

**Title:**

London

**Shelfmark:**

C1190/42/03

**Recording date:**

2005

**Speakers:**

Gheerawo, Rama, b. 1977 London; male  
 Gheerawo, Subhagiwate, b. 1975; female  
 Ramsarran, Sankar, b. 1933 Georgetown, Guyana; male  
 Singh, Deonarine, male

The interviewees are all professionals with Guyanese backgrounds.

PLEASE NOTE: this recording is still awaiting full linguistic description (i.e. phonological, grammatical and spontaneous lexical items).

A summary of the specific lexis elicited by the interviewer is given below.

**ELICITED LEXIS**

- ▲ see Dictionary of Jamaican English (1980)
- see Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage (1996)
- ± see Dictionary of Mauritian Creole (1987)
- ♣ see Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago (2009)
- △ see New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (2006)
- ◇ see Green's Dictionary of Slang (2010)
- ▼ see Dictionary of Contemporary Slang (2014)
- ◆ see Urban Dictionary (online)
- ◊ no previous source (with this sense) identified

- pleased**      *happy* (also used in Guyanese); *pleased* (“*you proper please my heart*” used in Guyana of extreme happiness); *satisfied* (suggested by interviewer, used); *content*; *filled*; “*me do all right*” (of simple contentment); “*good for you, man*” (used as acknowledgement of success/achievement)
- tired**      (not discussed)

<b>unwell</b>	<i>sick</i> (“ <i>he sick very bad</i> ” of serious illness); <i>me got nara</i> <sup>▲1</sup> (Guyanese Creole for ‘stomach pain’)
<b>hot</b>	<i>hot</i> (of temperature/food, e.g. “ <i>the tea is hot</i> ”, also used of attractive person/stolen car/calypso music); <i>boiling</i> (of temperature); <i>peppery</i> (of spicy food); <i>steamy</i> (of feeling “sweaty”)
<b>cold</b>	(not discussed)
<b>annoyed</b>	<i>vexed</i> ; <i>vex</i> (originally patwa now “ <i>London street word</i> ”, e.g. “ <i>don’t vex me out</i> ” used for ‘don’t annoy me’); <i>bex</i> <sup>▲</sup> (“ <i>him bex</i> ” used in Guyanese Creole of extreme anger); <i>passion</i> <sup>2</sup> (“ <i>passion get me/passion hold me/don’t make me go in passion, man</i> ” considered Guyanese slang); “ <i>don’t make me lose control</i> ” common threat in Guyana)
<b>throw</b>	<i>pelt</i> (of e.g. stone)
<b>play truant</b>	<i>skulk</i> <sup>•</sup> (“ <i>you skulk yesterday</i> ” used frequently in Guyana, not heard in England); <i>run way</i> <sup>3</sup> (“ <i>he run way</i> ”, i.e. Guyanese pronunciation of ‘run away’ used of avoiding e.g. function/wedding); <i>dodge</i> <sup>▲</sup> ; <i>vamoosed</i> <sup>♥</sup> (“ <i>Americanism</i> ” used for ‘disappeared’)
<b>sleep</b>	<i>dodo</i> <sup>▲</sup> (“ <i>go dodo/time to dodo</i> ” used frequently to children, “ <i>affectionate</i> ”); <i>go take a nap</i> ; <i>lie down</i> (“ <i>me go lie down, man</i> ”)
<b>play a game</b>	(not discussed)
<b>hit hard</b>	<i>pelt</i> (“ <i>pelting mangoes</i> ”); <i>knock down</i> (“ <i>knock down de mango</i> ” <sup>4</sup> ); <i>chooks</i> <sup>•</sup> ; <i>jooks</i> <sup>•</sup> ; <i>hammer</i> ; <i>knock</i> (“ <i>God, Lord, man, me knock me go-box</i> ” <sup>△</sup> once used by father of blow to head after fall from ladder)
<b>clothes</b>	<i>dandan</i> <sup>•</sup> (“ <i>nice new dandan</i> ” used in Guyana especially of clothes for children/babies); <i>Sunday best</i> (of clothes worn to church/Sunday school); <i>khaki</i> <sup>◇5</sup> (pronounced “ <i>khaki</i> ” [ke:ki] in Guyana of khaki clothes); <i>dress up</i> (“ <i>gyal</i> <sup>▲</sup> , <i>you dress ninety-nine</i> ” <sup>6</sup> of smart clothes); <i>shirt-jack</i> <sup>•</sup> (of cross between shirt/jacket worn outside trousers worn frequently by father, liked by Denis Healey <sup>7</sup> ); <i>frock</i> (still common in Guyana for ‘dress’)
<b>trousers</b>	<i>pants</i> (pronounced “ <i>pants</i> ” [pa:nz] in Guyanese Creole, “ <i>small pants</i> <sup>8</sup> / <i>bukta</i> ” <sup>9</sup> used in Guyana for ‘underpants’)
<b>child’s shoe</b>	<i>booty</i> ; <i>trainers</i> ; <i>yatin</i> <sup>10</sup> (used as child in Guyana); <i>sneakers</i> (used in USA, adopted as adult); <i>plimsoll</i> (used in England)
<b>mother</b>	<i>ma</i> ; <i>mama</i> (“ <i>me mama</i> ” used in Guyanese Creole)
<b>gmother</b>	<i>nani</i> <sup>▲</sup> , <i>aji</i> <sup>▲</sup> (“ <i>me nani me aji</i> ” used to distinguish between maternal/paternal grandmother)
<b>m partner</b>	(not discussed)
<b>friend</b>	<i>mate</i> ; <i>pal</i> ; <i>buddy</i> ; <i>me mattee</i> <sup>•</sup> ; <i>dost</i> <sup>♦</sup> (Hindi for ‘friend’ common in Guyana)
<b>gfather</b>	<i>aja</i> <sup>▲</sup> , <i>nana</i> <sup>▲</sup> (used to distinguish between paternal/maternal grandmother)

