

RANIE RAMPARSADH

A Woman for Peace

16 October 1941 - 28 April 2019

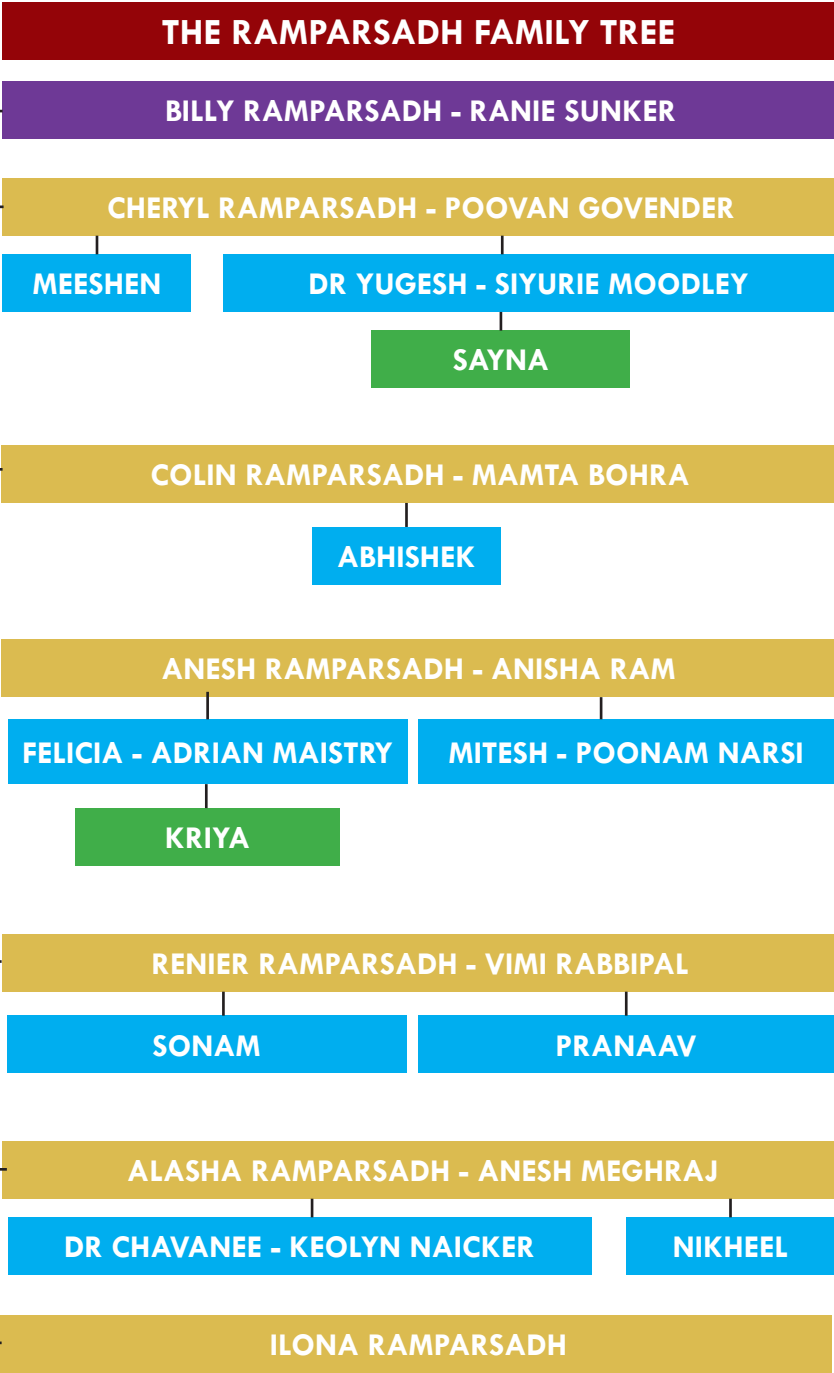


A Tribute to a Special Sister
by Fakir Hassen

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INTRODUCTION

My wife Zarina and I first met Ranie when we settled in Lenasia after our marriage in 1976. Ilona was a little toddler at her side at the time. I was a young journalist, and Ranie was part of an event organised in Finetown for the needy by the still fledgling Lenasia branch of Women for Peace, led at that time by the late Auntie Maisie.

Indeed, we shared a special bond, which was reaffirmed barely a year later when Ranie adopted me as a brother by tying a Rakhi on my wrist, according me the privilege that up to then had been reserved only for her natural-born brothers. For more than four decades after that, she never failed to track me down on Raksha Bandhan day for a call. Even if I was abroad, she would wait for my return and come home to tie the Rakhi.



Ranie lived by the adage ‘Matha Pitha Guru Deivam’ in everything she did. A literal translation from Sanskrit is, ‘Mother Father Teacher God’. In everything that Ranie did, from caring for the aged, guiding children in cultural activities and religious programmes through the Sanathan Ved Dharam Sabha, and just rendering the best humanitarian service that she could to anyone and everyone, this was the motto that guided her.

It was through Ranie’s diverse efforts in Women for Peace with her many colleagues there, that Ranie won hundreds of hearts in not just the local community, but in a wider spectrum.

