

INDIAN DIASPORA: A CASE STUDY OF FIJI

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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INDIA
2004**



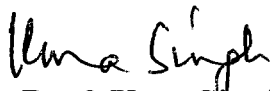
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Certified that dissertation entitled **INDIAN DIASPORA: A CASE STUDY OF EIJI** Submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any university and is my own work.


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... To Maa & Papa

CONTENTS

	Page No.
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	
<i>Preface</i>	<i>i-iii</i>
CHAPTER - I: INTRODUCTION	1-23
CHAPTER - II: FIJI: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	24-45
CHAPTER - III : FIJI AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND THE PIOs	46-73
CHAPTER - IV: THE RESPONSE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THE CRISIS IN FIJI	74-94
CHAPTER - V : CONCLUSION	95-105
BIBLIOGRAPHY	106-117

Acknowledgement

In writing this Dissertation, I have received invaluable guidance and constant encouragement from my Supervisor Dr. ManMohini Kaul. At every step during my study since my M.A. days, I have benefited from her ideas, professional knowledge and research skills. She has been a great and constant source of inspiration and encouragement for me. In addition her 'humane' nature with a blend of cooperative attitude has been very helpful to me. She has painstakingly revised and corrected the draft of the dissertation till it was made into a coherent, concise and academically contributive one. To, her I have no words to express my gratitude and I remain indebted to all she has done for me.

Besides, I would also thankful to Prof. Ajay Dubey, Dr. GangaNath Jha and Dr. Amba Pande whose insightful inputs and constructive suggestions were precious during my research work,

I would also like to thank our Chairperson Prof. Uma Singh for her constant support and cooperation. I am also indebted to other member of the division Dr. Shankari Sundararaman. I am also thankful to the staff of our centre especially Ms. Asha Ji.

The dissertation would also not have been possible without the support of my classmates, seniors and friends Vidhan Pathak, V.K. Singh, Vivekanand ji, Harsh, O.P., Vikas, Bongnok, Suchismita, Renu, Srividya, Surjeet, Ajay, Kallol, Swadesh, Siddhartha, D.D., Gaurav, Vinoo, Abhishek, Asheesh, Manishi (the list is endless) who provided much needed understanding and company in times of stress and keeping my spirits shored up throughout this difficult task. I would also acknowledge the institutional support of different libraries, museums and archives (JNU, IDSA, Teen Murti, ICHR, ICCR and Art Faculty DU Libraries, National Archives and National Museum).

I am very grateful to my parents, my elder sister Archana and younger brother Sumit continued to be the constant source of inspiration. Above all, I am also thankful to Sanjay Photostat SIS for typing my dissertation sincerely. In the end my special thanks to Ankita Bhattacharjee. Last, the mistakes in this work belong to me only.

21 July, 2004
New Delhi

Amit Singh

PREFACE

Modern Diaspora are minority ethnic groups of migrant origins residing and acting in the host countries but maintaining strong, sentimental and material links with their countries of origin i.e. their homelands. The Diaspora are almost ethnically distinct, often differ from the population of their host country in their race, religion, culture, and in their language. In the past the host society did not encourage migrants to assimilate with the native population, or change their national identity or mix socially with the locals. Being a minority in their adopted countries, the Diaspora assiduously preserved their ethnic, religious identity and solidarity. It is this solidarity based upon a kind of ethnic exclusive identity that gives the Diaspora the cutting edge in its relation with the people of the host country.

The Indian Diaspora has emerged as one of the leading and largest Diaspora of the world. There are more than 20 million people of Indian origin (PIO) spread in 136 countries. Majority of them are located in Africa, Caribbean & the Oceania. They had migrated in different waves and in different capacities. During ancient times, they went as merchants from western India to Africa and the Middle East. From eastern part of south India, they immigrated to Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries of South- East Asia and the South- West pacific. This group derived its livelihood from international trade and still maintained international kinship and economic network. Some south Indian rulers had sent successful expedition to South-East Asia. Indians migrated to the Far-East and South-East Asia during this phase to spread Buddhism. But the bulk of Indian migration took place during colonial period. The previous small-scale movement of Indian people turned into mass migration. They went under three different capacities - (i) the indentured workers in sugar colonies of the Caribbean, Oceania and Africa, (ii) under Kangani/maistry system to Malaya and Ceylon (iii) and free or passenger Indians primarily in East Africa. The free Indians went in small numbers to many other places as well. In the third phase, during the 20th century, Indians immigrated as skilled and semi-skilled workers to (i) the Middle East. (ii) Europe, North America and Oceania.

The Britishers colonized Fiji in 1874. Britain, like elsewhere in their colonies needed a labour force for their plantations and preferred to import labour force for their plantations from India. It was because of this labour-based migration that the Indian community came into existence in Fiji and still continues to be in significant numbers.

In the beginning conditions of Indians in Fiji was not much better than that of slaves but once it became certain that Indians were there to stay permanently, they started working hard and progressed in every sphere of life and there population increased. Most of the Indians were in the sugar plantations they made a great impact on the Fijian economy. The British did not intend to let the Indians lead and assume power, which was evident from the 1966 Constitution. This was an implementation of the British policy of 'Divide and Rule.'

Fiji became independent on 10 October 1970. The Constitution, which they adopted, was very much on the lines of the old British constitution. Under the new constitution Ratu Mara of Alliance Party became head of the government, ethnic Fijian were the source of power of this party. In 1977 NFP (National Federation Party) got the majority but they couldn't form the government because of their internal disputes. Once again Ratu Mara ruled Fiji. In 1985 Dr. Bavadra and Mahendra Choudhary formed a new party called FLP (Fiji Labour Party). The support base of this party was urban Fijian, Indo- Fijian and ethnic Fijian from the western part. In 1987, NFP and FLP formed a coalition and won the election. For the first time in the history of Fiji, the Indian people came to power under Dr. Bavadra's leadership. But Rabuka military coup followed and toppled this government. Rabuka brought drastic changes in Fiji. He turned Fiji into a Republic and banned all political parties promoting the slogan "Fiji for Fijians". Soon riots followed in Fiji which witnessed destruction of Indian properties that's why most of Indians migrated from Fiji which turned the Indians from a majority to a minority of population (51% to 43.6%). Due to these developments Fiji was asked to leave the Commonwealth of Nations and Australia and New Zealand imposed restriction on Fiji.

The 1990 Constitution formulated by Rabuka was highly discriminatory against the Indians. As Rabuka could not rule Fiji properly, dissatisfaction, unemployment and poverty increased in Fiji. The resulting international pressure forced him to form a Constitutional Review Committee to bring about a more

egalitarian constitution in Fiji. The resultant new constitution of 1997 was perceived to have made a striking and fine balance between the two communities. This led to a re-entry of Fiji in the Commonwealth of Nations and India too re-opened its High Commission at Suva. According to the new constitution in May 1999, FLP led People's Coalition under Mahendra Choudhary formed the government. This government symbolized peaceful coexistence between the communities of Fiji. But things didn't go well for the Indo-Fijians as on 19 May 2000, George Speight instigated a civilian coup in Fiji. Of late Fiji has been ruled by the Laisenia Qarase's government and the journey of the Indians to get respect and privilege in Fiji continuous till date.

The first chapter focuses on the conceptual analysis of Diaspora, ethnicity, minority and national integration. It will analyze problems and insecurities of Diaspora in general and of Indo-Fijians in particular. It will also focus on ethno-nationalism in Fiji in eluding the concept of "pacific identity".

The second chapter examines the historical background of Fiji and traces and analyzes the role and position of Indo-Fijians in Fiji. This chapter will also focus on integration and genesis of the dispute. It will analyze the impact of colonialism and its legacies on Fiji's politics, society and economy.

The third chapter analyses the socio-political and economic dimension of race-relations and concentrate on post-colonial experience. It examines the privilege of a particular community at the cost of others. It will also examine the perceptions of other ethnic groups towards PIOs and find out the socio-economic and political dynamics of PIOs in Fiji especially after the Fiji's independence.

The fourth chapter discusses the role of external powers like the USA, Australia, New Zealand and India in the Fiji besides, the role of International and regional organizations like the UN, ASEAN, and the PIF will be examined in detail. In this context the meaning of the Pacific as an "arc of crisis" will be analyzed.

The concluding chapter attempts to reach some conclusions about the above issues and focus on the prospects and future of the Indian Diaspora in Fiji.

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

“Indians abroad always should give primary consideration to the interest of the people of those countries; they should never allow themselves to be placed in a position of exploiting the people of those countries; in fact, we have gone thus far and said, if you cannot be, and if you are not, friendly to the people of that country, come back to India and do not spoil the fair name of India”.

Jawaharlal Nehru, 1957

THEORIZING DIASPORA

The notion of 'Diaspora', used first in the classical world, had acquired renewed importance in the late twentieth century. The term applied principally to Jews and less commonly to Greeks, Armenians, Chinese, Africans and Indians. Now at least thirty ethnic groups declare that they are a Diaspora, or are so deemed by others.¹

Diaspora is an ancient word which is derived from the Greek term *diasperien* from *dia-*, "across" and *sperian*, "to sow or scatter seeds". Historically, Diaspora is referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile. Diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation state or the geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation states, territories or countries.²

Theorizing Diaspora offers critical spaces for thinking about the discordant movements of modernity, the massive migrations that have defined this century- from the late colonial period through the decolonization era into the 21st century. Theorization of Diaspora need not, and should not, be divorced from historical and cultural specificity. Diasporic traversals question the rigidities of identity itself-

¹ i. The dispersion of Jews outside of Israel from the sixth century B.C., when they were exiled to Babylonia, until the present time. ii. Often *Diaspora* The body of Jews or Jewish communities outside Palestine or modern Israel. iii. *Diaspora* a. A dispersion of a people from their original homeland. b. The community formed by such a people: "the glutinous dish known throughout the [West African] Diaspora as...fufu" (Jonell Nash, *Essence* February 1996). iv. Diaspora A dispersion of an originally homogenous entity, such as language or culture: "the Diaspora of English into several mutually incomprehensible languages" Rondolph Quirk, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*: (Boston, US, 2000).

² Brazil, Jana Evans and Anita Mannur, ed., *Theorizing Diaspora*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), p. 1.

religious, ethnic, gender, national; yet this Diasporic movement marks not a post modern turn from history, but a nomadic turn in which the very parameters of specific historical moments are embodied and—as Diaspora itself suggests—are scattered and regrouped into new points of becoming.³

Recent theorizations of Diaspora also seek to represent the lives that unfold in myriad diasporic communities across the globe. Diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity-cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and these subjects are defined by a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nations and Diaspora. Diasporic subject experiences double (and even plural) identifications that are constitutive of hybrid forms of identity; hybrid national (and transnational) identities are positioned with other identity categories and severed from an essentialised, nativist identity that is affiliated with constructions of the nation or homeland.⁴

Diaspora has been theorized from many diverse points of departure-East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Asia Pacific, Caribbean, South American, Latin American, African and Central European. Recent use of the term moves from essentialist notions of homeland, national or ethnic identity and geographical location to deployments of Diaspora conceptualized in terms of hybridity, *metisage* or heterogeneity.

The Diasporic studies have emerged as an important new field of study; it is not complete without its critics. Theorizations of Diaspora have been hotly contested and critiqued. The term “Diaspora” has been critiqued as being theoretically celebrated, while methodologically indistinct and ahistorical. Some

³ *ibid.*, p.3.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp.5-6.

scholars, arguing that Diaspora enters into a semantic field with other terms and terrains, such as those of exile, migrant, immigrant, and globalization, have asserted that Diasporic communities are paragons of the transnationalist movement.⁵

In the last century, under the pressure of monumental transnationalist and global shifts (economically, politically, geographically), the nation as a political ideal and as a state form, has undergone significant transformation, if not massive ideological erosion. The shaping of national identities occurs within many discursive frames-judicial, political, Civil, economic and literary. Such deterritorialization of nationalism and nation-state however, do not place us within a decisively post-nationalist world. Diaspora has been loosely associated with other terms, particularly transnationalism, to describe the disjunctures and fractured conditions of late modernity; however Diaspora needs to be extricated from such loose associations and its historical and theoretical specificities made clear. While Diaspora may be accurately described as transnationalist, it should not be taken as transnationalism.⁶

Transnationalism may be defined as the flow of people, ideas, goods and capital from national territories in a way that undermines nationality and nationalism as discrete categories of identification, economic organization and political constitution. Analysts differentiate Diaspora from transnationalism, in that Diaspora refers specifically to the movement-forced or voluntary of people from one or more nation states to another. Transnationalism speaks to larger, more impersonal forces-specifically, those of globalization and global capitalism. Where Diaspora addressees the migrations and displacement of subjects; transnationalism

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

⁶ *ibid*

also includes the movement of information through cybernetics as well as the traffic in goods, products and capital across geopolitical terrains through multinational corporations.⁷

Some scholars even suggest that such movements will force redefinition of citizenship, arguing for models of flexible, Diasporic and even nomadic citizenship. In the end one need to by posing specific questions that interrogate the foundations and the imbricated construction of nationality, national identity, citizenship and Diasporic or migrant subjects. The migratory spaces traversed by migrant or refugees in a few decades mark Diasporic zones that deterritorialize and reterritorialize the increasingly blurred borders of nations and nation-states.

The five different types of imagined world landscape that help explain the nature of this “new” global economy are: ethnoscapes (people who move between nations, such as tourists, immigrants, exiles, guest workers and refugees), technoscapes (technology, often linked to multinational corporations), financescapes (global capital, currency markets, stock exchanges), mediascapes (electronic and new media) and ideoscapes (official state ideologies and counter ideologies).⁸ By describing these imaging worlds that traverse the borders of the nation-state, it becomes possible to reflect on how communities are forged transnationally, across nation-states through networks of Diaspora migration, technology, electronic media, ideologics, and global capital. The suffix-scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes. Shapes which characterize international capital as well emerging international culture. These

⁷ Kapil Kapoor, “Theorizing Diaspora and the Indian Experience” in Adesh Pal & Tapas Chakrabarti, ed., *Theorizing and Critiquing: Indian Diaspora*, (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004), pp.29-31.

⁸ Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Differences in the Global Cultural Economy”, in Brazil, Jana Evans and Anita Mannur, ed., *Theorizing Diaspora*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), p. 1.

terms with the common suffix-scape also indicate that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts like: nation-states, multi-nationals, Diasporic communities, as well as sub-national groupings and movements (Whether religious, Political or economic).

Modern Diaspora are minority ethnic groups of migrant origins residing and acting in the host countries but maintaining strong, sentimental and material links with their countries of origin i.e. their homelands. The Diaspora are almost ethnically distinct, often differ from the population of their host country in their race, religion, culture, and almost in their language. In the past the host society did not encourage migrants to assimilate with the native population, or change their national identity or mix socially with the locals.⁹ Being a minority in their host countries, the Diaspora assiduously preserves their ethnic, religious identity and solidarity.¹⁰ It is this solidarity based upon a kind of ethnic exclusive identity that gives the Diaspora the cutting edge in its relation with the people of the host country.¹¹

It may be considered erroneous to say that Diaspora had its origin only in the recent past. The new immigration is being recognized as an international force. The race for globalization has created an environment, which enables the People of Indian Origin (PIO) to look beyond the rigid national boundaries for the realization of their interests. Prior to the 19th century, it was difficult to maintain linkages with

⁹ Myron Weiner, "Labour migration as Inspient Diaspora", in Gabriel Sheffer, ed., *Modern Diaspora in International Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p.47.

¹⁰ Vidhan Pathak, "Indian Diaspora in South Africa", *Africa Quarterly*, vol.43, no.1, 2003, pp.72-73.

¹¹ Gabriel Sheffer, "A New Field of Study: Modern Diaspora in international politics", in Gabriel Sheffer ed., *Modern Diaspora International Politicians* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p.1.

the homeland due to lack of communication constrained by distance and cost. Also, there was no large-scale international migration so that the original culture could be retained. The migrant communities largely had no alternative but to form their own identity which is distinct socially and culturally from what they left behind. In the modern period (post 19th century) migration and its characteristics were quite different. Diaspora phenomenon became more pronounced after the European expansion and the colonization of the African and Asian continents.¹²

THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

The Indian Diaspora has emerged as one of the leading and largest Diaspora of the world. Indian Diaspora has a global presence. There are more than 20 million people of Indian origin (PIO) and some six million non-resident Indians (NRIs) spread in 136 countries.¹³ Majority of them are located in Africa, Caribbean & the Oceania. There are regional variations in their adaptations. But in many ways they exhibit common identity, which is not regional but global. Their adaptability has never subsumed their identity. It springs from their deep faith in their civilization and spiritual heritage. It is demonstrated through their pride and abiding faith in Indian value system. It is expressed in their aspiration and inspiration that they get from their country of origin. For settlement they may like their children to prosper and grow in their adopted countries, but globally they would prefer them to adopt Indian family values. The global identity of Indian Diaspora is distinct because of these preference practices and aspiration.¹⁴

¹² Sadananda Saho, "Indian Diaspora at the Cross Roads: The Fiji and Malaysian Case", *Studies in Humanities and Social Science (SHSS)*, vol. IX, no.1, summer 2003. New Delhi, pp.1-2.

¹³ K. Mathews, 'Indian Diaspora', *World Focus*, vol. 22, no.3, March 2001, New Delhi, p.5.

¹⁴ Ajay Dubey, ed., *Indian Diaspora: Global Identity*, (New Delhi: Kalinga, Publications, 2003), pp.iii-iv.

Indians migrated in different waves and different capacities. During ancient times, they went under three different capacities- (i) the indenture workers in sugar colonies of the Caribbean, Oceania and Africa, (ii) under Kangani/maistry system to Malaya and Ceylon (iii) and free or passenger Indians primarily in East Africa. The free Indians went in small numbers to many other places as well. In the third phase, during the 20th century, Indians immigrated as skilled and semi-skilled workers to the Middle East, Europe, North America and Oceania.¹⁵

The migration of people from India to different parts of the world is not a new phenomenon. More than 5000 years ago saints and seers moved in different directions-not with a sword in their hand or an army for conquering new lands but with deep knowledge of philosophy and the rich Indian cultural heritage.¹⁶ The impact of their visits to the foreign lands is evident today. Not only in Indonesia but also in Cambodia, Vietnam and the entire Southeast Asian countries.¹⁷ The “Angkor Vat” in Cambodia is a standing proof of the migration of Indians to these countries. Though majority of the Indian population in Indonesia embraced Islam, it still maintains the rich Indian cultural heritage. The temples in Bali and the seven horse driven chariot of Arjuna and Lord Krishna in front of the President Palace in Jakarta are some of the symbols of the rich Indian cultural heritage still dominating these areas.¹⁸ The ancient Indian emperor Ashoka sent his son and daughter to spread the Buddhism and they achieved success not only in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia but also in Tibet, China and Japan. This was the first phase of

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ S.D. Singh, “The Indian Diaspora” in Adesh Pal and Tapas Chakrabarti (ed.), *Theorizing and Critiquing: Indian Diaspora* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004), pp. 92-93.