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* (2009) records ‘nara’ in sense of ‘muscle strain in abdomen’.

<sup>2</sup> *The Caribbean Dictionary* (online at <http://wiwords.com/>) records ‘passion’ in sense of ‘angry/upset with rage’.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996) records ‘way’ in sense of ‘away’ ‘esp. as adv. in vb. phrase go way/run way’.

<sup>4</sup> See *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996) for spelling conventions of markedly dialectal/Creole pronunciations, e.g. <de> = ‘the’, <deh> = ‘there’, <dem> = ‘them’, <dat> = ‘that’ etc.

<sup>5</sup> *Green’s Dictionary of Slang* (2010) includes ‘khakis’ in this sense.

<sup>6</sup> *OED* (online edition) records ‘dressed to the nines’ in sense of ‘dressed very elaborately/smartly’

<sup>7</sup> British Labour politician (1917-2105) who served as Secretary of State for Defence 1964-1970 and Chancellor of the Exchequer 1974-1979.

<sup>8</sup> *OED* (online edition) records ‘smalls’ in sense of ‘underwear’.

<sup>9</sup> *The Caribbean Dictionary* (online at <http://wiwords.com/>) includes ‘bukta’ in this sense.

<sup>10</sup> *Guyanese Dictionary* ([http://www.gtfaces.com/guyanese\\_dictionary.html](http://www.gtfaces.com/guyanese_dictionary.html)) records ‘yatin boots’ in this sense.