At the height of the anti-apartheid struggle, I remember Ranie firmly declaring that Women for Peace would not get embroiled in politics but rather do its bit by promoting racial and religious tolerance in other humanitarian ways.

Ranie and her team had roped me in when they initiated an outreach programme to the women in the Afrikaner community where I and people like Abdus-Samad Abdul Kader shared details of our cultures to help break the myths in that community about it.

I remember the gratitude on the faces of senior citizens at the Lenasia Civic Centre as they were given tea and sandwiches while they waited in long queues on pension pay-out days. Then there were the Mother's Day and Father's Day parties at the Nirvana Home, often co-hosted by Women for Peace with other community organisations.

There were self-help training schemes which led to employment for people; soup kitchens, and collection drives during natural disasters, and all this in the rickety old VW combi that just kept on going like Ranie and her tireless members.

It was no wonder then that Ranie was twice the recipient of the Women of the Year Award, which she proudly shared with her husband Billy and their six children. She even got the national organisation to declare me one of their first men to become Honorary Life Members of Women for Peace!



On the cultural scene, I was part of many efforts by Ranie and her family to get children from the Paatshala and the broader community to perform items that found not just favour, but won awards at international eisteddfoddi in South Africa and Lesotho.

On the ensuing pages of this small tribute to Ranie, some of these activities are reflected, largely in photos culled from family members, our mutual friend Farida Salejee, and some of those that I have taken over the years at activities we were jointly involved in.

The digital technology of photography today did not exist then and time has taken its toll on some photos, so apologies for the quality of some photos included purely because of the unforgettable memories they represent.

My apologies upfront to other members of the organisations that Ranie belonged to and who contributed to not only the success of those organisations, but also in the personal development of Ranie. Since this book is a personal reflection on Ranie's life, the few references or omission thereof does not in any way minimise their role.



Ranie's name became synonymous with Women for Peace. Here she was with founder members Dr. Cecile Cilliers (left) and Bridget Oppenheimer.

RANIE THE FAMILY CHAMPION

No matter what the time of day or day of the week, the residence of Ranie and Billy Ramparsadh in Cuckoo Avenue in Lenasia would always be bustling with some kind of activity. Both of them hailed from pioneering families in Lenasia who had moved out of the cramped conditions in Sophiatown.

It was the loving home where the couple who doted on each other raised their children – Colin, Cheryl, Alasha, Renier, Anesh and Ilona. It was where Ranie and Billy proudly hosted the ceremony for the naming of their second granddaughter, Chavanee, now a qualified doctor and married.



It was the home where anyone who popped in could not leave without some refreshments or a meal or engage in some conversation. And the prayer room niched into the lounge never failed to impress.

As the children grew and all but the youngest, Ilona, set up their own homes, the large residence became not just superfluous to their needs, but also inconvenient for Ilona who had started teaching in the city, so the three of them moved into a smaller townhouse in

Buccleuch. Zarina and I spent frequent hours enjoying chatting to Ranie while she fried her fresh bhajia mix, which she believed, and rightly so, were my favourites.

Special mention needs to be made of Billy.

He was the quiet, unassuming husband and father who never had a bad word about anyone. Even when others got into heated arguments about the family football club Swaraj Spurs, Billy would just grin away and do his own thing.

And there was one particularly special thing about Billy, who worked as a bakery deliveryman – he always brought some fresh bread and confectionery home not just for the family, but also for friends, my own family having been frequent recipients of his generosity. I learnt much later that he paid for these out of his own wages.

Even when Billy suffered a stroke that left him with limited mobility and loss of speech, he remained his cheerful self, undoubtedly boosted by the love showered on him by Ranie and the children.

Billy also remained extremely supportive of Ranie's activities outside the family. We often joked about him being "the silent partner" in this.

Ranie took care of Billy for many years before he eventually succumbed to illness. Simultaneously, Ranie also developed a number of ailments which added to her already challenging asthma. But none of this deterred her from her determination to serve the community.

She doted on her children, and I remember her confiding in me her fears and concerns as Cheryl's husband Poovan secured a career opportunity in the US and the family had to resettle there.

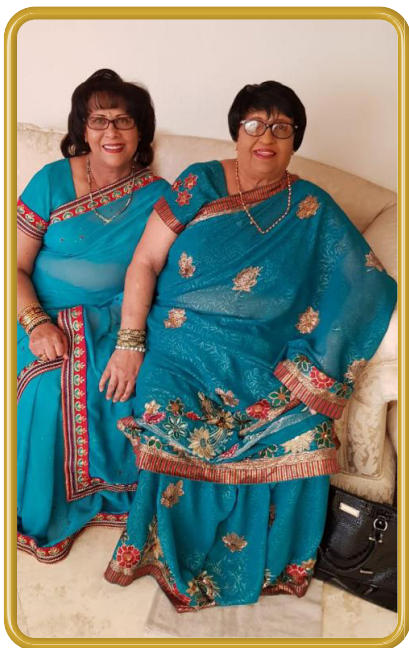
They have since returned to South Africa.

On another occasion, Ranie told me how her attempts to get Colin settled down with a local bride were failing. Until one day, Ranie called me excitedly to say that Colin had gotten married in Dehradun in India and was coming home with his bride Mamta.