¹⁷ K.S Sandhu, and A. Mani, ed., *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1993), pp.218-220.

¹⁸ See Details in Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 1, from Early Times to C.1800, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

migration from India though not in big numbers but it comprised of scholarly persons who spread the message of Indian culture to the whole world.¹⁹

The second phase of Indian migration was that of the traders. The Indian silk- traders from Bengal and the traders dealing in spices from Southern India not only went to neighbouring countries but also went to Italy and France. The silk route is famous and well known. The Indian traders went to these countries with their commodities, sold the material and came back to their own country. They never tried to colonise them. They had no imperial motives. The East India Company however, when they came from Great Britain and sought trading permission from the Kings in India, did not have only trade as their motive. They interfered in the political system and manipulated things in such a way that they started becoming the owners of territories in different parts of India.²⁰

The third wave of migration from India was during the British period. Slavery was abolished by the British Parliament in 1830, and the white colonial masters wanted some alternative labour force to replace the black slave contingent working in the sugar plantations, not only in Mauritius and South African but also in Fiji and the Caribbean countries. Attempts were made to recruit labour force from China and Indonesia but the experiment was not a success. A new system of labour contract, the indenture system was introduced by the British plantation owners, under which the worker went on contract of five to ten years on a very meagre salary. The contractors of the white masters fabricated stories and created false images that gold was available in the colonies in plenty and the distance was just one week's journey. The reality was that there were no gold but only stone

¹⁹ See Details in D.R. Sardesai, *Southeast Asia: Past & Present* (U.S: Westview Press, 1997).

²⁰ Baleshwar Agarwal, "Indian Diaspora", *World Focus*, vol.22, no.3, March 2001, New Delhi pp.3-4.

boulders which had to be broken and removed for cultivation and it took not one week but full three months for the “Girmitia” to reach Mauritius the nearest country. These indentured labourers were treated like animals. They were given a wash as soon as they got down at “Cooli Ghat” at Port Louis in Mauritius. Their clothes were burnt so as not to carry infection and new sets of clothes were given. They were auctioned like commodities and brothers were separated as they were sent to different sugar plantations. They were issued a “Pass” and were not allowed to move to the other parts of the “territory.” They lived in overcrowded “busties” with no proper sanitation and had to work even if they were ill, under the rule if a worker was absent even for a day, his two days wages of would be deducted.²¹

The first batch of indentured labour went to Mauritius in 1834, and ever since it continued till 1917 when the indenture system was abolished because of organised protest from the Indian political leadership. The indentured labourers were mostly illiterate and belonged to lower strata of the society. They did not carry any scriptures with them except Hanuman Chalisa and Tulsī Ramayana. After hard work during the day time they used to collect in “Baitaks” with lanterns and recite Hanuman Chalisa and Ramayana. In spite of all the hardship that came to them, they maintained their Indian cultural heritage intact and one is surprised to find today the religious fervour in the community even after more than 160 years.²²

Besides, the indentured labourers went to Malaya & Sri Lanka for rubber and tea cultivation. They also went to Burma for clearing the wasteland and converting them into rice fields. Skilled artisans were taken to East African countries for construction of railway lines. After India attained independence in

²¹ *ibid*

²² S.K, Sareen, “Home Everywhere: The Consciousness of Diasporic Belonging”, in Adesh Pal & Tapas Chakrabarti, ed., *Theorizing and Critiquing: Indian Diaspora* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004), pp.89-90.

1947, a big influx of Indian workers both skilled and unskilled went to the Gulf countries after the discovery of Petroleum products in the Asian deserts. They went on contract for a few years and this continues even today. Several million Indian citizens are today working in all the Gulf countries with the maximum number being in Saudi Arabia. There have been instances of maltreatment of these labourers by the contractors or their employers. Discrimination on the basis of religion is still continuing. Majority of the number of people to the Gulf countries came from Kerala. Though, it has made their countryside rich, it has also created social problems. It is difficult for them to find jobs after they come back.²³

The last phase of Indian migration to the West started after India became independent. A large numbers of professional's, doctors, engineers, chartered accountants and businessmen migrated to Western countries. Generally, these professionals came from the affluent society of India. They did not experience the difficulties, which the indentured labourers or the plantation labourers had to face on arrival in the new country. Many of them became citizens of the countries in which they migrated according to the law of the land. Their number has been increasing every year. It has gone above fifteen lakhs in the United States alone. In UK, also Indians have crossed the one million mark.²⁴ During the last few years there has been a sudden increase in the migration of the Indians particularly the Information Technology (IT) professionals. The demand for Indian IT experts is increasing not only in the USA but in Germany and other countries of Europe also. Many of the recent migrants have become extremely rich in their country of domicile. The total wealth of the Indian community outside India is more than the

²³ Girijesh Pant, "Gulf NRIs: from Expatriates to Entrepreneurs," *World Focus*, vol. 22, no.3, March 2001, New Delhi, pp.12-13.

²⁴ For details see Table in Chapter-I.

Indian Government's Gross National Product (GNP). In many cases they have been able to enter the Parliament also, particularly in the United Kingdom. The NRIs/PIOs in USA have been successful in influencing the American Government's decisions in many matters. Though they have adopted western customs and manners, their urge for maintaining the Indian identity is very much pronounced. They have built a number of temples in the USA, Canada, UK and other countries, which serves as a venue for social gatherings; and have contributed to the various schemes and projects launched by the Government of India to attract foreign capital. Their love and admiration for India has not diminished.²⁵

The twenty million populations of People of Indian Origin (both NRIs/PIOs) are a great asset to India. They could be very useful if they are taken care of properly by the Indian missions abroad. They could not only invest in the various projects in India as the Chinese have done for their motherland but they could also influence international public opinion whenever required. Equally interesting is the contribution made by the Chinese in the economic transformation of China. The Chinese outside China constitute only four per cent of the Chinese population but their income is two-thirds as high. They have contributed more than eighty per cent of the total investment since the economic liberalisation began. New Delhi's concerted efforts to attract capital and technology of Indians living abroad have just begun. Mr. C. Rangarajan, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, has made a systematic study of investment flows into India. He has pointed out that there have been sharp fluctuations in investments made by the Indians living abroad. It began with \$63 million in 1991-92, rose to \$217 million in 1993-94, peaked in 1995-96 to a level of \$715 million and dropped to \$62 million

²⁵ S.D. Singh, n. 15, pp.97-98.

and \$84 million in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 respectively.²⁶ It must be highlighted that the Indians, compared to the Chinese, are not an affluent community. What is more, there is a basic difference in their attitude towards China and India. The distinguished economist-administrator, Dr. I.G. Patel, pointed out few years ago: “The non-resident Indians may have their heart in the homeland, but prefer to keep their cash elsewhere.”²⁷

Indian Government Initiatives and Responses

The liberalisation of the Indian economy and efforts made by the Indian Government to attract investments from Indians living abroad have given encouragement to sections of the Indian community in Western countries to demand that New Delhi introduce “Dual citizenship”. Dual citizenship would have dangerous implications for Indian minority groups in neighbouring countries. They are in the painful process of integrating themselves and the ruling elite are trying to build the nation on the basis of language and religion of the majority community. Dual citizenship would mean dual loyalty and it would make the task of their integration extremely difficult. What New Delhi should do is to liberalise the provisions relating to the PIO card so that the Indians living abroad are not subjected to unnecessary difficulties when they want to visit India. And far more attention should be devoted to provide more facilities for education, tourism and cultural sustenance. In response to consistent demands of overseas Indians, the Government of India had constituted a high level committee to study the problems and difficulties being faced by the Indian community.

²⁶ V. Suryanarayan, “Indian Communities Abroad”, *World Focus*, vol.22, no.3, March 2001, New Delhi, pp-12-13.

²⁷ *ibid.*

The Indian Government, appointed on 18 August 2000, a High level Committee on the Indian Diaspora under the Chairmanship of Dr. L M Singhvi, M along with three other members, Shri R.L. Bhatia, Shri J. R. Hiremath, and Shri Baleshwar Agrawal, and Member Secretary, Shri J.C. Sharma.²⁸

The comprehensive 'Terms of Reference' of the Committee in brief were to: (i) review status of Indian Diaspora in India and the countries of their residence; (ii) study their aspirations, requirements, strengths and weaknesses, (iii) study their role in the economic and social and technological development of India; (iv) examine the current regime that governs their travel/stay in India and investments to India and recommend measures to resolve the problems faced by them and (v) recommend a broad but flexible policy framework and country specific plans for forging a mutually beneficial relationship with the region of PIOs and NRIs, and for facilitating their interaction with India and their participation in India's economic development.²⁹

The appointment of this high powered High Level committee can reasonably be termed 'historic' as for the first time, an efforts was made to interact with every segment of India's diverse Diaspora in an extraordinary wide-ranging consultation with prominent overseas Indians and Diaspora Committees in different countries. The committee examined various academic studies, data analysis and had consultation with members of Parliament, serving and former diplomats, in order to identify the issues of increasing linkages and connections between Union and State Government authorities and Indian Diaspora.

²⁸ See details in Press Release, *Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora* <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.html>, January 08, 2002.

²⁹ R.J. Thirwani, "India and Overseas Indians Structure for Interaction", *South Asia Politics*, June 2004, New Delhi, pp.22-23.

On 19 December 2001, the Committee submitted its detailed Report, running into 576 pages, with its recommendations. The following three 'Interim Recommendations' made by the Committee in its "Interim Reports" (Part III) dated 3 April and 27 August 2001, respectively have been immediately implemented by the Government:

- (i) The government accepted 'Interim Report on the Persons of Indian Origin Card (PIO Card) Scheme' submitted on 3 April 2001 and implemented it.³⁰
- (ii) The Government accepted and implemented another 'Interim Recommendation on Celebration of "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas"' submitted on 27 August 2001, by celebrating first "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas" on 9th January, 2003. (Mahatma Gandhi had returned to India on 9 January from South Africa.)³¹
- (iii) The Government accepted and implemented another 'Interim Recommendation on the Institution of 'Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards. For the Indian Diaspora, submitted on 27 August, 2001, by awarding these Awards to ten prominent Overseas Indians on 9 January 2003 in a big public functions.³²

In part IV of the final report submitted on 19 December 2001 the Committee examines the following "Major Issues Pertaining to the Indian Diaspora": Consular and other Issues, Culture, Economic Development (Investment, International Trade, Industrial Development and Tourism), Education, Health, Media, Science and Technology, Philanthropy, Pravasi Bharatiya Bhavan, Dual Citizenship and Diaspora Relations and Organisational Structure. While the

³⁰ See details in, *Report of the High Level Committee of the Indian Diaspora*, Chapter-24, <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.html>

³¹ *ibid*, Chapter-25.

³² *ibid*, Chapter-26.

Government in the Ministry of External Affairs has been processing the Report by inviting comments of all the relevant Ministries and Departments, who deal with the 'Major Issues Pertaining to the Indian Diaspora', following three Issues are briefly examined as under:

After great efforts, a plot of land measuring 500 Sq. Mts. Was allotted and handed over on 6 May 2002 to an N.G.O., Antar-Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad, Bharat, for the construction of 'Pravasi Bharatiya Bhavan' as recommended by the Committee. The foundation stone was laid by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on 15 December 2003, for construction of the Pravasi Bhawan on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi.³³

The Committee has rightly examined the sensitive and major Issue pertaining to the Indian Diaspora of "Dual Citizenship" in great deal. The Committee has recommended grant of "Dual Citizenship" to PIOs within the rubric of Citizenship Act, 1955, with certain safeguards in regard to security of India, and to amend sections 9, 10 and 12 of the Citizenship Act of, 1955 and said that a provision analogous to Section 12 to British Nationality Act, 1981 should be included in the Citizenship Act under the caption "Renunciation and Resumption of Citizenship."³⁴

In part II and Chapter 23 of the report the Committee has given a useful and relevant information under the heading "Other Diasporas: A Global Perspective", including 'Organisational Structure' of Poland, Japan, the Philippines, Lebanon, Italy, Greece, People's Republic of China, Israel and South Korea, their relevance in the Indian context and lessons from foreign Diaspora for India, etc. Except China, none of the countries referred to above, have a separate Ministry for taking

³³ *ibid*, Chapter-35.

³⁴ *ibid*, Chapter-36.

care of their Diaspora. It is mainly the Foreign Ministry, which might have a separate Department under its jurisdiction, with advisory council of an autonomous body of prominent citizens for advising the Ministry in the formulation of policies on Diaspora affairs.

However, before giving brief outline of China's Organisational Structure a passing reference may be made to Egypt, which has a separate Ministry for Overseas Egyptians. It was published in news of Kuwait that the Indian Government had decided to have a separate Department for Non-Resident Indians in 1982, as large number of Indian Diaspora was working in various Gulf countries as well as in North America, Australia and Southeast Asian countries and a few in the West European countries. However, a separate Division for NRIs was created as late as in 2001 in the Union Ministry of External Affairs, when the Indian Diaspora had reached by 2000 as many as 20 million, with estimated income between US\$300 billion to US\$ 400 billion. Even the Indian Diaspora was requesting for a separate Ministry on the pattern of Egypt and China, which would be to mutual advantage between Diaspora and the Government of India and society.³⁵

The committee had recommended the setting up of an autonomous and empowered body structured along the lines of the Planning Commission with Prime Minister as Ex-Officio Chairman and five Members, for interacting with Indian Diaspora. Details of the organisational structure, its membership and functions were also given.

Though there are more similarities there are major differences between Chinese and Indian Diaspora; in terms of number of immigrants found in various

³⁵ *ibid*, Chapter-23.

countries of the world during the last few centuries and status of developing economy in both the countries between 1948 to end of 1970, when Deng Xiao Ping initiated a revolutionary programme of economic reforms in China, it is necessary to know how China attracted huge investments from their Overseas Chinese into China from studying its Organisational structure for interaction with its Diaspora. First let us look to table, FDI into China (in US\$ billion) indicated in the Report “Showing amount of annual FDI investment flows from Overseas Chinese into China:

Table: FDI into China (in US\$ billion)

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
China-	3.49	4.37	11.29	27.77	33.95	37.38	42.35	43	45.5	40.3	40.8

Source: Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora , Table23.3, <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>

The above amount represent 70 percent out of total annual FDI contributed by Overseas Chinese into China compared to only 30.76 percent out of the total annual FDI investment flows made b Overseas Indians into India during the period 1991 to Jul 1996 as per figures of the Reserve Bank of India. Following is the Organisational structure in China for interacting effectively with its huge Diaspora:

- i) The Chinese Constitution: (Articles 50, 70 and 89) protects the legitimate rights of both Overseas Chinese and returned Overseas Chinese;
- ii) The Legislature- National People’s Congress: There is an Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the Chinese Parliament. It functions under the Standing Committee of the Parliament when the latter is not in session.
- iii) The Executive: At the Central Government level, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office Called (SCOCAO), under the State council of the PRC (The

Chinese Cabinet) is the highest executive body. The SCOCAO is headed by a Cabinet Minister and four Vice Ministers and has a staff of 120. Governments at every level, provincial, city, township and country have similar offices handling Overseas Chinese affairs.³⁶

The Committee's recommendation for setting up of an autonomous and empowered body structured along the lines of the Planning Commission does not meet the aspirations and consistent demand of responsible individual NRI and PIO and various Associations of Overseas Indians spread over all over the world, who prefer a separate Ministry for interacting with the Indian Diaspora for cooperation between Indian authorities and society to mutual benefit. It has assumed urgency and crucial importance in the context of globalisation, Information Technological development facilitating communication, Diaspora reaching number of 20 million in 2000 and their estimated income to about US\$ 400 billion by 2002 that the present separate Division for NRIs in the Ministry of External Affairs set up recently may be upgraded and a full-fledged Ministry for Overseas Indians is announced, in principal, preferably on 9 January 2004 or during budget session of the parliament. There is one overseas Chinese Affairs Office headed by a Central Cabinet Minister and four Vice Ministers and staff of 120 as well as Governments at every level, provincial, city, township and country, with similar offices for handling Overseas Chinese affairs, as well as an overseas Chinese affairs. Committee of the Chinese Parliament, Provisions in 3 Articles of the Chinese-Overseas and returned Chinese. It is wondered when the Indian Government would

³⁶ *ibid*

make similar Organisational Structures in India for facilitating effective interaction resulting in mutual benefit.³⁷

The additional justification in the Indian context is that India is practicing a democratic Parliamentary form of Government in which a duly elected Union Minister is responsible to the Indian Parliament, which is the highest legislative body of whole nation. Besides a Union Minister would be able to initiate investment-friendly and other policies for protecting legitimate rights of overseas Indians, getting them passed by the Union Cabinet and suitable legislation passed by the Indian Parliament, have easy access to the Prime Minister and other Cabinet Ministers, MP's, media, academic for getting inputs for formulating suitable policies and laws to meet various and in emergencies. He /She may travel and meet frequently representatives of Associations of Indian Diaspora and discuss personally their problems and possible co-operations between them and the Indian authorities, leading to faster social and economic development of poor India. Besides, the work –load of Minister of External Affairs would be reduced enabling him to concentrate on political and diplomatic affairs and effective foreign policy in the fast changing global politics in the context of Globalisation, end of cold war creating one dominating superpower, USA only, global terrorism, fierce competition due to opening of economy under various agreements sponsored by the WTO, weakening of authority of the UNO due to Gulf War-2 in March-May 2003, India not getting permanent membership of the Security Council, etc.³⁸

Apart from Organisational Structure needed in India for effective interaction between Overseas Indians and the Indian authorities and society a few

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ R.J. Thirwani, n. 25, pp.23-24.

political rights should be considered to be extended only to Non-resident Indians as the continue to be Indian citizens though living abroad due to variety of reasons.

