

[No Calypso for Hindu Kids](#)

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SCHOOLS

No Calypso for Hindu Kids

A musical misstep

Trinidad Hindus blasted a government minister's proposal to make calypso--the native folk music--a compulsory subject in the Caribbean nation's primary schools. "We strongly object to any compulsion on this matter, which must be a matter of choice for parents and school boards," said Sat Maharaj, secretary-general of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha. The Sabha runs 20 schools and is one of the largest Hindu organizations in Trinidad.

Calypso is a home-grown musical form developed by, and very popular among, Black Trinidadians, the descendants of African slaves brought to the islands to work the sugar plantations. The calypsonian singer composes a simple ballad with highly imaginative language sung to a syncopated rhythm. It has from the beginning been the satirical and consequential Black voice on politics and social issues. Many a politician has lost an election after street singers poured thinly veiled scorn upon him or his policies.

Pundit Ramesh Tiwari of the Edinburgh Dharmic Sabha in Trinidad said the proposal was made by the minister

somewhat innocently with the thought that all children should learn about this local art form. But the Hindu community felt calypso's political orientation would have a detrimental impact on young minds. Calypso fans believe the art form--which has been considerably influenced by Indian music--can and should be appreciated by all Trinidadians.