On Billy's third death anniversary, which fell on the auspicious occasion of Ram Naumi, Ranie gathered the entire family to do a special prayer at the Sanathan Ved Dharam Sabha Mandir in Lenasia before they posed for this picture.

From left to right: Mitesh, Yugesh, Siyurie, Sonam, Renier, Vimi, Cheryl, Anesh, Poovan, Alasha, Nikheel, Chavanee, Ilona, Anisha, Anesh. In front are Abhishek, Ranie, Tarana, Poonam.



Ranie with her niece Tarana Poonee. Both of them did sterling work at the Sanathan Ved Dharam Sabha in Lenasia for many years.

Any children who visited the Ramparsadh home would always find some special treats ready and waiting.



Ranie with her first great-granddaughter Kriya on 16 February 2019. "She was on top of the moon that day," Ilona recalled.





Ranie at some grandchildren's very special days. Top left: Yugesh's Nelengu; top right: Felicia's engagement; and below: Mitesh's wedding.

Above: Meeshen, the eldest grandchild that Ranie doted on; and Sayna, the latest addition to the Ramparsadh dynasty that Ranie unfortunately did not get to see. She had also passed on by the time Chavane married Keolyn (left).



RANIE THE CULTURAL ACTIVIST

Ranie was very much involved with the activities of the Sanathan Ved Dharam Sabha, where she served in an official capacity as well. Here she was with Sookhoo Singh.



She helped teach children, guide them in performances, especially dance, drama and singing, and often quietly assisted less affluent children, with gifts and money, something I was privy to, without anyone else knowing about it.

Ranie played an instrumental role in leading the children from the Sabha to repeated triumph at Eisteddfods and other contests, something which in her final years she often lamented to me after Lenasia kept losing in the annual Eisteddfod hosted by the Hindi Shiksha Sangh, where in the most recent ones, Lenasia was not even represented.

One particular highlight was a controversial decision by Ranie to take some children from Lenasia to the Roodepoort International Eisteddfod, where young singer Nerisha Singh and equally young dancer Reshma Govind received top accolades. Nerisha continues a career in singing today with other family members, including her

husband Anesh and their talented children. Reshma has become an artist of note.



Also highly lauded at the Eisteddfod was Sadana Balton (right), now a doctor and Head of the department of speech therapy and audiology at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital in Soweto. Her elder brother Shan, who was a young activist at the time and now heads the Ahmed Kathrada Foundations, recalled how he had berated Sadana for participating in an event which was officially opened by the apartheid-era white minority leader P W Botha.

For Ranie though, she shared a view that our children needed to be provided with The Eisteddfod bug bit further when Ranie provided opportunities to expose Indian culture to other communities, which did indeed happen at Roodepoort. In fact, the organiser of the Eisteddfod, a Welsh immigrant, later stated that the Indian participation from South Africa was the best among all the countries represented there.

The Eisteddfod bug bit further when Ranie, probably boosted by the Roodepoort success, teamed up with Isabella to take a troupe of children to one in neighbouring Lesotho. I recall being part of the team that made its way there in a rickety combi driven by Isabella's husband Ned. Some of us thought we might have to find alternative transport back home afterwards, but the intrepid Ned got us all back safely!

Ranie strongly supported the efforts of Women for Peace national office leaders the now late Bridget Oppenheimer and Cecile Cilliers, to get the different race groups in South Africa, forcibly separated by apartheid laws, to get to know each other's unique cultures.

In one such project, she roped in Islamic scholar Abdus Samad Abdul Kader of Lenasia and myself to deliver talks on different elements of Indian culture, both Muslim, and Hindu, to gatherings of the Afrikaans equivalent of Women for Peace, Vroue vir Vrede. I suspect that the samoosas, puri patta and barfi that we took along garnered greater interest than our presentations, but interactions with two ladies in particular afterwards still stand out vividly for me.



One of them, clearly showing keen interest, wanted more details about the dots on Hindu women's heads and why a Muslim friend she had, the renowned Prof Fatima Meer, always wore the sari, which the enquirer believed was reserved

for Hindu women, when she was a Muslim.

The second less tactful Afrikaans-speaking woman vowed to never again refer to a samoosa as a "drie-hoek Coolie-koek" (triangular Indian cake), using the derogatory term for Indians which has now been banned in democratic South Africa.

In March 2009, the Gauteng Branch of the Hindi Shiksha Sangh of South Africa celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of the national body, with its inaugural Hindi Seva Samman Awards at the Edenvale Community Centre. A number of pioneer Hindi teachers from Lenasia were among those honoured, including Ranie, who could

not attend because she was in hospital at the time. I was humbled to also be acknowledged with the Hindi Samman Award among this group of veterans, but somewhat saddened that my sister Ranie could not be there, as I know she would have beamed with pride for this.

In October 2010, I wrote this story about a special copy of the Ramayan in the Ramparsadh family.

“A huge leather-bound copy of the Ramayan, with brass lock and key, is still in regular use by the fourth-generation descendants of the man who brought it across the seas from Calcutta, and two more generations of eldest sons are already in the wings to inherit the priceless artifact.