In the Report, the Committee has mentioned that currently Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are not entitled to vote. However, a bill to enable them to participate in the electoral process is being debated in the Senate. If passed, OFWs will be able to cast their ballot in the next general elections.” This was the position in the Philippine as in December 2001. It is understood that expatriates of the United Kingdom and Malaysia also possess the right to vote. In any case, it is in accord with the democratic spirit of the Indian Constitution that, after verifying the position in few democratic countries, the Indian Government may consider whether to extend this democratic right to vote to Non-Resident Indians by a suitable amendment to the Indian Constitution.³⁹

As it does not need the amendment of the Indian Constitution, it would be in the interest of both NRIs and the Indian authorities if 3 responsible Non-Resident Indian, including ex-Non-Resident Indian, who have lived 5 to 10 years abroad and had take keen interest in the welfare of NRIs by interacting with the Indian authorities while abroad, may be nominated by the Indian Government to Rajya Sabha, for looking after the legitimate rights of 20 million Overseas Indians as well as act as bridges between the Diaspora and the Indian authorities and society to mutual benefit. This has also been the consistent demand of the Indian Diaspora for a long time and it is felt, taking into consideration various facts and figures and justification in support of few considered suggestions indicated above, the time has come for the Indian Government to consider this long-standing demand of 20 million Overseas Indians favourably and announcement may be

³⁹ See details in *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora*, Chapter-23, <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.html>

made in the next Budget session of the Parliament on this subject also.⁴⁰ It is hoped that the recommendations of this committee will enable the Government to take certain decisions, which will be beneficial to the entire Indian Diaspora.

Indian Diaspora in Fiji

Fiji was colonised by the Britishers in 1874.⁴¹ Britain, like elsewhere in their colonies needed a labour force for their plantations in Fiji and preferred to import labour force especially from India.⁴² It was because of this labour based migration that the Indian community came into existence in Fiji and still continues to be in a significant numbers.

In the beginning conditions of Indians in Fiji was not much better than that of slaves but once it became certain that Indians were there to stay permanently, they started working hard and progressed in every sphere of life and there population increased. Most of the Indians were in the sugar plantations they made a great impact on the Fijian economy. The British did not intend to let the Indians lead and assume power which was evident from the 1966 Constitution. This was an implementation of the British policy of 'Divide and Rule.'⁴³

Fiji became independent on 10 October 1970. The Constitution which they adopted was very much on the lines of the old British constitution. Under the new constitution Ratu Mara⁴⁴ of Alliance Party became head of the government, ethnic Fijian were the source of power of this party. In 1977 NFP (National Federator Party) got the majority but they couldn't from the government because of their

⁴⁰ See details in, *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora* <http://inidandiaspora.nic.in/contents.html>.

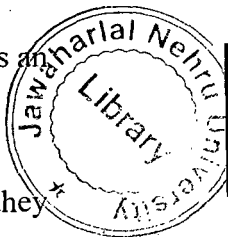
⁴¹ J.D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji 1858-1880* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1958) pp.V-VI.

⁴² For details see the Map in Chapter-I.

⁴³ Man Mohini Kaul, "The Crisis in Fiji: An Overview", *Peace Initiatives*, vol. 6, no.1-3, January-June-2000, pp.3-4.

⁴⁴ For details see, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, "The Pacific Way: A Memoir" (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1997).

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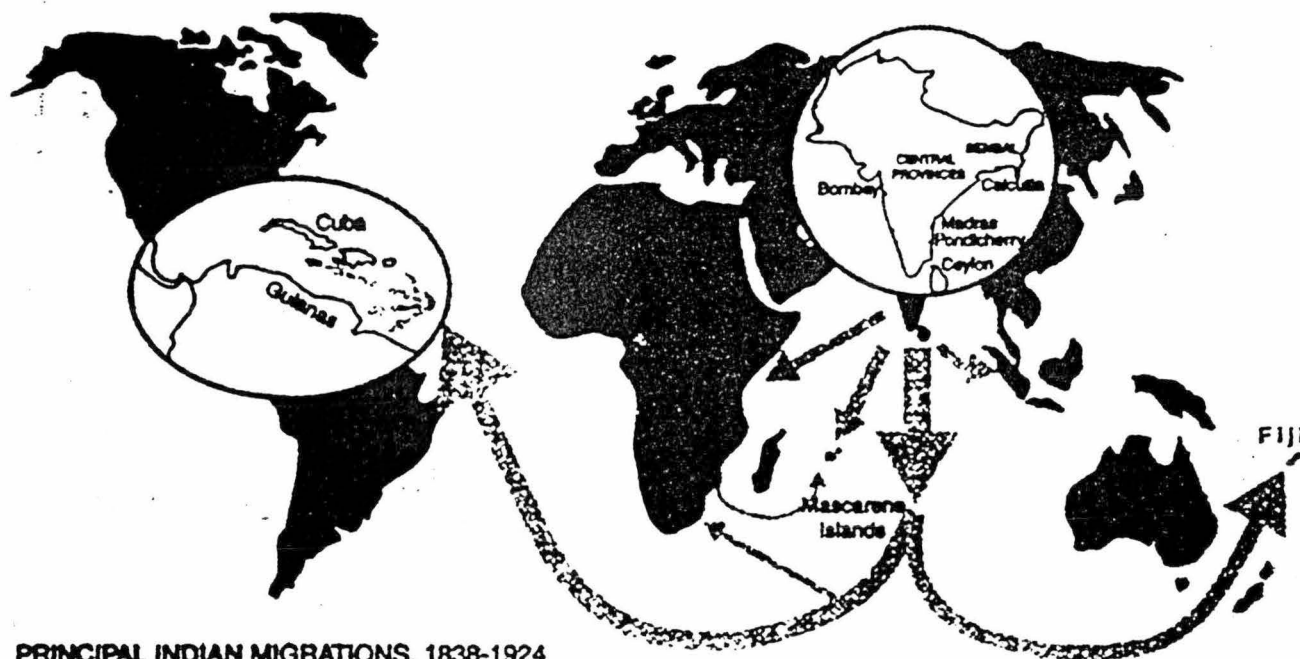
internal disputes. Once again Ratu Mara ruled Fiji. In 1985 Dr. Bavadra and Mahendra Choudhary formed a new party called FLP (Fiji Labour Party). The support base of this party was urban Fijian, Indo- Fijian and ethnic Fijian from the western part. In 1987, NFP and FLP formed a coalition and won the election. For the first time in the history of Fiji, the Indian people came to power under Dr. Bavadra's leadership. But Rabuka military coup followed and toppled this government. Rabuka brought drastic changes in Fiji. He turned Fiji into a Republic and banned all political parties promoting the slogan "Fiji for Fijians". Soon riots followed in Fiji which witnessed destruction of Indian properties that's why most of Indians migrated from Fiji which turned the Indians from a majority to a minority of population (51% to 43.6%). Due to these developments Fiji was asked to leave the Commonwealth of Nations and Australia and New Zealand imposed restriction on Fiji.⁴⁵

The 1990 Constitution formulated by Rabuka was highly discriminatory against the Indians. As Rabuka could not rule Fiji properly. So dissatisfaction, unemployment and poverty increased in Fiji. The resulting international pressure forced him to form a Constitutional Review Committee to bring about a more egalitarian constitution in Fiji. The resultant new constitution of 1997 was perceived to have made a striking and fine balance between the two communities. This led to the re-entry of Fiji in the Commonwealth of Nations on October 1st, 1997 and India too reopened its High Commission at Suva on March 2nd, 1999. According to the new constitution in May 1999, FLP led People's Coalition under Mahendra Choudhary formed the government. This government symbolized peaceful co-existence between the communities of Fiji. But things didn't go well

⁴⁵ *Fiji, The Fareast Australia 2004* (London & New York: Europa Publications, 35th Edition, 2004), p. 765.

for the Indo-Fijians as on 19 May 2000, George Speight instigated a civilian coup in Fiji. Of late Fiji has been ruled by the Laisenia Qarase's government and the journey of the Indians to get respect and privilege in Fiji continuous till date.⁴⁶ The next chapter deals with the historical background of Fiji and traces and analyzes the role and position of Indo-Fijians in Fiji. This chapter will also focus on integration and genesis of the dispute. It will analyze the impact of colonialism and its legacies on Fiji's politics, society and economy.

⁴⁶ Amba Pande, "Race and Power Struggle in Fiji", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.24, no.6, September 2000, pp. 1168.



PRINCIPAL INDIAN MIGRATIONS, 1838-1924

Intercontinental

British Guiana	239,000	East Africa	39,500
Trinidad	150,000	Natal	153,000
Jamaica	38,000	Fiji	61,000
Other BWI	11,200		
French Caribbean	79,000	<i>Regional</i>	
Dutch Guiana	34,500	Burma	1,164,000
Mauritius	455,000	Ceylon	2,321,000
Reunion	75,000	Malaya	1,754,000

Map 1 Principal Indian migration, 1838-1924

Source: D. Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp. 3 and 53.

Indian Diaspora (PIOs & NRIs)

Country	Total Size of Community	PIOs	Indian Citizens	Stateless
Algeria	26	5	21	
Angola	85			
Argentina	1000	700	300	
Armenia	194			
Australia	91105	61807	29298	
Azerbaijan	300			
Austria	12342	3504	8838	
Bahrain	130000		130000	
Bangladesh	1000			
Belarus	100			
Benin	500			
Belgium	7000			
Bhutan	1500		1500	
Botswana	9000			
Brazil	1600			
Brunei	7200	100	7000	100
Bulgaria	220			
Burundi	300			
Cambodia	155			
Cameroon	300			
Canada	650000			
Cape Verde	1			
Chad	30			
Chile	1050			
China (Hong Kong)	28500	550	500	
Comores	50	6500	22000	
Cote d'Ivoire	250			
Cyprus	300			
Denmark	22523	1000	1252	
Egypt	1390	40	1350	
Ethiopia	125			
Fiji	352000			
Finland	1170	410	750	10
France	40000			
Gambia	80			
Germany	40000			
Greece	7000			
Guyana	800000			
Indonesia	42000			
Iran	800	800		
Iraq	80			
Ireland	1000			
Israel	45500			
Italy	38000			
Jamaica	60000			
Japan	2500			
Jordan	500			
Kazakhstan	1127		1127	
Kenya	100000	90000	100000	
Korea (DPRK)	5		5	

Country	Total Size of Community	PIOs	Indian Citizens	Stateless
Korea (ROK)	1881	950	931	
Kuwait	288589	1000	287589	
Lebanon	11025	25	11000	
Libya	12000			
Lithuania	5			
Madagascar	27000	24000	3000	
Malaysia	2030000	2000000	30000	
Maldives	9000			
Mauritius	1209000	1200000	9000	
Mexico	150			
Morocco	375	25	350	
Mozambique	20000		870	
Myanmar	2920000	2500000	20000	400000
Namibia	150			
Netherlands	21000	15000	3000	3000
New Zealand	43000			
Nigeria	30000			
Norway	5630			
Oman	338905	700	338205	
Panama	10000			
Papua New Guinea	800			
Peru	155	5	150	
Philippines	38986	3000	23486	12500
Poland	600			
Portugal	70000	4500		
Qatar	125000	125000		
Rwanda	560			
Russia	16000		16000	
Reunion Islands	220055	220000	55	
Saudi Arabia	1300000		1300000	
Senegal	50			
Seychelles	7500	5000	2500	
Singapore	217000		90000	
South Africa	1300000			
Spain	16000	2000	14000	
Sri Lanka	338051	337620	413	
Sudan	1560	1200	360	
Surinam	160208	160000	208	
Sweden	10842	9244	1598	
Switzerland	4400			
Syria	500			
Tanzania	95000	9000	5000	
Thailand	60000	40000	10000	10000
Trinidad & Tobago	520000			
Tunisia	24		24	
Turkey	300			
Uganda	15000			
Ukraine	4000			
UAE	1200000		1200000	
UK	1000000		1000000	
USA	1500000			
Uzbekistan	650			
Venezuela	3400			
Yemen	109000	100000	9000	
Zambia	15000		8900	
Zimbabwe	15500			

Estimated Total No. of NRIs & PIOs: 17800428

In addition to the figures included in this statement, an estimated one million people of Indian origin holding foreign nationality have reportedly migrated to third countries e.g. Indo-Surinamese to Netherlands, Indo-Fijians, Indo-Caribbeans, persons from various African countries, Malaysia to UK, USA, Canada, France, Portugal, Australia etc.

(These are approximate figures based on information obtained from territorial divisions and Missions/Posts abroad).

CHAPTER - II

FIJI: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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The archipelago of Fiji lies in the Southwest Pacific Ocean, south of the Equator, 1,770 km north of Auckland (New Zealand) and 2,730 km north-east of Sydney (Australia). To the west lies Melanesia: Solomon Islands in the north-west, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. East of Fiji is Tonga and in the north-east, other Polynesian islands, those of Wallis and Futuna and Western Samoa. Tuvalu is to the north. The Fiji group comprises four main islands, Viti Levu (where 70% of the population lives), Vanua Levu, Taveuni and Kadavu and some 840 smaller islands, atolls and reefs, of which fewer than 100 are inhabited. The island of Rotuma 386 km (240 miles) north of Vanua Levu and the eight smaller islands of the group also constitute part of the Republic. The total area of the Republic of Fiji is 18,376 sq km (7,095 sq miles). The climate is tropical, with temperatures ranging from 16 to 32 c (60 to 90F). Rainfall is heaviest between November and April, but is more constant on the windward side.¹

Fiji is primarily an agrarian economy. About 60,000 acres (243,000 hectares) of land is in agricultural use. This is mostly confined to coastal alluvial flats, major river valleys and deltas. Most of the larger land masses are high islands of ancient volcanic and andesite rock and cretaceous and tertiary sedimentation. They are mostly rugged, with sharp mountain peaks, deep, winding valleys and sudden crags. Sugar cane is the principal cash crop, accounting for a large part of Fiji's export earnings.

¹ Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the 20th Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), pp. 3-16.

Sugar, tourism, coconut oil, fishing and gold are the important fields in which Fijian industries are well developed. Sugar industry is an important source of employment in Fiji. Fiji is very popular for its scenic beauty and tourist resorts.²

Fiji is characterised by racial diversity. The indigenous Fijian population declined sharply during the 1850s, owing to epidemics of measles and influenza in which thousands died, and only in the 1950s did it begin to rise. The Indian population was originally brought to Fiji as labour for the cane- fields from 1879. The population at the census of August 1986 was 715,375 of whom 48.7% were Indians and 46.1% Fijians. Following the coups of 1987, there was emigration on a large scale, particularly from among the Indian community. In 1989 official statistics claimed that ethnic Fijians again formed the largest part of the population; and by 1996 it was estimated that ethnic Fijians comprised 51.1 % of the population, Indian 43.6% and others 5.3%. In 1986 53% of the population were Christians (mainly Methodists), 38% were Hindus and 8% Muslims. Fiji's population totalled 819,000 in mid-2002. English is the official language, but Fijian (the principal dialect being Bauan) and Hindi (the locally developed dialect being known as Hindustani) are widely spoken. The capital is Suva on Viti Levu.³

The islands of Fiji were first inhabited about thirty-five hundred years ago. Archaeological evidence indicates that the original inhabitants came from the area around Vanuatu and New Caledonia, which had been settled earlier by Austronesian speakers from the New Guinea region. From Fiji sea-faring migrants moved eastward to Tonga and Samoa, both of which were settled around three thousand years ago. While Tonga and Samoa remained in relative isolation and developed the distinctive

² Amba Pande, "Race and Power Struggle in Fiji", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.24, no.6, September 2000, pp. 1154-70.

³ *Fiji, The Forecast Australia 2004* (London & New York: Europa Publications, 35th Edition, 2004), pp. 765-778.

social, political and cultural patterns known today as Polynesian, Fiji continued to receive successive waves of migrants from western Melanesia. Consequently, the physical characteristics and social organisation of the indigenous Fijians exhibit Melanesian traits. Polynesian traits are particularly pronounced in the maritime to provinces, which maintained regular trading and social contact with Tonga and Samoa, while Melanesian traits predominate in the hinterlands of the Major islands.⁴

At the time of arrival the first European adventures in the early 19th century the Fijians were divided into small chiefdoms. The social and political background of the early Fijians was diverse. Even today considerable variance exists in the nature of the social set up of the western and eastern Fijians. In the eastern islands they are grouped in large chiefdoms with strong hierarchies supported by ritual observances. The chiefs are known as 'High Chiefs'.⁵ It cannot be described with certainty because of limited evidence. At the risk of some distortion and oversimplification, it can be said that early Fijian society was hierarchical and based on the principle of patrilineal agnatic descent. Every Fijian belonged to a *yavusa* 'clan' that claimed descent from a legendary founding ancestor. The clan consisted of several *mataqali* 'family groups', whose rank and power were carefully determined by lineal proximity to the founding ancestor. At the top of the apex were the *turaga* 'chiefs of the leading *mataqali*', claiming direct descent through the male line from the founding ancestor. They provided the ruling chiefs for the *yavusa*. Below them in rank were the *sauturaga* 'executive *mataqali*', who carried out the commands of chiefs and otherwise supported their authority. Lower still were the *matanivanua*, speakers and masters of ceremony for the *yavusa*, the *bete*, priests, and the *bati*, warriors. The smallest units of Fijian society were the *itokatoka* 'subdivisions of the *mataqali*'. This comprised the

⁴ Brij V. Lal, n.1, pp. 3-16.

⁵ Amba Pande, n.2, pp. 1154-70.

closely related households living in a defined area of a village and cooperating to perform such communal undertakings as the building and maintenance of houses and the preparation of feasts. In some parts of Fiji, the *itokatoka* were the landholding units of the tribe, although elsewhere that function was the responsibility of the *mataqali*.⁶

This somewhat schematic pattern of traditional Fijian society was vulnerable to pressures generated by voluntary or enforced migration within the islands and to internal conflicts and the vagaries of war. *Yavusa* broke up, dispersed, or merged with others as circumstances demanded. For social and economic reasons as well as for protection from the predatory designs of hostile chiefs, several *yavusa* might combine to form a confederation called the *vanua* 'state'. Comprising several villages, each *vanua* had a paramount chief whose position eventually became hereditary. Within each *vanua*, the line of *yavusa* succession was clearly defined and rigidly maintained. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, many *vanua* united, voluntarily or otherwise, into a larger state called the *matanitu* 'confederation'.⁷

The power and prestige of these confederations varied greatly across Fiji; in parts of central and western Viti Levu, they were unknown. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were about a dozen *matanitu*, of which the most important were Bau, Rewa, and Verata in Southeastern Viti Levu; Lakeba in the Lau group; and Cakaudrove, Bua and Macuata on Vanua Levu. As the nineteenth century opened, these leading *matanitu* were engaged in a Byzantine struggle for political supremacy that was soon complicated by outside forces just then beginning to encroach on Fiji.