<b>forgot name</b>	<i>ting</i> <sup>•</sup> (“ <i>boy, bring dat ting from dat ting</i> ” <sup>4</sup> ); “ <i>me forget</i> ” (used in Berbice for ‘I can’t remember’)
<b>kit of tools</b>	(not discussed)
<b>trendy</b>	<i>chav</i> (suggested by interviewer as used in UK, used by son); <i>flash</i> (of ‘dressing well’ in contrast to “ <i>shabby</i> ” of ‘dressing cheaply’); “ <i>he look/dress proper stupid</i> ” <sup>Δ</sup>
<b>f partner</b>	(not discussed)
<b>baby</b>	<i>pickney</i> <sup>Δ</sup> (African, “ <i>lil pickney</i> ”); <i>beta</i> <sup>•</sup> (of boy/son); <i>muna</i> <sup>Δ11</sup> ; <i>beti</i> <sup>•</sup> (of girl/daughter); <i>boy</i> (“ <i>bring de boy here</i> ” <sup>4</sup> ); <i>gyal</i> <sup>•</sup> (used in Guyanese Creole of female child); <i>baba</i> <sup>•</sup>
<b>rain heavily</b>	(not discussed)
<b>toilet</b>	<i>latrine</i> (commonly used in Guyana of outside earth closet, also used in South Africa); <i>toilet</i> (used of flush toilet); <i>loo</i> (used in England, not heard/used in Guyana); <i>box</i> <sup>Δ</sup> (heard used in Guyana)
<b>walkway</b>	(not discussed)
<b>long seat</b>	<i>settee</i> ; <i>sofa</i> ; <i>couch</i> (most common in Guyana)
<b>run water</b>	<i>trench</i> (used in Guyana of watercourse alongside road leading to “ <i>conservancy canal</i> ” <sup>12</sup> ); <i>four-foot</i> <sup>Δ</sup> (used in Guyana of watercourse leading from trench to household); <i>canal</i> ; <i>middle walk</i> <sup>•</sup> (used in Guyana of canal used for transporting sugar cane to factory); <i>pond</i> ; <i>drainer</i> , <i>drain</i> (used in Guyana of small watercourse to leading to “ <i>four-foot</i> ”)
<b>main room</b>	<i>hall</i> <sup>•</sup> , <i>gallery</i> <sup>•</sup> (used in Guyana); <i>living-room</i> (used in England); <i>hallway</i> <sup>•13</sup>
<b>rain lightly</b>	<i>drizzle</i> (“ <i>rain a-drizzle</i> ” <sup>14</sup> ); <i>shower</i> ; <i>fine rain</i> (common in Guyana)
<b>rich</b>	(not discussed)
<b>left-handed</b>	<i>cack-handed</i> (pronounced “ <i>cack-a-hand</i> ” [kakəhan] in Guyanese); <i>lefty</i> ; <i>left-handed</i> ; <i>sinistra</i> <sup>Δ</sup> (Latin)
<b>unattractive</b>	<i>ugly</i> ; <i>not good-looking</i> (“ <i>she not good-looking</i> ”); <i>not so attractive</i> ; <i>not nice</i> (“ <i>she not nice</i> ”)
<b>lack money</b>	<i>skint</i> (used in Guyana); <i>poor</i> ; <i>ting bad</i> <sup>Δ15</sup> (extremely common in Guyanese Creole); <i>garib</i> <sup>16</sup> (Hindi for ‘poor’ used as child); <i>hard up</i> (“ <i>hard up for cash</i> ”); <i>hand-to-mouth</i> (“ <i>dem deh hand to mouth</i> ” <sup>4</sup> used negatively in Guyanese Creole of “ <i>scrounger</i> ”); <i>brass</i> <sup>Δ</sup> (heard recently, considered “ <i>London street</i> ”)
<b>drunk</b>	<i>sweet</i> <sup>Δ</sup> (“ <i>proper sweet</i> ”, used light-heartedly, extremely common in Guyanese); <i>high</i> ; <i>pissed</i> (derogatory); <i>drunk</i> ; <i>tankered up</i> <sup>Δ</sup> ; <i>tank up</i>
<b>pregnant</b>	“ <i>de girl got belly</i> ” <sup>Δ4</sup> (common “ <i>village one</i> ” in Guyana)
<b>attractive</b>	<i>fit</i> ; <i>good-looking</i> ; <i>sharp</i> (used in Guyana of well-dressed/extremely attractive person, used in UK for “ <i>brainy</i> ”); <i>nice</i>
<b>insane</b>	<i>pagla</i> <sup>•</sup> (Hindi for ‘mad’ commonly used in Guyana); <i>mad</i> ; <i>crazy</i> (“ <i>he crazy</i> ”); <i>head na good</i> <sup>17</sup> (“ <i>me head na good</i> ” common in Guyana); <i>lunatic</i> (“ <i>he should go to lunatic asylum</i> ”); <i>loony</i> ; <i>insane</i> ; “ <i>he want go Berbice, man</i> ” <sup>Δ</sup> (reference to local mental hospital in Guyana); <i>mental</i>

<sup>11</sup> *Dictionary of Mauritian Creole* (1987) records ‘muna’ in sense of ‘baby monkey’.

<sup>12</sup> Municipal irrigation system in Guyana.

<sup>13</sup> *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996) records ‘hall’ in this sense.

<sup>14</sup> See *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996, p.3-4) for progressive aspect marking with preverbal <a->.

<sup>15</sup> *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* (2009) entry for ‘ting’ includes citation featuring ‘ting bad’ in this sense.

<sup>16</sup> Transliteration of lexical items based on *Digital Dictionaries of South Asia* (<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/>).

<sup>17</sup> See *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996, p.407) for use of ‘na’ as negative marker in Caribbean English; *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* (2009) records ‘head bad’ in this sense.

**moody** “*you come and go*”<sup>Δ</sup> (commonly used of person prone to mood swings); “*you proper change your mind*”<sup>Δ</sup> (“*you change your mind like a clock*”)

© Robinson, Herring, Gilbert

*Voices of the UK*, 2009-2012

A British Library project funded by The Leverhulme Trust