Although the specific details are lost in time due to little oral information having been passed on, Ranie Ramparsadh of Lenasia believes that the well-weathered Ramayan, which she painstakingly preserves in a special red cloth, was brought on one of the first ships that brought



indentured labourers from India to South Africa in 1860. He was the great-grandfather of her husband Dewkaran Ramparsadh (better known as Billy), Harduth Banya Shah, who left his native Lucknow to seek new fortunes in South Africa.

From there it went to Shah's son Kalishah Harduth, who eventually settled in Newclare in Johannesburg, who in turn passed it on to Billy's father, Ramparsadh Harduth. Billy's son Colin has become

the custodian of the special Ramayan, and his son Abhishek, will inherit it after that.

“I found the Ramayan here when I moved into the family home after our marriage in 1961 and it has remained a guiding light since then for us and our six children – Cheryl, Colin, Anesh, Renier, Alasha and Ilona,” Ranie said.

“Except for Ilona, who is still with us, the others are now all married, and on their own in various parts of the world. But they still maintain their religious practices which the big Ramayan and regular reading therefrom on special occasions set the tone for,” said Ranie.

“Despite its fragile pages, the Ramayan has been a source of comfort at times of need and delivered guidance and inspiration whenever it was needed,” Ranie added as she pointed out the lock and key which still works, and the faded hand-engraved message on the leather cover which appears to indicate that the Ramayan was a gift specially made for someone leaving on the big trip to a new land.”



Ranie and Billy with Caps and Tarana Poonee. Ranie always considered Tarana to be her daughter.

RANIE THE COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

Besides her own personal support for such things as school supplies and food to needy children, Ranie was part of the many diverse activities of Women for Peace.

She would always invite me to come and attend and report on these in the Lenasia Times or the Post that I worked with.

I remember one year a visit to the Cotlands children's home for a Christmas party, where Ranie was initially nominated to don the Father Christmas costume, complete with fake beard, but lost out to the jovial Auntie Fatima, who did a splendid job.

Sadly, many of the photographs that were taken in those days have been lost over the years.

One of the pet projects that Ranie and Farida especially took great pride in was the establishment of a community centre for training and empowering women and the unemployed. It did not last long, however, as one day she called me to come and witness how the centre had been broken into and the equipment with which they taught women sewing, jewellery-making and other activities had all been cleaned out by the burglars.

But Ranie's special passion was organising the annual Mother's Day and later also Father's Day functions for the senior citizens at the Nirvana complex where many of them lived. Ranie often reminisced about how so many of them had been 'dumped' there by their children, some of them never getting visits from the ones they had raised so lovingly. Ranie also expressed the hope that she and Billy never end up like that, and it is to the credit of the children they raised that they maintained their special bonds even after moving out.

Without fail, Ranie roped in entertainers and sponsors to make these day extra special for the senior citizens, with fun, prizes, gifts for all and special meals. I have to admit that I too found special joy in being the MC at many of these functions as we engaged in fun activities with them.



At the Father's Day event in June 2007, Ranie joined colleagues in the kitchen to ensure everything went right.



At the May 2008 Mother's Day party, Ranie handed a special gift to Ambiben Chotubhai (in blue sari), who was having her birthday celebrated for the first time ever in her 75 years. With her are the two oldest people at the function, Gangathama Naidoo and Ramesh Sunker, both over 80, and Farida.



Fundraising remained critical for the activities of Women for Peace , and one such activity was a dinner-dance in Lenasia South, where Ranie and her fellow members appeared to have more fun than the guests who contributed to the coffers!

On the right Ranie and friends were hosting a Women for Peace fundraising tent at the Jiss Red Nose Carnival in Lenasia.



A very special occasion was the 30th anniversary of Women for Peace in August 2006, when a number of founding members got together with the Lenasia branch as well to mark the historic milestone. Founder members of the Women for Peace Lenasia branch, Choti Soni and

Ranie, Chairperson of the Lenasia branch and Woman of the Year winner, with then Chairperson of the national body, Patience Pashe. Seated were founders of Women for Peace Dr. Cecile Cilliers (left) and Bridgette Oppenheimer.



After handing over the reins as chairperson of Women for Peace to Farida Salejee and moving to Buccleuch, Ranie's illnesses curtailed her community activities. Successive chairs of Lenasia's Women for Peace branch included Shahida Kazie, and Fehmida Salejee, who all continued the legacy of Ranie and the other pioneers with a host of community activities for several years. But sadly, the passing of older members and the complete apathy of the younger generation to join, has led to the end of an era as far as Women for Peace Lenasia is concerned.



In July 2006, when a group of doctors extended the Daxina Medical Clinic from a day clinic facility to a full clinic, Ranie and Farida represented Women for Peace. Dr Pungie Lingam wanted to involve community organisations.



Ranie's advice and guidance was always valued by both members of her own branch in Lenasia and those at other branches. In this picture, some friends, Patience Pashe, Bobby Wise and Denise Valente were visiting her for some such advice.

In November 2006 Ranie was a judge at the Gauteng leg of the Post Real Curry Competition at the Trade Route Mall in Lenasia. She was with second prize winner Fozya Mahomed; Post Marketing Executive Hazel Pillay, first prize winner Daisy Govender, Trade Route Mall executive Maahayi Inderjeeth; third prize winner Radha Singh and fellow judges Sabera Khan, Sheila Somers and Sandra Pillay.