⁶ David Routledge, *Matanitu: Struggle for power in Early Fiji* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1985), pp. 27-30.

⁷ R.A. Derrick, *A History of Fiji* (Suva: Government Printers, Revised edition, 1950), pp. 7-9.

The Nineteenth Century: Road to Cession

The nineteenth century was a period of fundamental change for most islands of the Pacific Ocean.⁸ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the era of European discovery, exploration, and itinerant trading was over, paving the way for more intensive political and commercial contact between outsiders and the people of the islands. Some Pacific islands, especially those in Polynesia, soon had small settlements of resident European settlers, traders, adventurers, and beachcombers.⁹ New trades in copra, pork, beche-de-mer, and sandalwood had reached many of the islands, along with new iron tools and novel ways of doing things that began a restructuring of the islands' internal social and economic relationships.¹⁰ A new Christian faith also spread rapidly after it was introduced by agents of the London Missionary Society in Tahiti in 1797. As a result of these increasing contacts with the outside world, by the middle of the nineteenth century, white people were no longer novelties and no longer perceived as ancestors returning in new colour, but permanent fixtures, if at times irritating ones, in most of the major Pacific island groups, except parts of Papua New Guinea that remained untouched by foreigners until the early years of the twentieth century.¹¹

The geographical position of the Fiji islands began to assume some potential strategic importance to European and American trading interests. It was at this time that a preliminary survey was carried out for the Panama Canal and it was thought that Fiji might well be used as a port of call for journeys across the Pacific to and

⁸ Ian C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989).

⁹ Caroline Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses: A Study of Five Pacific Beach Communities of the 19th Century* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1977).

¹⁰ H.E. Maude, *Islands and Men: Studies in Pacific History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1968).

¹¹ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins of Oceania* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1983).

from Australia. With such prospects in mind, treaties were established between several of the paramount chiefs of Fiji and France, Great Britain, and the United States, with the latter two nations appointing consuls for Fiji as well.¹²

Hard on the heels of these early traders, beachcombers and missionaries came along with the other Europeans with more ominous purposes. The nineteenth century was a period of imperial rivalry among the great powers of Europe and North America. With much of the world already carved up among them, these powers focused their attention on the remote, scattered islands of the Pacific Ocean. One by one they extended the long arm of their imperial reach into the area: Britain, France, Holland, Germany and the United States. One by one, the islands found themselves objects of imperial claims based ostensibly on “rights” of “discovery” that were enforced for strategic or economic reasons or to placate the demands of European or American nationals in the islands. The impact of this expansive imperial rivalry was such that by the end of the nineteenth century, all the Pacific Islands, except Tonga, which managed to retain a semblance of sovereignty under the arm of British protectionism, had come under the ambit of Euro-American colonialism.¹³

Fiji was no exception to this pattern. The islands were first sighted by foreign explorers in 1643 when the Dutch navigator Abel Janszoon Tasman navigated the reef-infested, hurricane-prone parts of Northeastern Fiji. Tasman managed to chart some dozen islands in the group, but made no known landing on any of them. No other Europeans appeared until the English Captain James Cook passed through the southern Lau group in 1774 during his second expedition to the South Seas, without making any significant “discoveries”. Lieutenant William Blight passed through the islands with more significant results in 1789 and again in 1792. More than any other

¹² R. A. Derrick, n.7, p. 156.

¹³ W.P. Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

European explorers, Blight is credited with charting many islands in the group and adding them to the rapidly increasing corpus of knowledge of the Pacific Islands. Other Europeans, such as D'Entrecasteaux and Kermadec, soon followed, and by the late eighteenth century, the rough outlines of Fiji (Feejee) were fairly well known to the outside world. These explorations ended the isolation of the islands, but contributed little to the outside understanding of Fiji's people, who were widely portrayed in the popular literature as ferocious and prone to violence, unlike their eastern Polynesian neighbours in Tonga and Tahiti. Indeed, for a while, Fiji was known somewhat exaggeratedly as the Cannibal Islands, though the practice of consuming human flesh was found in many other places in Oceania.¹⁴

More intensive and sustained contact between the islands and the outside world began early in 1800, when sailors from the schooner *Agro*, wrecked on the Bukatatanoa Reef east of Lakeba, landed on Oneata. In time, more European ships plied the Fiji waters and brought to the islands "deserters, marooned sailors, (and) derelict scorings of the ports of the Old World, among them some of the worst and lowest of their kind".¹⁵ With them came exotic diseases like measles, whooping cough, influenza, dengue fever, and dysentery, which soon wreaked havoc on a hapless indigenous population that had no immunity to them. Muskets, too took their toll, though perhaps not to the extent usually portrayed in the conventional literature or contemporary accounts.¹⁶ The advent of the sandalwood trade (1800-1814) at Bua Bay in Vanua Levu and the much longer lasting beche-de-mer trade (1820s-1850s) brought a wide variety of European tools and other goods as well as a cash economy and greater contact with the outside world. A new *lotu* 'religion' arrived in 1835 when

¹⁴ Stephanie Lawson, *The Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 45-78.

¹⁵ R. A. Derrick, n.7, p. 37.

¹⁶ Peter France, *The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.21.

the Wesleyan missionaries William Cargill and David Cross reached the islands from Tonga. Cargill and Cross wanted to spread the scriptures in the vernacular and with that aim produced the first orthography of the indigenous language. The politics and processes of conversion to Christianity had important ramifications for internal political struggles within Fijian society.¹⁷

By the middle of the nineteenth century, that society was deeply mired in political convulsions caused in part by the new forces of change from the outside. A great contest for power was under way between the leading rival *matanitu*.¹⁸ Bau was asserting its hegemony over the islands of the Koro Sea, while Rewa was ascendant, over eastern parts of Viti Levu; on Vanua Levu, the other main island, Bua and Macuata were asserting their independence. Into this confused picture of Byzantine chiefly struggles entered another formidable figure, the Tongan chief Ma'afu, in 1847. Appointed in 1853 by King George Tupou to oversee the affairs of the Tongans long settled in the Lau group, Ma'afu intrigued to secure political paramountacy in the eastern islands and in Vanua Levu. His presence and shrewd diplomacy caused problems especially for Ratu Seru Cakobau, *vunivalu* 'war lord' of Bau and self-styled king of all Fiji or Tui Viti.¹⁹

Ma'afu's growing influence came at a particularly inopportune time for Cakobau. As Tui Viti, Cakobau was held accountable by American Consul John Williams for the looting that occurred after William's house had burned down during the Fourth of July celebration in 1849. The initial claim for US \$5000 compensation grew to US \$43,000 by the mid 1850s, when claims of other American citizens were added. Cakobau was not unable to pay this sum, nor, for obvious reasons, would he

¹⁷ R.G. Ward, "The Pacific Beche-de-mer Trade with Special Reference to Fiji", in R.G. Ward (ed.), *Man in the Pacific Islands: Essays on Geographical Change in the Pacific Islands* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 91-123.

¹⁸ Deryck Scarr, *Fiji: A Short History*, (Lae: Institute of Polynesian Studies, 1984).

¹⁹ Brij V. Lal, n.1, pp.3-16.

accept Ma'afu's offer of help in this confrontation. William Pritchard, who arrived from Samoa in September 1858, suggested a way out of the impasse for Cakobau. Cakobau agreed to cede 20,000 acres of Fiji to Britain in return for Britain paying the American debt and guaranteeing Cakobau's title of Tui Viti. Pritchard approached Britain with the offer, which was formally rejected in 1862. The troubles of New-Zealand were fresh in the minds of British officials. Moreover, Fiji offered few encouraging prospects for commercial development, a commission of inquiry under Colonel Smyth concluded. Annexation would be fraught with problems, not the least of which was that Cakobau did not have the authority to make the offer of cession on behalf of the whole of Fiji. The best course of action would be to establish a "native government aided by the counsels of respectable Europeans".²⁰

This path was followed in the 1860s, not under the direction of Pritchard, who was dismissed for exceeding his consular authority and meddling in Fijian policies, but that of a new consul, Captain, H.M. Jones. A loose confederation of leading chiefs from the *matanitu* of Bau, Rewa, Bua, Cakaudrove, Lakeba, Macuata, and Nadi was formed in May 1865 to provide a semblance of representative constitutional government. The endeavour fell through in mid-1867, when Jones left Fiji and tensions surfaced again between the two principal players in the makeshift government, Ma'afu and Cakobau. The two protagonists then set up separate governments. Ma'afu with his Lau Confederation and Cakobau with his kingdom of Bau in the west. Both these governments were elaborate affairs, complete with written constitutions and all the rudiments of administrative apparatus, including ministers, assemblies, and bylaws.²¹

²⁰ W.P. Morrell, n.13, p. 137.

²¹ Brij V. Lal, n.1, pp. 3-16.

The Lau Confederation, nominally headed by Tui Cakau but with Ma'afu and R.S. Swanston as its real powers, was the more successful of the two governments, creating as it did the semblance of government in eastern Fiji. Cakobau's settler-dominated organization was less effective. The problem of the American debt came back to haunt the Tui Viti when the USS *Tuscarora* arrived at Levuka on 11 July 1867. Captain Stanley demanded that Cakobau pay the principal in installments and mortgage certain islands as security that he would pay in timely fashion. The Melbourne-based Polynesia Company came to Cakobau's rescue, offering to pay the debt in return for 200,000 acres of land and a free hand in developing them "in the manner of the old seventeenth century mercantilist monopolies like the East India Company".²²

The debt was eventually paid, but his payment created new problems. In particular it fostered an influx of European settlers, whose numbers increased from thirty or forty in 1860 to about two thousand in 1870. The new settlers were attracted to the islands chiefly by the prospect of cashing in on the temporary global shortage of cotton caused by the American Civil War. Their arrival brought new problems. The planters wanted more land and cheap labour, and the fraudulence and violence that attended these transactions showed the need for control and regulation by a properly constituted government. So, too, did the importation of 1,649 Pacific Island labourers to work on European- owned plantations in the mid-1860s.²³

In 1871 Cakobau made a final attempt to form a Fiji-wide government, this time modelled on the Hawaiian monarchy. He divided the islands into separate districts, each ruled by a Fijian governor. A privy council was created consisting of Fijian provincial governors and one additional chief from each of the districts. In

²² Ian C. Campbell, n.8, p. 94.

²³ J.D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji, 1858-1880* (London: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 44-45.

addition, a cabinet advised the king, Cakobau, and served as the upper chamber of the legislature, the lower chamber consisting of a legislative assembly, elected for three years by a vote in which all adult males had a franchise. Judicial functions were exercised by a supreme court, one of whose judges was required to be an indigenous Fijian. During its two-year existence, this government enacted numerous legislations and proposed various reforms in an effort to achieve peace and stability.²⁴

The effort was futile. Cakobau's opponents attacked his government for ineptness, corruption and extravagance. More important in the government's collapse was the active and at times violent opposition of European settlers to the "assumed authority" of a "few British subjects forming the so-called Government of Fiji".²⁵ Among other things, the settlers organized an armed society to subvert the judicial and political authority of the kingdom; their opposition effectively paralyzed the government. All this coincided with growing pressure from humanitarian groups in Britain to force the British government to act against the widely reported abuses in the Pacific Islands labour trade, in which many British nationals were involved. More active British intervention in Fijian affairs was also urged by Australia and New Zealand, both of which were apprehensive about the expansion of the French and German presence in the Pacific Islands. Cakobau, old and tired summed up the predicament of the islands as Britain moved to enlarge its presence there. "If matters remain as they are", he said, "Fiji will become like a piece of driftwood in the sea, and be picked up by the first passer-by... of one thing I am assured, that if we do not cede Fiji (to Britain), the white stalkers on the beach, the cormorants, will open their maws and swallow us".²⁶ For Cakobau, annexation by the British had become the only way

²⁴ *ibid*, pp. 78-89.

²⁵ *ibid*, p.84.

²⁶ R. A. Derrick, n.7, p.248.

out of the threatening instability and was preferable to annexation by some other European power. He therefore acquiesced in what he could not prevent, and Fiji became a British Crown Colony on 10 October 1874.²⁷

Cession and Its Legacy

The introduction of Indian labour five years later was the act of the first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon (later Lord Stanmore). Gordon's policy was formed by the different interests of the main elements in the colony- the Fijians, the settlers and the colonial office. The most important fact for him was that the Fijians had been unsettled and disorganised by the events of the preceding decades. Shortly after cession, the tribes in central Viti Levu rebelled, though Gordon evoked sufficient confidence in other Fijians for them to pacify the area and avert the need for European troops. Moreover, in the year after Cession, a measles epidemic swept through the population and reduced it by about one quarter. It was morally and politically clear, in fact, that Fijian interests must be maintained. That's why the land policy ensured an almost exclusively Fijian control over the Colony's primary resource and by maintaining the traditional landholding units, gave support to the existing social structure.²⁸

The policy of restricting the area of land claimed by settlers was an aspect of Gordon's general concern to guard Fijian society from sudden and radical change, and from the abuses of settlers. The other aspect was that of a positive policy of economic and social development, in which Fijian society would be guided towards the conditions of modern life. But such a policy costs money, and Fiji has none. The imperial Government had made a grant-in-aid of £ 100,000 after Cession, and the Colony was told to pay its way when this was finished. As Legge remarks, 'It was a

²⁷ Adrian C. Mayer, *Indians in Fiji* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 7-12.

²⁸ *ibid.*

paradox of British colonial policy at this stage that expensive measures of native welfare could only be secured by developments likely to produce the reverse of welfare'.²⁹ These 'developments' were either the wholesale recruitment of Fijians for the plantations, or the introduction of immigrants to develop the colony, and thereby make it self-supporting through the expansion of the crops than under cultivation. These included cotton, copra, tobacco, coffee and sugar cane. Cultivation of the latter started in earnest when cotton prices slumped, and was greatly stimulated by the decision of the Colonial Sugar Refining (CSR) Company of Sydney to start operations in Fiji in 1880.

Gordon remained resolutely opposed to the recruitment of Fijians in sufficient numbers to meet the planter's demands and the Fijian chiefs themselves refused to send their subjects for contract labour. By 1877, the indenturing of Pacific island labour, started in 1864, had run into difficulties because of the expensive but necessary control over recruitment imposed after Cession. Gordon proposed in 1876 that Indians should be indentured. At first the planters opposed this, but finally came to see that it ensured a stable supply of labour at a hardly increased cost. In 1878, arrangements were made with the Government of India for an indenture contract, under which labourers were to be brought by the Government of Fiji for five years of compulsory labour under government direction. After this, they were to be free to return to India at their own expense, though at the end of a further five years their passages and those of their children were to be paid by the Fiji Government. Most important, however, there was no compulsion on them to return at all. On 14 May

²⁹ J. D. Legge, n.23, p. 275.

1879, 498 indentured Indians arrived in Fiji on the *Leonidas* from Calcutta. Fijian society had been saved, and financial stability assured.³⁰

No single responsibility can be allocated for the starting of Indian immigration. It was rather a convergence of interests and policies which made the recruitment necessary. The main problems which it posed were first, to what extent the resulting economic benefits should be used, as Gordon intended, to further the adjustment of Fijians to the new conditions of life; and second, to what extent the scale of immigration could or should be controlled, so that it would remain secondary to the interests of Fijians.³¹

The first of the sailing ships taking Indian workers to Fiji, the *Leonides*, docked in Fiji on 15 May 1879 with 463 persons. It had been stricken en route with cholera and dysentery because of the miserable and unsanitary conditions on board. The last of 87 ships, the *Sutlej-V*, arrived there on 11 November 1916. When the indenture system was finally terminated after considerable opposition in India because of the inhuman treatment meted out to the indentured Indians, a total of almost 61,000 persons are reported to have been transported to Fiji. They had been compelled to work under deplorable conditions on the sugar plantations that had begun to dominate the local economy after the demise of cotton as the preferred cash crop. About 75% of these Indian had been recruited from what are now UP and Bihar, and the remaining 25% from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.³² From India as indenture labour there were 85.3% Hindus, 14.6% Muslims and 0.1% Christians.³³ The Hindus were from a variety of castes; Brahmins and other high castes comprised 16% of those who came

³⁰ Adrian C. Mayer, n.27, pp. 7-12.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² See details in, "Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora", Chapter-22, <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.html>

³³ K.L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants. A History to the end of Indenture in 1920* (Melbourne, 1962), pp. 209-210.

to Fiji through Calcutta, the Agricultural castes, 31.3% artisans, 6.7%, low castes 31.12%. An analysis of ages reveals 68.7% of those who left from Calcutta were between twenty and thirty years old and 17.9% between ten and twenty; those between thirty and forty comprised 4.9% those over forty, 0.2%.³⁴

In fathoming the reasons for migration to Fiji one needs to consider both the general and the specific. First, the indenture system was a response to the labour needs of the British Empire; especially of plantation agriculture. The new system followed on the heels of the abolition of slavery when 'the basic principle of ... private enterprise economy was to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest.'³⁵ The employer sought his labour at the lowest cost and desired from it the highest productivity. This desire to maximize profit was part not only of the planter ethos but also of the forces that created and sustained economic imperialism. The plantations of the British Empire satisfied some of its needs for raw material, and one of their essentials was a cheap and plentiful supply of labour which, if not available locally, had to be imported. The end of slavery resulted in a labour shortage. A former indentured labourer wrote. "Negroes refused to be ensnared a second time, so European glances were cast towards India and china as alternative sources'.³⁶ Since India was part of the British Empire and had a large population, a substantial proportion of which was in a state of poverty, it was not surprising that it provided a pool of men and women likely to go abroad to serve the needs of the plantations of the empire in a manner similar to Indian soldiers, who were recruited in India and died in foreign battlefields to preserve the same empire.

³⁴ Ahmed Ali, "Serving Girmity in Fiji, 1879-1919", in U. Bissoondagall and S.B.C. Servenising (ed.), *Indian Labour Immigration* (Moka, Mauritius: Mahatma Gandhi Institute Press, 1986), pp. 238-253.

