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## **Chutney to Queer and Back: Trinidad 1995–1998**

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### **Abstract**

In December 1995, I arrived for the very first time in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, to study chutney music—a fusion of Hindi religious folks songs and calypso and soca rhythms. From what I had been reading, the emergence of chutney music in the 1980s and '90s reflected the growing cultural impact of East Indians (or Indo-Trinidadians as I will also refer to them) as well as their desire for national belonging even as it claimed particular Indian cultural difference at its core. Basdeo Panday, the first Indo-Trinidadian Prime Minister, had just been elected, and it was also the 150th anniversary commemorating Indian arrival in Trinidad. Over the next month, and again for several months in the summer of 1996, I conducted interviews with any chutney musician who would meet with me—Chris Garcia, Ramraji Prabhoo, Rikki Jai, as well as with industry insiders such as the producers of the Indian cultural competition *Mastana Bahar*, radio station owners, music store managers, and chutney music promoters. I went to chutney performances all over southern Trinidad—Chaguanas, San Fernando, and many smaller towns in between—as well as the occasional event in Port-of-Spain.

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