RANIE THE MUSIC AND MOVIE LOVER

Ranie absolutely loved Indian music and movies.

She had a diverse collection of LP's and cassettes.

When I was Station Manager of Radio Lotus, we even got some music which was not available in our library from Ranie.

Billy once said to me that Ranie was an accomplished bathroom singer, but that he didn't think she should get onto a stage. Perhaps he never told her this himself, as Ranie would grab any opportunity to sing a song, join others in singing it, and even coercing very reluctant singers to join her at some events.

Once, when Sonu Nigam was having a show in Johannesburg, which I had a small hand in assisting with, I naughtily led Ranie into believing that I had been tasked to get a few budding local singers to do the opening act and had included her name. Ranie said that unless she could do a Bhajan to open the show, there was no deal! By all accounts, Ranie was an excellent Bhajan singer.

I once asked Ranie who her favourite actor (note singular!) was. "Raj Kapoor, Rajesh Khanna, Amitabh Bachchan and Shahrukh Khan," she rattled off immediately.

"Just one," I responded, to which she cleverly replied: "Yes, each one from his own era."

Prompted about her favourite actress, Ranie said there could be only Hema Malini, the original 'Dream Girl', because she had eternal beauty. Looking at Hema today, I guess that Ranie had some foresight!

Together with her son Colin, who later even briefly took over Lenasia's largest video hire shop, LVC, Ranie amassed a huge collection of VHS tapes and later DVD's, until the advent of the satellite channels from India like Zee TV and Star.

In her final years, she candidly confessed to spending almost all day on her sofa following the exploits of the family members in the various dramas on screen, often sharing details excitedly with Zarina as she angrily berated the mothers-in-law who were treating their son's spouses so badly. I recall at one bhajia-munching session in Buccleuch how she said she would never ever do that to her daughters-in-law and was sure that Zarina had a good relationship with her own daughter-in-law, our Farzana, married to Yusuf. I can attest to her being right on both counts.

Often recalling the heydays of cinema in Lenasia at the Apsara and Tahiti (now all shopping centres), Ranie continued the tradition of catching the movies on the opening weekend at Killarney CineCentre, often with Ilona in tow.



RANIE THE ADVENTURER

As I knew Ranie, she was a great adventurer, ready to try almost anything once, as long as others also benefited and she had good company.

Camping, mountain climbing and organising bus trips to Durban, Sun City and other places, often with fellow members and senior citizens, were all within her forte.



“But definitely no more slot machines. No, no, no,” Ranie once told me emphatically in a phone call when I wanted to check on her condition and she said she was on her way to Sun City.

Ranie also had a flair to tell some funny real-life stories with a very straight face which would have us all in splits.

The one I remember as the most hilarious and could never retell in the same way, and also at the risk of offending some about the emphasis on accents, involved a husband-and-wife tenant couple who rented the building behind the Cuckoo avenue house.

It also involved the wife, hailing from Durban, dropping the ‘h’ and adding it where it was not needed, when she came to complain to Ranie about a domestic dispute.

“My ‘usband got so cross, he grabbed the ‘Andy Handy bottle

from the sink and ‘it me on the ‘ead with it so ‘ard that I nearly ‘ad to be hadmitted to ‘ospital,” Ranie recounted it, but in print it could hardly do justice to the way she told it.

Ranie was definitely the life and soul of any function or gathering, often getting there with colleagues and family in the rickety old VW combi that served them so well for many years, getting frequent attention from the late Munaaf Saloojee.



Ranie was particularly proud of this photo that I took of the entire family at the 40th anniversary party that they planned for her and Billy in May 2001. A framed copy took pride of place among her many accolades in their home in Lenasia.



MESSAGE FROM CHERYL

Growing up, my mother was not just a parent to me but also my first friend. She had a way of making everything feel better, and her unwavering strength and resilience during difficult times inspired me to be the same way. Her words were always very powerful, but her actions spoke volumes, and her presence alone was enough to make everything okay.

My mother's love for her family was unconditional, and it was evident in everything she did. I can vividly recall her excitement and pride each time a grandchild was born, and how she would shower them with joy and affection. For her, family was everything, and she always looked forward to seeing it grow and prosper.

One of the many things my mother had to offer was her wealth of knowledge. She was a master at making parsad, a sweet offering during prayers, and she taught my sisters and I how to make it at a young age. Her love of cooking extended beyond parsad, and she was always trying out new recipes, which we all eagerly sampled.

Even when my family and I relocated, my mother remained a constant pillar of support and encouragement. She motivated us to be the best versions of ourselves and always had a way of making us feel like we could achieve anything we set our minds to.

Mummy, I miss you every day. I miss our chats, our silliness, and our laughter. You taught me how to be a good mother and grandmother, and I will always be grateful for your guidance.

Most of all, I cherish the lesson you imparted on the value of red lips and toenails. It was a small but meaningful way of reminding me to always take care of myself and to feel good about who I am.

You will always hold a special place in my heart, and I will love you forever, Mummy.