³⁵ E. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men. Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1964), p. 344.

³⁶ Totaram Sanadhya, *The Coolies System* (A pamphlet in Hindi, 1914).

As in the case of the indentured labour in South Africa and elsewhere, they had been taken there to work for assigned employers on a five-year contractual agreement. This was referred to as a *girit* in the popular parlance of the illiterate Indian labour, who soon came to be referred to as *giritiays*. After the contractual period, they were free to move to another employer, or work for themselves. At the end of ten years in the islands, they were entitled to a free passage back to India if they so desired. But most of them neither returned to India nor remained in the plantations to which they had been assigned initially. Instead, they preferred to settle down wherever they could find land to cultivate on their own with the new skills that they had acquired.³⁷

The British colonists soon discovered that it was going to be difficult to maximize profits by extending their plantations to new areas due to the dearth of locally available capital to finance them. Accordingly, the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSRC) was encouraged by the colonial government to enter the picture from 1880. In spite of the principle of native land ownership laid down by Gordon, the CSRC was initially allowed to purchase a thousand acres of prime land, with the option to acquire another thousand. By the 1920s it had come to own almost all the plantations and sugar mills in the Fiji islands. Owing to the problems encountered in managing such extensive estates in a centralized manner, the company soon initiated a scheme of small farmer cultivation. Its vast holdings were divided into 10-12 acre blocks and offered under contract to Indian labourers as and when they had completed their compulsory period of indenture. These lessees had to plant the land with cane under the supervision of company officials and sell it to the company at an agreed price. This meant that they had to adopt the latest cultivation and harvesting

³⁷ See "Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora", n.32, pp. 289-300.

methods that had been introduced into Fiji by the CSRC. As the scheme developed and prospered, the company's supervision was relaxed and the organization of their farms was left more and more to the lessees themselves.³⁸

In the initial period of indenture, the Indian expatriates in Fiji had been fully occupied in trying to find their feet in an alien land, and under hostile and unsympathetic conditions. The condition of Indians was almost like slaves. The proportion of women to men was totally skewed during that period. A settled family life was impossible in the barracks provided to them by the planters. The different castes and even the more distinctive religious differences between Hindus and Muslims had become dimmed by having to live together, and thus compelled to forget the divisions that had separated them in India. Christian missionaries from Britain and elsewhere, who had succeeded in converting most of the Fijians to one or other of the various Christian sects, had little effect on the Indian settlers who remained loyal to what they recalled of their ancient religions and traditional customs.³⁹

Gradually, 'free immigrants' (corresponding to the 'passenger Indians' of South Africa) began to arrive from India to seek their fortunes. Along with returning former indentured labourers, they represented a wide spectrum of various professions. Some of them were farmers from the Punjab; others were Gujarati craftsman and traders. There were also religious teachers among them, even a few lawyers. The local government or private employers brought in clerks, policemen, artisans, gardeners, doctors and school teachers. These waves of voluntary immigrants were endowed with better education and had greater material resources at their command, with which to start a new life on the islands. Already by 1920 there were two or three thousand of them. With their arrival in Fiji, there was a revival among the earlier

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ Brij V. Lal, *Chalo Jahaji: On a Journey through Indenture in Fiji* (Canberra: ANU, 2000).

Indian settlers, of the complex social structure existing in India. And very soon, there was also an awakening of political awareness and a desire to remedy their skewed position in the country's civic and political life. A former indentured labourer and self-educated *sanatani priests*, Totaram Sandaya of Rewa and later, Manilal Mohanlal Doctor who had come from Mauritius, provided leadership to the Indian community. But by this time the problems of the Indian settlers had mounted considerably.⁴⁰

From 1921 to 1936 the Indo- Fijians increased rapidly in number, from 60634 to 85002, as in the early 1920 and 30s. Their numbers were swelled by fresh immigrants from the trading sector who set up small shops and today own some of the largest retail sectors in the country.⁴¹

Hard work laid the foundation of the sugar industry. This is the main earner of the country's foreign exchange and provides a substantial part of government revenues. The Indians operate much of the transport system of the country; they are also artisans and shopkeepers and form the bulk of the urban populations. Fiji may well give the impression that it is a 'little India of the pacific'.

The Souring of Inter-racial Relations

The British planters resented the Indian immigrants-both the former indentured labourers as well as the free Indians who had arrived subsequently. This was partly due to the fact that those who had obtained land leases from the CSRC had been selling their cane to it at a much lower price than what the white planters were willing to offer. The white colonists looked down on the frugal life style of the Indians, whom they branded as dirty and unhygienic. They tried to keep the native Fijians and the Indo-Fijians apart as much as possible, not even permitting the establishment of racially mixed schools. They resented the political activism of the

⁴⁰ Brij V. Lal, n.1, pp. 17-59.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p.63.

PIOs (People of Indian Origin) and their urge to protect their *izzat* and their *swabhiman*. They considered their fight for civic and political equality as presumptuous. Their overall attitude of prejudice and hostility towards the indo-Fijians was summed up by James Michener in his *Return to Paradise* where he etched the following pen picture about them: 'It is almost impossible to like the Indians of Fiji. They are suspicious, vengeful, whining, unassimilated, provocative aliens in a land where they have lived for seventy years'.⁴²

As for the native Fijians, they lived separately in their own communities under Gordon's 'benevolent' dispensation. Like the whites, they too had begun to regard the Indians as unwelcome aliens with unfamiliar religions and strange cultural mores. The PIOs had not normally been permitted to enter their native townships. On the occasional instances when some Indians happened to go there, they had often received an unfriendly and hostile reception. It was rare for an Indian to marry an indigenous Fijian as both communities frowned upon miscegenation.⁴³

By the 1940s and 50s, the diligent and worldly wise Indians had acquired, with their interest in education, a new impetus for economic progress. Many of their children were being sent abroad to study in foreign colleges and universities. There was also a gradual urbanisation of the Indian settlers as they migrated to the new towns that were coming into existence. Many of them had moved from the plantations to occupy themselves in trade and commerce, which became almost an Indian monopoly. In the main streets of the growing towns, Gujarati names were prominently displayed on the shops. Some of the Indians drove the latest models of British and Japanese cars, even as the Fijians languished in subsistence agriculture, despite owning 83% of the land area of Fiji. The all-too obvious prosperity and higher

⁴² Stephanie Lawson, n.14, pp. 124-157.

⁴³ See "Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora" n.32, pp. 289-300.

standards of living of the Indians led to growing resentment by the indigenous people. Who felt outclassed in what they regarded as their own country.⁴⁴

On more than one occasion, the Great Council of Chiefs had voiced the alarm of the Fijians at the growing number of the Indians. Pio Manoa, a native Fijian, wrote in the 1940s that there were even some rumours that the Indians were going to be loaded into ships like cargo and forcibly repatriated as they would soon be outnumbering the Fijians. They were already dominating the economic life of the country, which was intolerable. The rumours turned out to be mere wishful thinking. But they were certainly indicative of the inter-racial relations that had already become part of the local scene by that time. Pio Manoa described these developments as 'marking the end of innocence and the beginning of stereotype formation in the country'.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, as the Japanese forces came within striking distance of Fiji in the Pacific sector during World War II, the Indo-Fijians came under fire for their reluctance to enroll themselves in the armed forces. Out of a total of about 11,000 persons who had enlisted, 1070 were Europeans and only 264 were Indians, the rest being native Fijians. This had earned the Indian community considerable criticism. They were accused of being more interested in making money, and also of disloyalty to their adopted country. It has been suggested later by some of the PIOs that there may have been many reasons why they had held back. The community's leaders had demanded the same scale of pay as the Europeans and, as this was summarily rejected, they did not want to submit to such discriminatory treatment. Another reason advanced by them was that, as Indian leaders in India had initially given a call to

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

boycott the war effort, the Indo-Fijians had decided to do likewise. But reasons of this kind did not seem to cut much ice with the indigenous Fijians.⁴⁶

If the indenture system had been a facet of economic imperialism, the sustaining factor of colonialism in the Fijian islands was race. At the top of pyramid were the white settlers in their privileged position. The indigenous Fijians occupied an intermediate position because of the paternalistic policy pursued from the time of Gordon's governorship. The Indian settlers constituted the lowest rung. In fact, a subtle form of apartheid had become part of the local scene from the very beginning of the indenture system and throughout the colonial period. It is not surprising, therefore, that the colonial legacy of racism was continued after the country's independence. If anything, it was further aggravated when alarm bells rang to announce that the PIO population had overtaken the native Fijians. When independence was granted to the archipelago on 10th October 1970, the departing British gave a farewell gift to the indigenous population which was very much in the spirit of Sir Arthur Gordon's legacy of perpetuating the special status of the indigenous Fijians in the new political system.⁴⁷

Following the policy of 'Divide and Rule' they maintained and inspired the belief that the Indians who had multiplied and outnumbered all others in the population, held a pre dominant share of economic power and if they were given equal political rights, they would take over the country which legitimately belongs to the Fijian.⁴⁸

In 1966 a new constitution was introduced by the British in Fiji which provided for a ministerial form of government, with an almost wholly elected legislative council. The British had adopted a system of communal rolls which meant

⁴⁶ Brij V. Lal, n.1, pp. 108-163.

⁴⁷ See "Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora", n.32, pp. 289-300.

⁴⁸ Man Mohini Kaul, "The Crisis in Fiji: An Overview", *Peace Initiatives*, vol.6, no. 1-3, January-June 2000, pp. 1-8.

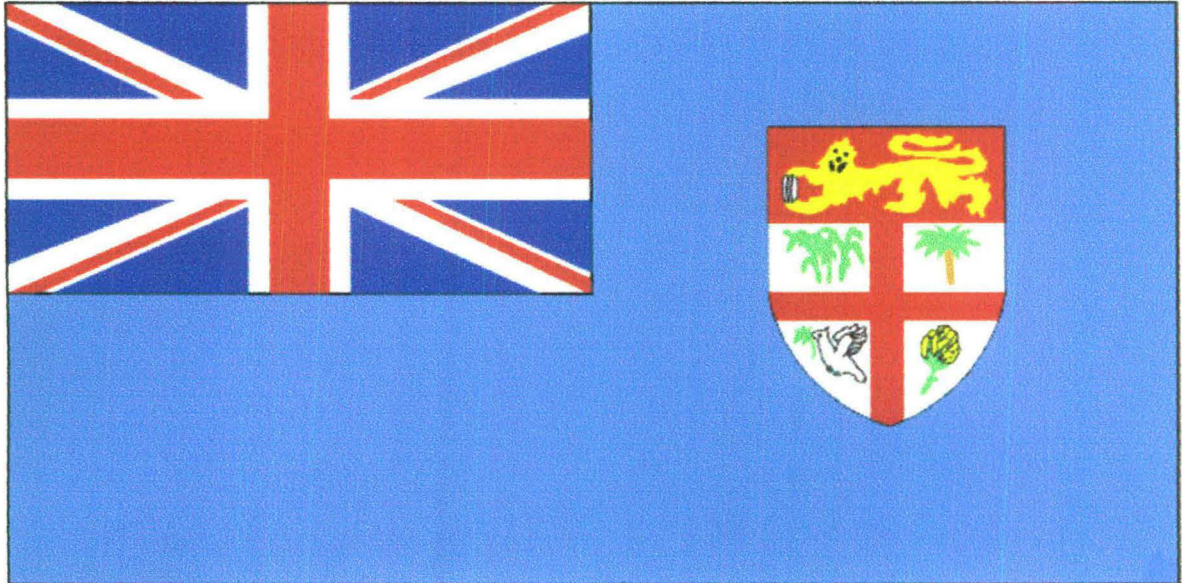
that people were divided into separate electorates on the basis of their ethnic groups. In September 1967, the executive council became the Council of Ministers, with Ratu Kamisese Mara leader of the Alliance Party and a powerful eastern chief as Fiji's first chief Minister. The two major political parties emerged during that time namely- the National Federation Party (NFP) with its support base predominantly among Indo-Fijians and the Alliance Party with its support base among indigenous Fijians. However by the time of independence the Alliance Party was mainly under the control of the eastern chiefs.⁴⁹

Indo-Fijians have always worked for the peace and prosperity of Fiji and have made enormous contributions to the economy of Fiji in terms of its agriculture, trade and industry. Indo-Fijians have also contributed to the social, educational and cultural advancement of Fiji. The Legislative council of colonial days had, however, ensured that the Indian members would not be able to form a government on their own strength. A similar pattern of weighted representation was repeated in the constitution that was gifted to Fiji when it attained freedom- exactly 96 years to the day after cession, on 10 October 1970.

⁴⁹ Amba Pande, n.2, pp.1154-70.

CHAPTER - III
FIJI AFTER INDEPENDENCE
AND THE PIOs

THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



NATIONAL FLAG OF FIJI



MAP OF FIJI

CHAPTER – III

FIJI AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND THE PIOs

The current political crisis in Fiji has brought to the fore the precarious position of the Indian community in their country of adoption. The struggle for power-sharing between the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians has existed since Fiji's independence in 1970, and it seems naive now to have expected the ethnic Fijians to willingly hand over the political power which had been their preserve for so long. The central crisis in Fiji today is essentially of an assertion of identity by the indigenous Fijians and the unwillingness of the indo-Fijians to accept a subservient role. It is the story of a post-colonial society deeply divided between two ethnic groups, attempting to make the transition from tradition to modernity, which turned into a crisis due to the head on collision of the two competing nationalisms. That the crisis was created to shelter the corrupt leaders of Fiji is merely incidental to this one central dichotomy.¹

Getting to the root of this problem is not difficult- one is quite familiar with the policy of '*divide et imperium*', and also the price of planting foreign indentured labourers.² Indians were brought to Fiji by the British in 1879 to work on plantations as indentured labourers. Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor of Fiji felt that by getting Indian labour the Fijian way of life would continue undisturbed.³ According to an analyst, this was a shortsighted policy, and had the Fijians been allowed to work on their plantations they would have been able to eventually emerge from a 'traditional

¹ Man Mohini Kaul, "Imaging the South Pacific: An Indian Construct of the Region", in N.N. Vohra (ed.), *India and Australia, History, Culture and Society*, (New Delhi: Shipra, 2003), pp.132-160.

² Man Mohini Kaul, *Pearls in the Ocean: Security Perspectives in the South West Pacific*, (New Delhi: URS Publishers Ltd, 1992), pp.27-50.

³ J.D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji 1858-1880*, (London: Macmillan, London, 1958).

society and enter the modern world of economic competition'.⁴ Gordon also laid down the policy of the inalienable Fijians right to land that continues to this day. The 'Fijian society therefore had (and still has) a close organic relationships between the land, the people, the chief and the ancestors'.⁵ Under the colonial rule, separate local administration was evolved for the Indo-Fijians and the Fijians. This 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British laid the foundation of separation between the two communities.⁶ Meanwhile in India, political leaders were greatly concerned about the condition of the Indians abroad and it was their consistent efforts, which led to the abolition of indenture labour in January 1920. Once indenture labour was abolished, the majority of Indians chose Fiji as their new home even though it meant living under insecure conditions.⁷

The vulnerability of their situation and the high value they traditionally laid on education made Indians look to alternative means of livelihood and work hard at ensuring a better future for their children by educating them. With education came prosperity, and the Indians achieved dominance in commerce and trade and took over most of the white collar jobs. On the other hand, the traditional way of life encouraged by the British and their own value system impeded the Fijians from developing into a viable economic group. As the Indians prospered, the suspicion of the Fijians towards them increased, and with the communities maintaining their separate identity, the ethnic rift grew.

In April 1970, constitutional conference in London agreed that Fiji should become a fully sovereign and independent nation within the Commonwealth. Fiji

⁴ Adrian C. Mayer, *Indians in Fiji*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.8.

⁵ J.D. Legge, n.3.

⁶ Man Mohini Kaul, "The Crisis in Fiji: An overview, *Peace Initiatives*, vol.6, no.1-3, January-June 2000, New Delhi, pp.1-8.

⁷ Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920*, (London:, 1974), p.337.

became independent on 10 October 1970, after about a century of British rule. From August 1969 through March 1970, there were intensive negotiations with regard to the Constitution of independent Fiji between the representatives of the Alliance Party and the National Federalism Party, representing the three main racial groups in the country, the indigenous Fijians, the Indians, and the Europeans.⁸ At the first talks were restricted to the two parties. It was only towards the end of discussions, late in January 1970, that the British Government sent Lord Shepherd, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, at the invitation of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the leader of the ruling Alliance Party and S.M. Koya, the leader of the opposition from National Federation Party (NFP). A large number of contentious issues were considered during the negotiations, and agreement was possible on all except the one relating to the question of representation in the Parliament of independent Fiji. The final Constitution drafted in secrecy between late 1969 and early 1970s in London was neither subjected to a national referendum nor was it debated at length in Parliament as was later in the case of other Pacific micro states. The leaders of NFP and Alliance Party accepted the constitution as a *fait accompli*. Thus Brij V. Lal observes, "The Constitution was an instrument, so complex that its structure and full implications have barely been understood by people. The so called consensus constitution of independent Fiji thus did not mark any radical departure from the colonial past; on the contrary it entrenched the same racial principles that had governed colonial politics in Fiji."⁹

The fears and suspicions of the Fijians vis-à-vis the Indians were incorporated in the Constitution adopted at independence in 1970. The major fears arose from the

⁸ R.K. Vasil, "*Communalism and Constitution-making in Fiji*, Pacific Affairs, Vancouver, B.C.", vol.45, no.1, spring, 1972, pp.21-41.

⁹ Brij V. Lal, *Politics in Fiji: Studies in Contemporary History*, (London: Allen and Unwin, edition no.3, 1986,) p.38.

increased birth rate of the Indians whose 50% had reduced the ethnic Fijians to a minority community in their own land. This fear, almost fringing on paranoia, resulted in the incorporation of certain clauses regarding the inalienable rights of Fijians towards their land, customs and way of life. They could not be changed without the consent of the Council of Chiefs in the Senate.¹⁰

The Constitution of the newly independent Fiji was adopted in April 1970 which provided Fiji with a parliamentary form of democracy based on the Westminster model. It provided a bicameral legislature with one of the most complex legislative systems of the world. As the Melanesians in Fiji were in numerical minority therefore the Constitution was stretched out of the way from Westminster democracy to safe guard the interests of the indigenous populations.¹¹

The political system worked out by the British was based on a communal instead of a common electoral role. The Fijians had been advocating a communal roll throughout the colonial period. They wanted their interests to be protected and political power ensured to them. Therefore, a unique voting system had been evolved by which Fiji voter had four votes to cast in the elections.

