children from other races and did not want to be seen or stand out as different.

6. In some instances **potential leaders** of the ceremony and men of influence became more involved in the formation and fight to legalize **Trade Unions** (1930's) and their **political careers** or aspirations for political office in the 1950's and 1960's when Constitutional changes were taking place in the British Caribbean and a number of coveted posts were made available.

7. The **upper class opposed** these cultures. The rowdy behaviour, the rum drinking and the loud music were seen as barbaric and uncivilized. They made no attempt to understand the new cultures that were injected into the society instead they reacted with scorn and derision. For example in 1884 the Governor of Trinidad passed a law, placing certain restrictions on the Taziya procession. A **Proclamation** was issued to the East Indians of Naparima, (Trinidad) notifying them that they would NOT be allowed to pass through San Fernando.

8. Those members of the lower classes who managed to send their children to schools desired for them a better way of life. Very often this 'better way of life' meant aspiring to the values and traditions of the upper class.

9. The **Americanization of the Caribbean** led to a lot of culture erosion. This was especially so after the American soldiers spent some six years in the Caribbean on the different bases. Persons became more attracted to the American culture- the rock and roll music, the seductive moves of Elvis 'the pelvis' Presley and certainly after the late 1950's for those who could afford it television became the centre of attraction not festivals and celebrations! A number of persons lost their taste for 'those things'.