MESSAGE FROM COLIN

My Mum was everyone's Mum.

Wherever I go I meet people who have a story or two to tell of how she educated them and gave them confidence to face the world. And of my Dad I still get people talk to me about his adventures and how he took them off the streets and taught them how to play football and gave them entrepreneurial skills at a young age. We used to sell bread at the Lenasia railway station.

My Mum was my best friend. We discussed anything and everything. There were times she would say: "Don't tell your brothers and sisters". She knew I was the secret keeper. I still hold our talks dear.

She taught me how to pray. She gave me the education that no university could ever match. Because of you Mum, I followed my religion and ensured that I pass it down.

The funny thing was this standing joke between us that you will never attend my wedding. And you never did, but I know you were with me in spirit. I also know you celebrated and danced more than anyone else when I got married in India to Mamta. When Abhishek was born you were the happiest I have ever seen you.

Some months prior to her death Mum phoned and asked me to do a prayer for her myself, not by the pandit. Eventually I did it one evening at her home. She said to me I feel happy and satisfied. A few days later she was admitted into hospital and that was that.

Mum, you gave me courage and strength when I needed it.

Mamta, Abhishek and I will always treasure our good times with you.

MESSAGE FROM ANESH

Dear Mum,

There isn't a day that goes by without thinking about you.

I wish that I had an opportunity to say farewell properly, but I guess God had other plans for you.

In your lifeme you have helped so many people and brought joy to many others,.

I was always proud to be your son.

When Daddy suffered his stroke, you didn't allow him to give up on himself. You rather encouraged him to fight on and helped him through his difficult times and ensured that he was always well cared for, and that his dignity was kept intact.

To me this demonstrated the type of person you were - determined, posive and willing to sacrifice your own well-being for others.

Thanks to you and Daddy for instilling such good values in us.

We promise to uphold your legacy forever.

I am who I am because of you Mum and Dad and I am eternally grateful for all that you did for me.

Love,

Anesh, Anisha, Bavisha, Adrian, Kriya, Mitesh and Poonam.

MESSAGE FROM RENIER

Give me hope Joanna by Eddie Grant is playing on the dancefloor, Ranie takes a puff of her asthma pump on the dance floor, she is full of life laughter and joy.

That is one of my memories of my mom, always jovial and full of life making jokes. Always positive and never let any negativity bring her down.

During our childhood, we went through many struggles and my mom always made sure we came first.

She was a pillar of strength and always gave me courage in my darkest days. She taught me to always believe in myself and help people in need.

My mom opened our home to so many people in need and at one time I think there must have been about 20 people staying at our home, and my dad fed everyone.

As a member of various organisations, my mom always went the extra mile and took it upon herself to make sure it was a success.

Helping the aged was her number one priority.

On a Sunday night I would remember that I had homework and an Opstel to write, and as always, my mom wrote it for me. She had beautiful handwriting. She covered all our books and labelled it throughout our schooling.

Mom, the legacy you left, will be instilled within us.

MESSAGE FROM ALASHA

One of my mum's favourite phrases was: "You know that I have more guts than brains."

Now reflecting on this statement I truly understand what she was trying to tell me . She was telling me to be brave, to be courageous, to have fun, to take risks to be confident and to believe in myself.

My mum was a born leader who remained positive and focused despite her circumstances. She stood her ground and maintained her individuality in all aspects of her life.

She nurtured her family and her immediate and greater community by giving her time selflessly into any fundraising or charity event.

She pulled out all the stops to make the task at hand successful.

From the 1970's she worked with the Sanathan Ved Dharam Sabha as a committee member and as a Hindi school teacher. She still has an incredible following of ex-students who are grateful for her contribution to their lives .

My mum bonded with both old and young alike.

She left us with her legacy of unconditional love, service to humanity and upliftment of all in any way possible.

My mum has left this earth but she lives in each one of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The memories of my mum warms my heart and always leaves a smile on my face.

MESSAGE FROM ILONA

A Tribute to the Queen of My Heart.

Every time I think of my mother, my heart just fills with pride.

My mother gave me unconditional love, taught me how to love and live life to the fullest.

My mother always comforted me and was there to dry my tears.

My mother always had a smile on her face and taught me how important it was to laugh. I will never forget our long conversations at night about life and laughing at silly things.

She would always tell me how important it is to care and to be understanding no matter what the situation was. Her wisdom, strength, love and constant faith in me guided me through life.

I am so privileged to be called the daughter of Ranie Ramparsadh.

I will forever be grateful to my mother for giving me the gift of life, for loving me unconditionally, for being such a powerful influence in my life and being my best friend.

The day she left me was the worst day of my life and one of the hardest things I have to do is to live without my mother, with whom I spent almost every single day of my life until she left us so suddenly.

“Mum I know that you are now my angel up in heaven and although we are apart, you will always live inside of me, deep within my heart.”

MESSAGE FROM MEESHEN, ELDEST GRANDSON

My Nani was the keeper of our family history, the guardian of traditions, and the source of endless wisdom.

She taught me about life, love, and the importance of staying true to myself no matter the situation or outcome.

Her comforting presence and warm embrace always made everything feel better, and her gentle guidance shaped me into the best version of myself.