According to the New Constitution (1970s) of Fiji the Lower House, which was called the House of Representatives, had 52 members. Among these, 12 Fijians, 12 Indians and 3 general members were to be elected on the basis of communal voters roll. Other than that, 10 more Fijians, 10 Indians and 8 general members had to be elected on national roll. The members, under general category represented minority communities. Each voter had a total of four votes, one in the communal electorate and three (one for each social grouping) in the national electorate. The Upper House was

¹⁰ Man Mohini Kaul, n.1, pp.132-160.

¹¹ E.K. Fisk, *The Political Economy of Independent Fiji*, (Canberra: ANU, 1970), p.18.

called the Senate which had 22 members 8 nominated by the Council of Chiefs, 7 by the Prime Minister, 6 as the opposition leader's nominees and 1 was to be the nominee of Council of Ratumata. The special representation given to the Council of Chiefs in the Senate was of most crucial significance in establishing supremacy of Fijian interests. The Constitution gave veto power to any three nominees of 'Council of Chiefs', effective veto over any legislative attempt to interfere with core Fijian interests such as land, customs and way of life. The Constitution also guaranteed to the indigenous Fijians, the traditional rights over 80 percent of the country's land. The elected House of Representatives had no rights over these provisions. Thus "the outwardly symmetrical parity of ethnic representation was more than outweighed by defence of Fijian interest through the composition and powers of the nominated senate".¹²

Under this condition, it was absolutely impossible to achieve a reasonable basis for representation based on majority rule. The NFP had always opposed the system of communal representation. In fact, the National Federation Party insisted from the beginning that the rights of the majority must be accepted. The only proper way to identify a majority was to establish the principle of one man one vote.¹³ But this idea was rejected by most of the Fijians on the ground that it might dilute their political identity. They also feared to place the numerically and economically strong Indians on an equal footing. It may be noted here that at the time of independence Indians outnumbered the Fijians. Thus ultimately, the NFP had to accept the system of communal roll in order to allay the Fijian fears of Indian domination. In the elections thus held in 1972, Alliance Party won the majority and Ratu Mara became

¹² Rod Alley, "Fiji at the Cross Roads?" *Round Table*, no.342, April 1997, p.247.

¹³ R.K. Vasil,n.8., p.250.

the first Prime Minister of independent Fiji. In the words of Shanti Sadiq Ali, “Although the 1970 constitution was not a perfect document, the Indo-Fijians cooperated with ethnic Fijians to create a society which was described as ‘the way the world should be’”.¹⁴

Ultimately, the NFP had to accept the communal roll in order to assuage the Fijian fears. Writing in 1976, Ahmed Ali’s comments seem as relevant today as they were then:

While the political system as it exists today generates security in the minds of Fijians, for Indians it continues to spell insecurity; in many of them, it still breeds the feeling that they are not equal and are, therefore, second-class citizens. It makes them aware that while Fijians are prepared to share power with them, they are not prepared to relinquish political power to Indians. The inference is that Indians have to accept Fijian political rule, perhaps without ever having a chance of governing the country themselves.¹⁵

An Indo-Fijian scholar Brij Lal states that at the time of Fiji’s independence many fundamental questions were left unresolved. These were related to distribution of power, land tenure, structure of the electoral system and the nature and goals of development. According to him Fiji got ‘independence rather hurriedly, therefore, it bypassed the experience of a prolonged period of nationalist struggle which might have sharpened and classified some of these issues. And because they were not, they

¹⁴ Shanti Sadiq Ali, “Institutionalized Racial Discrimination” *Mainstream*, vol.30, no.10, December 2, 1991, p.15.

¹⁵ Ahmed Ali, “Fiji Indians and the Politics of Disparity”, *India Quarterly*, 32 (4), October-December, 1976, p.425.

would continue throughout the dominion years to surface to the fore to pulverize and eventually consume the nation'.¹⁶

The loyalty of Indo-Fijians has always been questioned, especially in every general election held since 1972. It was the 1977 election that convinced the ethnic Fijian elite that the 1970 constitution did not carry enough guarantee favouring permanent right to political power for them. In this election the NFP won majority of seats 26 out of 52 seats in the House of Representatives, but failed to form the government due to its internal dissensions. In this situation Ratu Mara was invited to govern in a caretaker capacity until the next General Elections. In the same year when elections were held, the alliance party of Ratu Mara returned to power with huge majority. Race was always a factor during all the General Elections and it was also manifested in the appeals for votes. During his election campaign Ratu Mara accused the NFP of getting support from India. He managed to sow seeds of suspicion against NFP. Hence, the democratic ideas professed by the NFP came to be associated with general debate over democracy. The chief based their anti-democratic position on appeals to preserve tradition and native Fijian rights in the face of the assumed threat from Indo-Fijians.¹⁷ Rabuka, the 1987 coup leader, has stated in an interview that he had thought of a military coup then, had the NFP succeeded in forming the government. It was also alleged that the Indian High Commission had been working for the success of NFP. The 1982 election too, was dominated by racial tension and allegations against India were once again made. There was even a formal complaint by Fiji regarding the Indian high commissioner's alleged involvement in the politics of the NFP. Once again in the April 1987 elections, the Alliance Party in its

¹⁶ Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of Fiji in the 20th Century*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p.20.

¹⁷ Amba Pande, "Race and Power Struggle in Fiji", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.24, no.6, September 2000, pp.1154-70.

advertisement in the '*Fiji Times*' made uncomplimentary reference to India. At every election the NFP was made to look as though it was a party which owed allegiance to India whereas the Alliance Party was a truly nationalist party.¹⁸

The point to be emphasized here is that India should not have been surprised at the events that have unfolded in Fiji. After all the so-called 'democratic' political system established at independence in 1970 was discriminatory and had institutionalized supremacy of indigenous rights. From 1970 until the military coup of 1987, the Fijian- dominated Alliance Party led by a paramount chief Sir Kamisese Ratu Mara ruled Fiji, and as long as political power remained the preserve of the Fijian chiefly elite Fiji remained a peaceful multi-racial country. Even though in the past India had maintained that its interest in overseas Indians was purely sentimental and not political, yet, Fiji has always accused India of interference in its internal affairs.¹⁹ Perhaps things might have been different if the Indian government had been more responsive to Ratu Mara's efforts at building relations with India. He had made several visits to India, and Indira Gandhi was the first Indian Prime Minister to visit to Fiji in September 1981. She was given a rousing welcome of the kind reserved earlier for British royalty and the Chiefs.²⁰ India should have secured the goodwill of the Fijian-leadership especially Ratu Mara who was highly educated and an able administrator. Unfortunately, in India not much is known about Ratu Mara and what little is known is totally biased.

The issue of land was another factor, which was used as a tool against the NFP. In fact the root of land politics in Fiji goes back to the pre independence period. It was one of the most contentious issues in the Fijian-Indian relations. The ethnic

¹⁸ Man Mohini Kaul, n.1, pp.132-160.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Ramesh Thakur, "India and Overseas Indians", *Asian Survey*, March, 1985, p.369.

Fijians owned more than 83 percent of the land but as the main commercial cultivators of sugarcane, Indians held most of the land as tenant farmers on a lease. Despite the fact that the land was legally made inalienable by the constitution of 1970, the fear of losing it had always been there in the minds of the Fijians. But it is important to note here that the Indians actually never challenged the customary rights of the Fijian people. In fact, they always accepted the special position given to Fijians in their own country, including their rights to ownership of the land. However, the major concern with respect to land has always been the adequate agricultural leases and that has also been in the interest of the Fijian economy to ensure some security of tenure for indo-Fijian farmers. But in later years the ever-present “bogey of Indian land grab” was used by the ruling elite to maintain Fijian support base.²¹

In the General Elections of 1982 Ratu Mara’s Alliance Party again came to power but with a reduced majority. However, there was a great deal of discontent with the Ratu Mara government over rising inflation and unemployment. Also the economic development was lopsided which favoured the eastern side. The economic measures adopted by the government to meet the crisis brought it into direct confrontation with the trade unions and as a result of this the trade union movement became stronger. One of the largest trade unions had Dr. Timoci Bavadra as its President and Mahendra Chaudhary as its National Secretary. These two leaders formed the Fijian Labour party in July 1985. The new party had its base mainly among three classes i.e. urban Fijians (who were the greatest sufferers of inflation and unemployment), western Fijians (who despite having the bulk of the sugar industry were deprived of adequate development and political power) and the indo-Fijians

²¹ Stephanie Hegan, “Race Politics and the Coup in Fiji”, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol.19, no.4, Oct-Dec 1987, p.3.

(who despite owning the bulk of the sugar industry, were sufferers of the economic policies of the government). Moreover, due to industrialization and urbanization a number of Fijians had moved away from the villages weakening the traditional hold of the feudal system. These enlightened urban Fijians faced a lot of common problems together with other ethnic groups and found it beneficial to form links with them. Thus the labour party had its support base in the cross section of the society and the idea of multiracialism it stood for, came to appear as a truth in the otherwise racially divided society. The issues of common concern became so important that the rhetoric of Fijian identity or threat of Indian domination could no longer hold water. The new party made several welfare schemes like free education and national medical scheme as its priorities.²²

At the General Elections in April 1987, a coalition of FLP and NFP won 28 seats in the House of Representatives, 19 of whom were won by ethnic Indians. Dr. Bavadra and his cabinet were sworn in by the Governor General Ratu Sir Panaia Ganilau. Dr. Bavadra's cabinet includes 7 Indo-Fijians, 6 Fijians and 1 European. It was for the first time in Fijian history that the Indians were given an equal role in the governance of the country.²³ The issue of land, which was already a sensitive issue in Fijian politics, was made an instrument to mobilize the Fijians against the Bavadra's government. An indigenous Fijian movement called "Taukei" (meaning our land) movement was started by ultranationalists. The movement having got the networking of the Alliance Party spread rapidly throughout the country. Massive demonstrations were held against the new government. In fact the government had done absolutely nothing to threaten any aspect of Fijian land, which in any case was constitutionally

²² Stephanie Lawson, *The Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp.195-233.

²³ Shubha Singh, *Fiji: A precarious Coalition*, (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publication, 2001), pp.110-120.

safeguarded in the Senate. In a sense land became an 'anticipatory issue' meaning that it was expected by the Fijians that sooner or later the new government would begin to tamper with the Fijian land tenure and operations of the National Land Trust Board (NLTB).²⁴

The 1987 coup and its implications

However, showing little regard for democratic principles, coup led by Lt. Col. Sitivemi Rabuka (belonging to a warrior clan of eastern Fiji) was staged on 14 May 1987. At 10 am, Thursday, May 14th, Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka, 38, a third ranking military officer stormed into the chamber of the House of Representatives where the members were beginning their fourth day of debate on the contents of the address of governor General Ratu Sir Penai Ganilau delivered on Monday. Lt. Col. Rabuka was dressed in civilian clothes but behind him was to soldiers in battledress and sinisterly adorned with gas masks. They were carrying M-26 automatic rifles and outside the government buildings two Lorries carrying armed troops stood waiting.²⁵

"This is a military takeover, stay down and remain calm" declared Rabuka. Then his men led away the four-week-old government of Dr. Timoci Bavadra outside the parliament making them captives in the barracks of Nabua. Within four hours, all telephone, telex and fax services were suspended. Rabuka gave in Radio Fiji a statement, in which he claimed that he had overthrown the government to prevent further disturbances and bloodshed. He justified his coup as a pre-emptive act of thwart the anarchy and disorder.²⁶

²⁴ Ralph R. Premdas and Jeffrey S. Steeves, "Fiji Problems of Ethnic Discrimination and Inequality in the new constitutional order", *Round Table*, no.318, April 1991, p.164.

²⁵ Anikundra Nath Sen, "The American Hand Behind the Fiji Coup" *Onlooker*, March 1-15, 1988, p.51.

²⁶ Alley Roderic, "Military Coup in Fiji" *Round Table*, vol.30, Oct.1987, p.36.

Rabuka declared that constitution henceforth is suspended. A council (interim council) was formed, most of the members of which were the ex-minister, in Alliance cabinet including Ratu Mara, and as chairman of council had Lt. Gol. Rabuka, the only military representative. Ratu Sir Ganilau, the governor General refused to recognize the unlawful military government and declared a state of emergency, urging civil servants and military to show allegiance to head of the state. However, this declaration had little effect and governor general remains confined in the government house.

Brigadier Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Commander in chief of Royal Fijian Military Forces (RFMF), since 1980, who was in Australia at the time of coup, stated his continuous support for the constitution, his abhorrence of the coup and disregard to claim that he had been dismissed from the post. Eleven of the country's Supreme Court judges issued a statement, holding the military coup as illegal, and asked for the restoration of Dr. Bavadra's government Rabuka had also to face some resistance and opposition from the Indo-Fijian community. A civil disobedience movement was also launched. Trade unions and employees associations also demanded restoration of Bavadra's government.²⁷

The Queen had advised Governor General to continue his refusal to recognize the military government. She had asked Ganilau to stand firm against the rebels who had seized the power. On 19th May, Rabuka again met the Governor General to persuade him but he refused to bow down.

Rabuka had consistently stated that he would resume full control if the objectives of his coup were not met. On 25th September at 4 p.m. he swung into active and staged his 2nd military cop. Rabuka's 2nd coup was more efficient in operation.

²⁷ Roberts K. Reid, "Fiji under the Gun" *Island Business*, Suva, June, 1987, p.8.

The newspaper office of 'The Sun' and 'Fiji Times' were immediately closed. Radio FM 96 was shut down, and curfew was imposed.

The Governor General was isolated and virtually house arrested. Bavadra and other coalition leaders were imprisoned and justice Rooney of Supreme Court was placed under house arrest. Journalists, academics, lawyers, tax unionists and organizers of BTEMM were sent to jail.²⁸

The implications of the 2nd coup in Fiji was that the re-imposition of the military rule in Fiji just hours before a compromise bipartisan civilian government was to be installed was a tragic blow, wrote George Smith in 'Telegraph'²⁹ by usurping power through second coup. In Suva in less than five months, Rabuka arrogantly sought to scuttle the efforts of Governor General for national reconciliation between native Fijian and ethnic Indians. It was also a step to neutralize British pressures, exercised through Ganilau, not to declare Fiji a Republic. Ratu Ganilau refused to accept the offer of Presidency under a new Constitution. The Chief Justice of Fiji indicated that the judiciary would consider itself dismissed if Ratu Ganilau was forced out of office. Ultimately the declaration of Lt. Col. Rabuka, to sweep aside the Constitution, abolishing the post of Governor General and declaring Fiji a Republic came as a bolt from the blue. This decision did not only sever the 113 years old links with the British monarchy, wrote Stephen Taylor, but opened the possibility of paradise island to be condemned to the kind of worst internecine communal conflicts, from which it was plucked more than a century ago.³⁰

Rabuka, who was running Fiji with military mechanism as the head of a self-appointed military council named a 19 member interim government on 7th of October.

²⁸ Shubha Singh, n.23, pp.121-133.

²⁹ George Smith, "Why Rabuka is Courting Disaster", *Telegraph*, London, 29th Sept.1987.

³⁰ Shubha Singh, n.23, pp.121-133.

The so-called civilian government dominated by pro-Rabuka Melanesian leaders thus ensured the political supremacy of the military dictator.³¹

While the proceedings of constitutional provisions to legitimize the usurped regime was going on, several incidents of violence against Indian ethnic community had taken place. In Suva, Melanesian youths, mostly belonging to Taukei movement rampages all through Suva, are attacking members of the Indian community and destroying their properties. In worst racial violence to have occurred in Fiji after the coup over 50 people were injured, which continued sporadically unchecked despite appeals for the restoration of calm and tolerance.³²

Soldiers had raided the house of the members of the deposed Bavadra's government. Close surveillance was maintained on even members of Indian High Commission. There had been several incidents of soldiers carrying away goods from shops by producing so-called order papers from their commanding officers from the shops owned by Indians. Thus military coup destroyed the sense of security among Indians. Several members of Indian community started disposing of their property and migrating to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US.³³ The post-coup period was one of trauma and turmoil for the ethnic Indians. The professionals, the businessmen and those who could obtain emigrant visas left Fiji for other countries thereby bringing in demographic change, which ended their predominant position.

At first glance the coup appeared to be a racist reaction by ethnic Fijians and indeed race was a factor but there were other factors involved as well. The feudal Chiefs (especially eastern) who were the major beneficiaries during the long rule of the Alliance Party felt that their traditional dominance over Fijian society and

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Robertson, Robert T. V. Akosita, Tamanisan, *Fiji Shattered Coups*, (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1988), p.67.

³³ Man Mohini Kaul, n.1, pp.132-160.

economic interests were also at stake. As Anthony J. Payne explains it “The problem was that these old men had come to believe that the government of Fiji was their natural chiefdom. Led for many years by Ratu Mara the Fijian ruling elite was simply unable to tolerate the existence of FLP and the coalition as a government”.³⁴

Dr. Birj V. Lal has referred to the coup of 1987 as ‘an outcome of supremacy of traditionalism’. He further adds “both Bavadra’s class and regional origin posed the danger for traditional scheme of things in Fijian society. Dr. Bavadra belonged to the middle class and was from western part of the country”.³⁵ In the words of another writer J. Sandy on Fiji “The coup of 1987 overthrew a newly elected multiracial government and reinstated the former Fijian elite led regime which espoused the traditional order and the ‘Fijian way’ yet also aimed to preserve its own privileged position in both Fijian society and modern economy”.³⁶

The Constitution, which was adopted by the interim government in spite of the protests by Indo-Fijians, was highly discriminatory against them. The interim government was formed on 7 December 1987. According to the new Constitution, there was to be a bi-cameral legislature with an Upper House known as ‘Senate’ and a Lower House, called the ‘House of Representatives’. The Lower House was to have 69 popularly elected members from communal constituencies of which 37 were allocated to Fijians, 27 to Indo-Fijians, 1 for Routman and 5 to others. In the Senate the ‘Great Council of Chiefs’ was to nominate ethnic Fijians to 24 out of the total of 34 seats. The Senate played an important role in protecting the Fijian interests in Parliament especially in decisions to alter or repeal any constitutional provisions

³⁴ Anthony J. Payne, “The Fiji Effect: A Review of Trends in the South Pacific”, *Round Table*, no.312, October, 1989, p.442.

³⁵ Brij V. Lal, “Fiji Indians and the Politics of Exclusion”, *Foreign Affairs Report*, vo.38, no.7-8, Jul-Aug 1989, pp.105-106.

³⁶ J. Sandy, “The Coups of 1987: A Personal Analysis”, *Pacific Viewpoint*, vol.30, no.2, 1989.

affecting the Fijians or their land, customs, traditions etc. The Senate was also empowered to appoint President of the Republic (for a term of 5 years) and the Prime Minister from among the Fijians.³⁷ The late President Ratu Ganilau, commenting on the new constitution stated:

*“To the Fijians the plight and fate of indigenous people in many land sounded a warning. The Fijians had to preserve their identity, their culture- and sometimes it seemed, and their very existence... It was obvious to them that the former constitution did not provide sufficient guarantees for the political rights of the Fijian people... the new constitution rectifies in several ways”.*³⁸

Thus, the constitution of 1990 set up a form of elective parliamentary government but even the most generous interpretation could not deny the fact that it was discriminatory and non-democratic. The 1990 constitution deterred badly needed inward investment and was faced with a number of other problems.³⁹ Urban Fijians although constituting one third of the indigenous population, were only allotted 5 of the 37 seats in the House of Representatives. Hence the constitution was opposed by both the NFP and the FLP and they announced that they would not participate in any elections to be held under it. Rabuka on the other hand justified the discriminatory nature of the constitution on the grounds that it was meant to redress the political and economic inequality between the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians.⁴⁰

President Ganilau finally promulgated the constitution on 25 July, 1990. In the legislative elections held in 1992 and again in 1994, Rabuka's Party SVT (formed by Great Chiefs and reflecting the ideas of Taukei movement) came to power with Rabuka as the Prime Minister. But during his tenure Rabuka faced numerous problems. The negative effect of the racist constitution had resulted in a huge capital

³⁷ Shubha Singh, n.23, pp. 134-148.

³⁸ *The Fiji Times*, 27 July 1990.

³⁹ Rod Alley, n.12, p.245.

⁴⁰ *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, November 12, 1988.

outflow, which considerably affected the economy. The economic policies followed by the new government led to a great deal of unrest among the workers and strikes were held over wages and poor working conditions all over Fiji. Meanwhile racial tensions were also exacerbated during the period; several attacks were reported on Hindu temples. The issue of land also came to the forefront. Rabuka also aroused some controversy over corruption charges.⁴¹

Rabuka, trying to win over the situation, invited opposition leaders Jai Ram Reddy of the NFP and Mahendra Chaudhary of the FLP to form a Government of national unity, which the Indo-Fijians declined. Hence Rabuka announced the formation of a Constitutional Review Commission, which it was hoped would complete a review of the constitution by 1997. Moreover the economic plight of both urban and rural Fijians forced Rabuka to revise his earlier constitution to permit Indians to share power. Actually, due to a general economic downturn the racist card had lost its appeal. The Rabuka government therefore had no hope of retaining power and the only way for him and his SVT Party was to make a peace pact with the Indo-Fijian community by restoring some of their democratic rights.⁴² Apart from this the international concern regarding continued existence of Fiji's racially biased constitution and its subsequent economic isolation had forced Rabuka to adopt amendments in the constitution.⁴³

On the other hand in order to pacify the Fijian nationalists and the Great Council of Chiefs who accused him of conceding too much to Indo-Fijians, Rabuka took only ethnic Fijians in his Cabinet. The next year he also announced that all the

⁴¹Shubha Singh, n.23, pp.134-148.

⁴²S.P. Seth, "New Beginning in Fiji, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.34, no.2, June 1999, p.1413.

⁴³*Deccan Herald*, May 20, 1999.

state land (around 10 percent of the total Fijian land) was to be transferred to the Native Lands Trust Board.

During the early 90's another land related grievance came up from the Indian side. There were reports that the Indo-Fijian leases would not be renewed (most of which were due to expire between 1997 and 2024). Moreover, a newly formed ethnic sugarcane growers association known as the 'Taukei Cane Growers Association' campaigned for ethnic control over the sugar industry and to make their land leased to Indo-Fijians available for their own use. In this regard they demanded abolition of ALTA (Agricultural Land Lords and Tenants Act) Land legislation. The expiry of leases became a pressing social and economic problem as thousands of Indo-Fijian tenant farmers faced the problem of being displaced from the plots they had held for generations. In 1995, Jai Ram Reddy had blasted delays in negotiations on this issue saying "My worst fears are that there would be wide spread dislocation of farmers from all category of lands when their leases expire, without adequate advance planning on their resettlement".⁴⁴

However amidst all these upheavals in September 1996 the report of Constitutional Review Commissions was presented in the House of Representatives. There was extreme opposition from the nationalist parties but with some modification, the Constitution was approved unanimously by the House of Representative and the Senate on July 1997. The new Constitution of 1997 aimed to create a fine balance between the two communities. The main provisions of the Constitution were that it declared Fiji to be a Sovereign Democratic Republic, which guaranteed to the citizens fundamental rights, a universal adult suffrage and equality before law. It provide a Parliamentary form of government with bicameral legislature, comprising of a House

⁴⁴ Amba Pande, n.17, pp.1154-70.

of Representatives with 71 elected members and a Senate with 32 appointed members; 46 seats in the Lower House were reserved on racial basis (23 for ethnic Fijians, 19 for Indians and 3 for other races and one for Ratuman Islanders) and remaining 25 seats were open to all. The Senate was to be appointed by the President on the advice of the Council of Chiefs (14 members), Prime Minister (4 members), leaders of opposition (8 members) and Ratuman Islands Council (one member). In this constitution Indo-Fijians and the general voters were given equal status, so that the ownership of Fijian land, their rights and those of the Indo-Fijians were articulated in the specific articles of the constitution. The new constitution was hailed as a unique experiment in a complex situation.⁴⁵

Following the adoption of the new Constitution Fiji was on the path of reconciliation and co-existence. This led to the re-entry of Fiji in the Commonwealth of Nations and India too re-opened its High Commission in Suva. Elections were conducted on the basis of the new Constitution in May 1999 in which the FLP under Mahendra Chaudhary led People's Coalition (other partners were the Fijian Association and the Party of National Unity) came to power. Out of the total 71 seats in the House of Representatives, People's Coalition got 52 seats (37 went to the FLP alone). Shortly after the election results were announced, former Prime Minister Rabuka warned the Indian community that, "... to the Members of the Indian Community, we the indigenous Fijians, have given so much in agreeing to review the 1990 constitution. Your vote is your democratic right but judging from the way you

⁴⁵ Rajeev Dhawan, "The Fiji Crisis", *The Hindu*, July 2, 2000.

have bloc voted turning inward to your own communal interests, I appeal to you all to show greater responsibility to our wider common interests as a nation”.⁴⁶

Although the FLP had enough seats to form the government on its own, Mahendra Chaudhary acted cautiously. Not only did he include his alliance partners but also Ratu Su Kamisese Mara's daughter and her Christian Democratic Alliance into his government. Another commendable step undertaken by Chaudhary was to allocate portfolios central to Fijian interests to ethnic Fijians. Ministry of Fijian Affairs, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests, Tourism etc. all went to ethnic Fijians, most of whom were not even members of the FLP. 12 out of 18 members of the Cabinet were ethnic Fijians. Thus Chaudhary's Government was in no sense a sectarian government but was a genuine cultural mix. It reflected a triumph of multiracialism over racism. This Government symbolized peaceful co-existence between the communities of Fiji. However an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister did not go well with some of the Fijian elite. After all, the suspicion of Indians holding political power was aggravated by Chaudhary becoming the Prime Minister. All kinds of rumors were spread especially about land rights. Not surprisingly, on 19 May 2000 George Speight instigated a civilian coup and Chaudhary's government was overthrown.⁴⁷

The Civilian Coup in May 2000 and Its Implications

On 19 May 2000, a group of armed men, led by businessman George Speight, invaded the parliament building and ousted the government, taking hostage Chaudhry and 30 other members of the governing coalition. President Mara condemned the coup and declared a state of emergency as Speight's supporters rampaged through

⁴⁶ Deryck Scarr, "Communalism and Constitution: Fiji's General Election of May 1999" *The Journal of Pacific History*, 34(3), 1999, p.258.

⁴⁷ Amba Pande, n.17, pp.1154-70.

streets of Suva, looting and setting fire to Indian businesses. Speight declared that he had reclaimed Fiji for indigenous people and had dissolved the constitution. Moreover, he threatened to kill the hostages if the military intervened. On 22 May Mara formally invited Rabuka, in his role as chairman of the Great Council of Chiefs, to seek a resolution of the crisis. In the following days the Great Council of Chiefs convened to discuss the situation and proposed the replacement of the Chaudhry's government with an interim administration, an amnesty for Speight and the rebels, and the amendment of the constitution. Speight rejected the proposals, demanding the Mara also be removed from office. Meanwhile, violent clashes erupted at headquarters of Fiji Television when the rebels stormed the building following the broadcast of an interview with an opponent of the coup. A police officer was shot dead, television equipment was destroyed and the station's employees were taken hostage. On 29 May Mara resigned, and the Commander of the Armed Forces, Frank Bainimarama, announced the imposition of martial law and a curfew, in an attempt to restore calm and stability to the country. In an expression of his apparent reluctance to assume the role, Bainimarama gave Mara a whale's tooth, a traditional Fijian symbol of regret.⁴⁸

Negotiations between the Military Executive Council and the Great Council of Chiefs continued throughout June 2000. Failure to reach a conclusive outcome seemed to be the result of inconsistencies in Speight's demands and an ambivalent attitude on the part of the military towards the coup. Regular patrols by the security forces curbed rioting in Suva, although outbreaks of violence in rural areas (mostly in the form of attacks on Indian Fijians, the looting and burning of Indian-owned farms and the occupation of several tourist resorts) were reported. On 25 June the four female hostages were released from the parliament building. The Military Executive

⁴⁸ Shubha Singh, n.23, pp.149-163.

Council announced its intention to appoint an interim government without consulting Speight and demanded that the rebel leader release the remaining hostages. Speight reiterated his threat to kill all those held if any rescue attempts were made.⁴⁹

An interim administration of 19 indigenous Fijians led by Laisenia Qarase (the former managing director of the Merchant Bank of Fiji) was sworn in on 4 July 2000. Minutes after the ceremony a gun battle erupted outside the Parliament building in which four civilians and one rebel was injured; the rebel subsequently died. Speight announced that he did not recognize the interim authority, and most of Fiji's mainstream political parties similarly denounced it, although the Methodist Church declared its support for the body. On 12 July a further nine hostages were released, and on the following day the remaining 18, including Chaudhry were liberated. In accordance with Speight's wishes, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, hitherto the First Vice-President was then installed as president. In the same month Chandrika Prasad, a farmer, quickly brought a legal challenge to the abrogation of the 1997 constitution in the High Court of Fiji. Chaudhry launched an international campaign to reinstate both the constitution and the people's coalition Government.⁵⁰

On 29 July, however, Speight was finally arrested, along with dozens of his supporters, for breaking the terms of his amnesty by refusing to relinquish weapons. Armed rebels responded violently to the arrest, and in Labasa Indian Fijians were rounded up and detained in army barracks by supporters of Speight. In early August more than 300 rebels appeared in Court on a variety of firearms and public order offences. Speight was similarly charged with several minor offences. On 11 August Speight and 14 of his supporters were formally charged with treason. On 15

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

November the High Court ruled that the existing constitution remained valid and that the elected parliament, ousted in the coup, remained Fiji's legitimate governing authority. Laisenia Qarase responded by declaring that the interim authority, of which he was the leader, would continue as the country's national government until new elections could be organized and a new constitution drafted within 18 months.⁵¹

In February 2001 an international panel of judges at the Court of Appeal began the hearing against the November 2000 ruling, which found the abrogation of the 1997 Constitution to be illegal. In its final judgment the court ruled that the 1997 Constitution remained the supreme law of Fiji, that the interim civilian government could not prove that it had the support of a majority of Fijian people and was therefore, illegal and that, following Mara's resignation, the office of President remained vacant. The ruling was welcomed by many countries in the region, including Australia and New Zealand, and appeared to be accepted by the interim authority, which announced that it would organize elections as soon as possible.⁵²

It was announced that a general election would be held in August-September 2001, and would be conducted under the preferential voting system, similar to that of Australia, as used in Fiji's 1999 election. There followed a period of factionalism and fragmentation among Fiji's political parties. George Speight had already been appointed President of the new Matanitu Vanua (MV- Conservative Alliance party) party, despite facing the charge of treason for his part in the 2000 coup. On 9 May 2001 Qarase formed the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL-Fiji United Party), a new contender for the indigenous Melanesian vote, thus rivaling the established Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa Ni Tauket (SVT). Another indigenous party, the Bai Kei

⁵¹ <http://www.fijilive.com>

⁵² *ibid.*

Viti, was launched on 28 June. In the same month Tupeni Baba, former Deputy Prime Minister in Chaudhry's government, left the FLP and formed the New Labour United Party. The election took place between 25 August and 1 September. Qarase's SDL was victorious, but failed to obtain an overall majority. The SDL secured 31 seats in the House of Representatives (increasing to 32 of the 71 seats after a by-election on 25 September). The FLP won 27 seats, the MV six seats and the NLUP two seats. International monitors were satisfied that the election had been contested fairly.⁵³

Following the election, however, by refusing to allow the FLP any representation in his new Cabinet, Qarase was accused of contravening a provision of the Constitution whereby a party winning more than 10% of the seats in the House of Representatives was entitled to a ministerial post. Two members of George Speight's MV were included in the Cabinet. Qarase claimed that Mahendra Chaudhry had not accepted that the Government should be based fundamentally on nationalist Fijian principles. In October 2001, when members of the House Representatives were sworn in Chaudhry refused to accept the position of the leader of the opposition, a title that consequently fell to Prem Singh, leader of the NFP. In December Parliament approved the Social Justice Bill, a programme of affirmative action favouring Fijians and Rotumans in education, land rights and business funding policies.⁵⁴

The Prime Minister defended himself against demands for his resignation in January 2002. The former Minister for Agriculture had alleged that Qarase had broken the Electoral Act after it was revealed that more than F\$25m had been misused by the interim Government's Ministry of Agriculture during the 2001 election campaign. In February 2002, furthermore, an appeal court ruled that the Prime

⁵³ Brij V. Lal, "Fijian Constitutional Condandrum", *Round Table*, vol.372, October 2003, pp671-85.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

Minister had violated the Constitution by failing to incorporate any member of the FLP in his cabinet. Qarase had previously declared that he would resign if the legal challenge against him were to be successful. In September, in advance of the ruling by the Supreme Court on the issue of the inclusion of the FLP in the Cabinet, the Prime Minister effected a ministerial reorganization, assuming personal responsibility for a number of additional portfolios. In April 2003 the commander of the Armed Forces, Frank Bainimarama, intervened in the ongoing dispute, stating that, "If the judicial ruling went, against Qarase then he should resign". Meanwhile, rumours circulated that a further coup might be attempted if the Government were ordered to include FLP members in the Cabinet. The Supreme Court finally delivered its ruling on 13 July, finding in favour of Chaudhry and declaring that, in order to uphold the Constitution, Qarase should form a new cabinet including eight members of the FLP. Qarase responded by proposing to retain his current 22 member Cabinet and to add 14 FLP members. Both the opposition and the SVT leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, criticized the proposal, which would result in more than a one-half of all member of the House of Representatives serving as cabinet ministers, and would give Fiji the largest cabinet in the world, in proportion to its population. Chaudhry expressed dissatisfaction with the suggestion, claiming that the positions offered to his party were too junior. However, Qarase remained defiant, his intransigence resulting in several more weeks of political impasse. At the end of August Qarase formally nominated a cabinet which included 14 FLP members (although Chaudhry was not among those named). The opposition, however, continued to resist the proposal, claiming that they should be consulted over the composition of the cabinet. The ransacking of the FLP office in Lautoka at the

beginning of September, in which records and property were destroyed, was believed by many observers to be an act of intimidation against the party.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, in June 2002 the Prime Minister and the FLP leader co-operated briefly in addressing the issue of expiring land leases that were threatening Fiji's sugar industry. A committee, comprising members of both the SDL and FLP was established to try to negotiate land leases that would satisfy both Indo-Fijian tenants and their predominantly ethnic Fijian landowners. Most of the 30 year leases drawn up under the ALTA were expiring, and both tenants and the FLP were opposed to its replacement by the Native Land Trust ACT (NLTA), which they saw as disproportionately favouring landowners. The Senate had approved two parliamentary bills in April, reducing the land under stat control to around 1% of the total and increasing the amount under the Native Land Trust Board to over 90%.⁵⁶

In August 2002, however, the FLP abandoned a second round of land lease discussions and announced that it would boycott most of the proceedings in the current session of Parliament. Chaudhry accused the Government of attempting to accelerate the passage of six bills through Parliament without regard for the mandatory 30 days notice of a bill being tabled. He also complained that the Government had not given the FLP the full details of the proposed NLTA. The Prime Minister protested that this would compel the Government to accept the decision of the Great Council of Chiefs regarding the leases. Tensions between the ruling SDL and the FLP and furthermore, between ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians had been further exacerbated by anti-Indian comments made by the Minister for Women, Social Welfare and Land Resettlement, Asenaca Caucau, which the Prime Minister had not

⁵⁵ Shubha Singh, n.23, pp.149-163.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

denounced. In September Qarase effected a reorganization of cabinet portfolios in which he assumed direct responsibility for the reform of the sugar industry and restated his commitment to resolve the long-standing issue of land leases.⁵⁷

Justice for both the perpetrators and the victims of Fiji's coup of May 2000 remained a slow process. The trial of George Speight and his accomplices on charges of treason opened in May 2001. (Speight was refused bail that would have enabled him to occupy the seat that he won in the legislative election later in the year). All the accused pleaded guilty to their involvement in the coup of May 2000 and at the conclusion of the trial in February 2002, Speight was sentenced to death. Within hours of the verdict, however, President Iloilo signed a decree commuting the sentence to life imprisonment (Fiji being in the process of abolishing the death penalty). Prison sentences of between 18 months and three years were imposed on 10 of Speight's accomplices, the charges of treason having been replaced by lesser charges of abduction. The trial of two other defendants began in July following the rejection of protests from the defendants that they were protected by an Immunity Decree promulgated by the Commander of the Armed Forces, Frank Bainimarama. Both were found guilty in March 2003, when a further 23 people were arrested on charges relating to the coup.⁵⁸

Fiji's population was 819,000 in mid- 2002 and Indians were now only 43.6% of the total population. Their number has declined due to migration to other countries especially since 1987 and also due to lower birth rates. From 1987 until the election of September 2001, violence against the Indian community and their property increased and they were marginalized in every aspect. This resulted in the migration of skilled

⁵⁷ Brij V. Lal, n.53, pp671-85.