I have always missed her stories, spending time together, and talking about our daily lives but the memories created will stay with me forever and I will continue to honor one of the biggest blessings in my life.

I think about how proud you would have been today knowing there was a book coming out about your life but when you look back at how many lives you have touched, your legacy will live through these words and in our hearts forever.

Not a day goes by where you don't come to mind, and I hope I one day have a similar impact to the world as you did.

Love you always.

MESSAGE FROM TARANA

Ranie was my aunt, my second mum, my confidante, my guru, my mentor, my greatest supporter and the list just goes on.

You have showered me with unconditional love and always proudly introduced me as your “Eldest Daughter”.

I will always remember how you took every opportunity to tell me that you are so proud of me for everything that I do.

Your continued guidance and teachings have made a huge impact on my life. It is something that I will never forget.

Caps and myself have shared many happy moments with you which were filled with so much of laughter. We will forever cherish those memories.

Caps always speaks about the “Tuesday Night gossip sessions” that the two of you had while I was at the temple. I am sure that those conversations were reminiscing about the past and also about me.

Your passing away was a great loss for me and has left a huge void in my heart.

I love you and will forever miss you.

MESSAGE FROM FARIDA

Rani was more than just a friend. She was more like a sister to me.

We met the first time at the opening of the Hyde Park shopping centre.

Women for Peace had a stall there that showcased Indian culture.

The late Aunty Maisie invited Rani to bring her kids from her dancing school to perform some items.

We just seemed to click and our friendship grew from there.

I have lots of good memories of time spent with her but the one that stands out the most are our trips we arranged to Warmbaths for the aged.

She even planned a surprise 60th birthday party for me on one of our trips.

Not a day passed without us at least calling each other to discuss our day.

It was a very sad day for me when through circumstances beyond her control Ranie had to relocate to Buccleuch and placed the few assets and records of Women for Peace into my temporary custody before I managed to convince Shahida Kazie to become the new Chairperson.

Ranie was and will always remain a one-in-a million friend.

MESSAGE FROM DENISE

To my dear and wonderful best friend Rani.

Rani I have known you for 35 years. We met at the offices of Women Peace at Brenthurst.

You were a wonderful organiser .

We shared dance evenings, senior citizens' parties, Christmas parties and learned to cook Indian food. We had such great fun!

I knew your loving husband Billy ,what a wonderful family.

At Diwali I helped you place the candles in the windows, which looked so pretty and also all the fire crackers in the streets. We really did have a wonderful evening.

Rani, at my last visit you gave me a bag of Basmati rice .That cloth bag I have kept or my knitting, so you are always very near to me as I think of all the memories we made together.

Go well, my dear friend. You are always in my thoughts.

May you and Billy be in Gods Hands.

Rest in Peace till we meet again.

Your ever loving friend,

Denise .

THE FINAL JOURNEY

It was almost 2 a.m. on the morning of 30 April 2019.

I stared at my PC screen, wondering if I had really penned all the thoughts in my mind for the service scheduled later that morning for my dear sister.

Over many decades, I have never written a speech for the hundreds of events at which I had spoken or been the MC. This time too, it should have been straight from the heart, as always.

But I decided to write it down, as I feared that I might not be able to deliver it fully and someone else might have to read it on my behalf. This proved to be a wise decision, as less than halfway through the eulogy, overcome by emotion and choking back the tears, I had to stop and it fell upon our mutual long-time friend, Bushan Das, who was rendering the Bhajans at the service, to complete it.

This is the full text of the address.

Namaste, Vanakkam, Assalamulaikum, Namaskaram, Good Day, Goeie Dag, Sawu Bona, Dumelang.

The mortal remains that we have come here today to pay our respects to, is that of Ranie Ramparsadh. It will soon take its place in the natural order of things as determined by a power above.

But there is also another part to each one of us, and that is the spirit that guides our lives – of our parents and other forebears; of other loved ones and friends departed, who watch over us and await our joining them.

I therefore believe that the spirit of my dear beloved sister Ranie, who endeared herself to thousands of people in such diverse areas is here with us now, wanting us not to mourn but to celebrate her life through which she brought so much joy into so many lives.

Her spirit and the legacy she has left with her children and so many of us will continue to celebrate that life.

Ranie was always a fighter, even to the end, but when I spoke to her last week, to seek her blessings for the launch of my latest book the next day, she, very uncharacteristically, was not her usual chirpy self whenever she was in hospital, although she was still joking about her shares in the hospitals that she was in and out of in recent years. “This time I’m nogal in ICU, so the contribution will be even greater,” Rani jested.

I had promised to visit her on the coming Sunday with Zarina to bring her signed book, as she always featured in most of my books because of her work, and her last words to me were: “You know I’ll always be with you, my brother” as she repeated the pride with which she commented on Facebook about my latest effort.

Amid the thousands of condolences from all over the world that the family has received as news spread of Rani finally giving up the brave battle of a number of years now, I alone received over 300 messages on the same Facebook.

I want to share just a few of them with you as I recall just a few of my special memories of Ranie from the myriad which could probably fill two volumes.

Former Editor of Post, Brijlall Ramguthee, sharing his condolences, wrote: “I know of your bond as you spoke so glowingly of her over time.”

Najma Khota wrote: “You are fortunate to have had such a precious

bond for so many years.”

Indeed we shared a special bond, which was reaffirmed barely a year after our first meeting when Ranie adopted me as a brother by tying a Rakhi on my wrist, according me the privilege that up to then had been reserved only for her natural-born brothers.

For more than four decades after that, she never failed to track me down on Raksha Bandhan day for a call. Even if I was abroad, she would wait for my return and come home to tie the Rakhi.

Bhadra Ranchod said in his condolence message: “Love your devotion to your bhen. Tying the Rakhi has deep significance”.

Ismail Mahomed remarked that “Ranie was a great philanthropist!!!” Of course she was. Not just through Women for Peace, which I will come back to in a moment, but also in culture and religion, with a special emphasis on children, teaching them Hindi, as both Lucy Sigaban and Goodie Padiachee recalled in their messages.

But it was through her diverse efforts in Women for Peace, with her colleagues there, like Farida Salejee, who is here but asked me yesterday to also speak on her behalf as she would be unable to because she would become too emotional, that Ranie won hundreds of hearts in not just the local community, but in a wider spectrum.

At the height of the anti-apartheid struggle, I remember Ranie firmly declaring that Women for Peace would not get embroiled in politics but rather do its bit by promoting racial and religious tolerance in other humanitarian ways.

A former colleague at the SABC Abri Le Roux sent a message which read: “Ons meegevoel en gebede saam met jou Fakir.”

It was a reminder of how Ranie and her team had roped me in when they initiated an outreach programme to the women in the Afrikaner community where I and people like Abdus-Samad Abdul Kader shared details of our cultures to help break the myths in that community about it.

I remember the gratitude on the faces of senior citizens at the Lenasia Civic Centre as they were given tea and sandwiches while they waited in long queues on pension pay-out days. Then there were the Mother's Day and Father's Day parties at the Nirvana Home, often co-hosted by Women for Peace with other community organisations.

There were self-help training schemes which led to employment for people; soup kitchens, and collection drives during natural disasters, and all this in the rickety old VW combi that just kept on going like Ranie and her tireless members.

It was no wonder then that Ranie was twice the recipient of the Women of the Year Award. She even got the national organisation to declare me one of their first men to become Honorary Life Members of Women for Peace!

Although I must give credit to the ladies who have since Ranie relocated to Buccleuch been keeping Women for Peace going, I think they might be the first to agree that the organisation, like many other community organisations in Lenasia, is struggling to reach the same heights that it did during the time that she was at its helm, largely because of apathy from younger members of the community and funding issues.

On the cultural scene, I was part of many efforts by Ranie and her family to get children from the Paatshala and the broader community to perform items that found not just favour, but won awards at international eisteddfoddi in South Africa and Lesotho.

Besides this, the family was also involved in many social welfare projects, most of them silently.

There is so much more to say about my dear bhenji, but she is now finally at rest with Billy eternally by her side – the husband she doted on as much as he doted on her, quietly and humbly supporting all her hard work in the background. The same Billy that she so lovingly tended for around a decade after he suffered a stroke, but remained brave and constantly smiling.

What will I miss most about my dear bhenji?

Her indomitable spirit, eternal optimism, gratifying guidance, and selfless service, of course, But also the bhajias that she would fry immediately on arrival at her home, knowing how I like them spiced mildly, and constantly berating me about not watching my sugar intake because of my diabetes. And then there was the friendly “Ag! Go you!” every time I shared one of the many accolades I have received and told her how she had been a part of that for introducing me to the community at large.

I would like to end off with the saddest moment of my career in writing 15 books. My dear friend Sammy Naidoo, who has again published this book with me, when I told him that Ranie was not at the launch because she was in hospital again, was due to accompany Zarina and I to go and give Ranie her book on the coming Sunday when Colin called to share the shocking news of her passing.

The message I had written in the book, almost in a flippant way, before her passing, and which she never saw, will now remain embedded in my mind forever as a haunting memory of my dear sister.

Please allow me to share it with you.

“To my dearest sister Ranie, thank you for the support always. Tum jeeo hazaaron saal, but at least a minimum of 99, like the page you are on in this book!”

Nothing I write in future will ever be the same again.

My first meeting with my bhenji was with Ilona, so it might be only fitting that this book is given at our last, also to Ilona.

Farewell my dearest bhenji, till we meet again.

Ranie Ramparsadh, a renowned community activist from Lenasia, spent her entire life in service of the community. She was a live-wire in the cultural, religious, educational and social welfare areas. Some four decades ago, Ranie adopted the author as her brother, in the traditional age-old Hindu tradition of tying a Raakhee on his hand. Fakir put together this book as a tribute to his beloved sister.

"I attended the funeral service for Ranie Ramparsadh with my dear friend Fakir and could see the pain in his eyes as he choked while reading his eulogy and someone else had to finish it. Theirs was indeed a very special relationship.

- Sammy Naidoo, Group Chairman,
Apple Group of Print Companies

RANIE RAMPARSADH - A WOMAN FOR PEACE
A TRIBUTE BY FAKIR HASSEN

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