⁵⁸ <http://www.fijilive.com>

Indo-Fijians to the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, reducing the Indian community's share in Fiji population from 51% at independence in 1970 to 43.6% in 2002. Currently the Laisenia Qarase's government is ruling Fiji.

However, this 'brain-drain' has caused much hardship to Fiji. Efforts are being made to diversify the economy by lessening dependence on sugar plantations. However, the number of Indians leaving Fiji has not lessened, what this means for the future of Fiji is difficult to predict. All the same one can state that the Fijian Judicial system has to be appreciated for its integrity and bipartisan stand reflecting that all is not lost in Fiji's multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

CHAPTER - IV

THE RESPONSE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THE CRISIS IN FIJI

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The previous chapter discussed the post-independence period in Fiji and the ethnic relations between ethnic Fijians and the Indo-Fijians vis-à-vis socio-political and economic context. What emerged in the whole discussions was that, Indians were discriminated from native population in all facets of Fiji's national life; yet Indians made progress and created impact in Fiji.

The present chapter will discuss the impact and role of external powers in Fiji's internal crisis, like the US, Australia, New Zealand & India and also the role of International and Regional organization like the UN, ASEAN and the PIF etc. The internationally significant crisis in Fiji viz. 1987 coup led by Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka and May 2000's coup led by failed businessmen George Speight, attracted substantial international attention. However very little study has been done on International responses to the Fiji crises and their lies the relevance of this chapter. The chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section will discuss the responses of the extra-regional powers after the 1987 coup in Fiji and the next section discusses the role of external powers after the May 2000 Fiji's civilian coup.

Fiji was not just any other Third world country, where the army had a highly visible presence in the administration. It was a stable model of the democratic process for the entire South- Pacific region, with respect for the rule of law and human rights, and an independent judiciary. It takes pride in its multiracial harmony and had sponsored the concept in the Pacific way. It was a dominion with

strong, personalized ties with the British Crown. However the coups in Fiji sent shock waves all around the region as well as the entire world.

The Reaction of the International Community After the 1987 Coup

In 1987, Dr. Bavadra and Mahendra Choudhary formed a coalition and won the General Election in Fiji. For the first time in the history of Fiji, the People of Indian Origin (PIO) came to power under Dr. Bavadra's leadership. But Rabuka's Military coup toppled the government on May 14, 1987 and subsequently on September 22, 1987.¹ Rabuka brought drastic changes in Fiji; he turned Fiji in to a Republic, banned all the political parties and promoted the slogan "*Fiji for Fijians*". Soon after riots followed in Fiji, which witnessed a large-scale destruction of the Indian property due to which most of the Indians migrated from Fiji transforming the Indian from a majority to a minority of population (51% to 43.6%).² Almost entire world condemned the coups. Initially Australia and New Zealand imposed restrictions on Fiji when it was ousted from the Commonwealth of Nations.³

Australia and New Zealand were affected by the crisis in Fiji as they were neighbors and have considerable investments in Fiji. Both the countries condemned the coups and at one point it seemed that they were thinking of military intervention. However, according to a senior Australian naval officer, Australia at no stage planned an attack on Fiji as Vietnam was still fresh in the minds of decision makers. Now looking back through various reports, statements and

¹ Winston Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji* (Lautoka: Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, 2003).

² *Fiji, The Fareast Australasia, 2004* (London and New York, Europa Publications, 35th edition, 2004).p.765.

³ Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, *The Pacific Way: A Memoir*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1997). p.194.

scholarly works it seems that the two countries realized that any physical intervention would be misunderstood by the South-Pacific island states. The Melanesian Spearhead Group consisting of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuata, condemned any suggestion that externally backed military intervention should take in Fiji. Australia is extremely careful not to give the impression of being the region's policemen. It is a different question whether Australia had the capability to intervene. Matthew Gubb writes:

Military intervention to restore the political status quo was ruled out at a very early stage. Apart from the inherent military difficulties of confronting the well-equipped and experienced Royal Fijian Military Forces (RFMF) on their home ground, an Australian intervention would have been regarded in Fiji as siding with the Indian population against ethnic Fijians, would have aroused the intense indignation of Pacific island nations.⁴

At the South-Pacific Forum meeting in Apia, Western Samoa, from 29-30 May 1987, the communiqué issued on 30 May reflects the mood of the island states. They were against the undemocratic method adopted by Rabuka but at the same time (as it became clear later on), they were rather hesitant in expressing this. The communiqué stated:

Heads of Government noted and endorsed the expression by the Chairman in his opening statement over recent events involving the overthrow of the elected government in Fiji. Recognizing the complexity of the problems in Fiji they fully shared the hopes expressed by the Chairman, reflecting as they did the same hopes expressed by the Governor General of Fiji, for a peaceful and satisfactory solution to the current problems. They associated themselves with his expression of willingness to provide whatever help they might be able to lend.⁵

⁴ Matthew Gubb, *The Australian Military Response to the Fiji Coup: An Assessment*, Working Paper no.171, (Canberra: ANU, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, November 1988), p.1.

⁵ *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, June 1987, p.295.

Although in 1987 Fiji did not attend the South Pacific Forum meeting, it participated in the September meeting of 1988. And inspite of the political repercussions of the proposed constitution, the South- Pacific Forum pretended all was well by not putting it on its agenda.

At the 21st South- Pacific Forum held in Vila 1989, Ratu Mara hosted a breakfast for South- Pacific Forums leaders and specifically excluded the New Zealand Prime Minister, Geoffrey Palmer, and Australia's Bob Hawke. The Fijian delegate was reported to have said: "Fiji was upset the lecturing it was getting from both men and Mr. Ratu Mara saw no point in a meeting".⁶ New Zealand had expressed its displeasure at the events in Fiji. Dr. Bavadra visited New Zealand in April 1988 and met the New Zealand Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. He expressed his thanks to the New Zealand government for supporting the cause of democracy in Fiji. But beyond protests, New Zealand could not do much. Both Australia and New Zealand realized that if the relations with Fiji were allowed to deteriorate any further, it would set a bad precedent.

New Zealand was perhaps more interested, in the developments taking place in Fiji than Australia because the strategic location of Fiji is of great importance to it. As J.M. Beaglehole, point out, Fiji is the "Iynch-pin of New Zealand's air and sea operations in the region".⁷ Also, it is an important area from the point of view of defence exercises undertaken by New Zealand needs to use forces in the South- Pacific, without "access to Fiji" the mission will be

⁶ *The Statesman*, New Delhi, 28 July, 1990.

⁷ J. H. Beaglehole, "Into Uncharted Seas" *Pacific Defence Reporter*, December, 1987/January 1988, p.16.

almost impossible to carry out.⁸ On 9 February 1988 New Zealand decided to resume non-military aid programme to Fiji.

The President of Fiji, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, warned Australia that his country would turn to others for help if aid was used as a means of dictating changes in Fiji's proposed new constitution.⁹ Shortly after, Australia began its phased release of a \$ 10 million and package. A further \$ 12 million programme was already in place.¹⁰ Rabuka too had stated clearly in an interview that if Australia did not stop commenting on Fijian affairs the Australian banks would not be allowed to operate in Fiji.¹¹ In January 1988, Australia resumed formal relations with Fiji, stating that it was doing so as Fiji was led by a civilian government.¹² Gareth Evens, Australia's Foreign Minister visited Fiji in October 1988 and said that the kind of Constitution Fiji decided to adopt was an internal matter of that country. Bavadra expressed surprise at Australia resuming ties with the illegally installed government of Fiji.¹³ When Gareth Evens came to India in August 1990 he clearly stated his country's policy towards Fiji. In a press conference on 2 August 1990, it was reported that Mr. Evans had stated: "that while Fiji's new Constitutional framework was racially based and racially biased, there was little that his country could do about it. Of course, Canberra would raise the issue in international fora whenever possible. But, basically it was for the communities concerned to take into account the ground realities and work out a solution."¹⁴

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *The Times of Papua New Guinea*, 29th December 1988-4th January 1988.p.12.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October, 1988.

¹² *ibid.*, 18th February 1988.

¹³ *ibid.*, 23 August 1988.

¹⁴ *The Times of India*, (New Delhi), 28 July 1990.

Australian and New Zealand trade unions called for a shipping ban. They refused to handle ships bound for or from Fijian ports. The trade union reaction was stronger than the official response of their governments. New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange was outraged at the developments; he attacked Mara for backing the coup. He spoke to Queen Elizabeth with the request that she write a letter to Ganilau to strengthen his resolve. A New Zealand frigate was in Fijian waters at the time of the coup, leading to all kinds of rumours of Auckland's intentions. It was conveyed that the frigate would be used only if the New Zealand High Commission was threatened or New Zealand citizens had to be evacuated.¹⁵

In contrast to Lange's loud and vocal reaction, Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke's response was much more restrained. Lange was in sympathy with Bavadra on several counts. He supported Bavadra's anti-nuclear policies; Bavadra's non-aligned policy did not disturb him since Lange had ended the ANZUS alliance with the US. Australia, on the other hand, was in the grip of an anti-Communist campaign; the media was full of stories of Soviet Union and Libyan moves into the South Pacific region. He had closed down the Libyan People's Bureau in Canberra and had even forced Vanuatu to do the same. Bob Hawke's conservative politics were not in tune with Lange's policies. More than the Australian government it was the Australian trade unions that took a hard line against a coup that overthrew a Labour dominated government. They imposed a shipping embargo that had an immediate effect on Fiji's economy, which was largely dependent on imports from Australia and New Zealand. Bob Hawke

¹⁵ Ralph R. Premdas and Jeffrey S. Steeves, "Fiji: Problems of Ethnic Discrimination and Inequality in the New Constitutional Order" *The Round Table*, 318, 1999, p.157.

declined to meet Bavadra citing the convention that the Prime Minister did not meet other heads of government during an election campaign.¹⁶

Bavadra's policy of a nuclear free south Pacific was anathema to the US, Australia and France. It meant the exclusion of nuclear powered vessels from the South Pacific waters, as well as an end to French nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll. The US State Department in Washington said that it was "profoundly disturbed" at the coup in Fiji. The French reaction was similarly muted. One of the various theories afloat at that time claimed that there was Americans backing of the military overthrow of an inconvenient government in the South - Pacific.¹⁷

The USA has an important strategic interest in Fiji given its central location between Hawaii and Australia. The Mara's Government had maintained a pro-American Foreign Policy stance and indeed Mara and President Reagan had established a close relationship. Within the South Pacific Forum, Mara had consistently been a moderate force. The US navy called regularly at Suva. The election of the Bavadra's Government portended potential trouble with the Fiji-USA relationship.¹⁸ The Fiji Labour Party (FLP) had within its platform a provision which sought, as with the Lange's Government of New Zealand, to ban nuclear - weapons carrying and nuclear - powered vessels from Fiji's ports.¹⁹ This would strike, if implemented by Bavadra, directly at American interests. The FLP also sought a more direct and active role not only in creating a nuclear-free Pacific but as well in challenging French policies in New Caledonia and French Polynesia.²⁰ The FLP platform also talked about the need to nationalize

¹⁶ Shubha Singh, *Fiji: A Precarious Coalition* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2001), p.125.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ 'US has a duty to protect US South Pacific interests', *Fiji Sun* (Suva), 2nd May 1987, p.3.

¹⁹ Timoci Bavadra, "Self-determination for a Nuclear-free Pacific" *South Pacific Forum*, vol.2, no.2, December 1985, p.164.

²⁰ *ibid.*, pp.166-167.

some foreign mining operations, particularly the Gold-mining sector. Nuclear-free ports, a harsher view of the French and nationalization sympathies could have awakened the US to react against the Bavadra Government. Vanuatu had signed up a fishing deal with the Soviet Union and Superpower rivalry was already in evidence in the region. American denials of involvement did not help, especially as Bavadra had also made similar allegations.²¹

Within the South- Pacific, it was only Walter Lini of Vanuatu who condemned the coup, for most of the members of the South Pacific Forum sympathized with the motives of the coup. They saw it as a battle by an endangered indigenous people against a larger immigrant community. At the South- Pacific Forum meeting in late May, Bob Hawke proposed that an Eminent Persons Group visit Fiji and study the situation. But the majority of the Island nations held it to be an unwarranted interference in the affairs of a member country. Papua New Guinea with its own ethnic problems was most vocal in support of Fiji at the Forum meeting. The Coalition Ministers who arrived to lobby among the Forum members were turned away on the ground that they did not have an official position. Rabuka declared Fiji a republic on October 6, 1987 after his second coup. Tonga was the first nation to recognize its new status. Australia and New Zealand suspended all their developmental aid programmes in Fiji.²²

France had already started giving significant aid after the coup. A passage exercise was conducted in October 1987 by the navies of France and Fiji. France justified its action by saying that it followed a policy of recognizing states and not governments. Therefore, it held, it did not mean that France was

²¹ Ralph R. Premdas and Jeffrey S. Steeves, n.15, p.157.

²² Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, n.3, p.170.

condoning the coup. All the same, France did not come out with a statement against the coups. In April 1988, Prime Minister Ratu Kamisese Mara visited Paris where he was given a rousing welcome.²³

In spite of French efforts at wooing Fiji and the latter's need for international support after the coup, Fiji did not lag behind the other South Pacific countries in the United Nations in criticizing France in October 1988 for its nuclear tests in the region. Two trips in early 1990 were made to China by Ratu Mara and by Major-General Rabuka. Commenting on the trip, an Australian wrote:

*What is new is the increasing warmth of the bilateral relationship, which has been nurtured by Fiji's relative isolation since 1987 and the frequently frosty-relations it has had with traditional friends concerned about the fate of democracy and racial equality in the country.*²⁴

Relations with the two South-east Asian countries namely Indonesia and Malaysia became quite close. Also as a result of Australia and New Zealand suspending defence relations with Fiji, the latter turned to Malaysia for training of its military officers.

India's image in Fiji has been far from good. In the past India had maintained that its interest in overseas Indians was purely sentimental and not political. Nevertheless as stated earlier, Fiji has always accused India of interference in its internal affairs. India had shown little interest in improving its relations with Fiji. Ratu Mara had made several visits to India, while Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Fiji in September 1981. She was given a rousing welcome by all Fijians, reserved earlier only for British

²³ *ibid.*, p.174-76.

²⁴ *Australian*, 1 May 1990.

royalty and the Chiefs.²⁵ This gesture on the part of Fiji showed that it did want to improve relations with India inspite of there being absence of aid and commerce. At best, India offered some technical help but trade between the two countries was negligible. Also, championing the cause of Indio-Fijians has not helped the Indian government. Even if a government in exile of the Coalition Party is allowed to be formed in India, it will be an irritant in the relationship with not only the island states of the South Pacific but perhaps with all those counties as well where overseas Indians reside.

In the medley of political confusion there has been a tendency to draw a totally biased picture of Ratu Mara in India. Whether he was involved in the coup or not is now longer relevant. One has to remember that during his tenure as Prime Minister, Fiji was a peaceful multi-racial country. In fact it was Ratu Mara who persuaded the Council of Fijian Chiefs to accept the use of "Fijians" to include all the people of the country. In his party's election manifesto there was no undue emphasis on "conservatism, Melanesian land rights, Cheiftanily privileges, the monarchy and close relations with the West..."²⁶ In fact there were positive policy statements. For instance on the significant political issue of land it stated:

As it has always done. The Alliance firmly upholds the rights of ownership of Fijian, Crown and Free hold land, as enshrined in the Constitution. At the same time it adheres to the policy stated by Ratu Sir Lal Sukuna in 1933 on behalf of the Council of Chief: 'We regard the Indian desire for more permanent tendency as a natural and legitimate consequence of an agricultural community setting in any country'.²⁷

²⁵ Ramesh Thakur, "India and Overseas Indians" *Asian Survey*, March 1985, p.369.

²⁶ *The Alliance Party Election Manifesto*, 1987

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.10.

According to the manifesto, two million acres were made available to 24,000 tenants out of whom 75 per cent were non Fijians. Commenting on the Alliance Party's stand on foreign policy, it stated: "Fiji is committed to the creation of nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific and the independence of New Caledonia, with security for all groups domiciled there."²⁸ These cannot be brushed aside as mere rhetoric, for Ratu Mara has played a leading role in the creation of the South Forum. Besides, he is one of the most respected Melanesian leaders in the South Pacific "and has played the role of an elder statesman in regional affairs."²⁹ Besides, Ratu Mara's role in the establishment of South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) has not received the publicity that Lange got. As far back as early 1976, Ratu Mara in a South Pacific Forum meeting in Rotorua put forward the idea of a nuclear-free South Pacific. Robert Muldoon the then Prime Minister of New Zealand admitted in an interview that "definition of a nuclear-free South Pacific was put forward by Fiji and accepted unanimously by all the Forum states...."³⁰ All this, however, should not be misconstrued to mean that by putting Ratu Mara's role in the right perspective, one is speaking in defence of the coup. All one pleads for is objectivity. In India, anyway, there is general apathy towards the crisis in Fiji. Except for a few knowledgeable people, there seems a lack of understanding of not only Fiji but of the South Pacific in general.

India was responsible for the shipment of Soviet -made arms which were seized in Sydney as reported in an Australian paper. According to this report, the shipment had been loaded by Indian soldiers in Sri Lanka. India denied these

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.7.

²⁹ Stuart Inder, "Leaders and their Legacies" *Pacific Islands Monthly*, December 1987, p.27.

³⁰ Interview with Prime Minister Robert Muldoon on 14th December 1976 in *Asia Week*, 7th January 1977, p.19.

allegations and an Indian Foreign Office spokesman stated: "It appears to us that strenuous efforts are being made by some to spread disinformation. The acting High Commissioner of Australia in India has been informed of our concern in the matter."³¹

Immediately after the coups, Indian media was full of news of Fiji and Indo-Fijians but soon their attention fizzled out. As for the Indian government, it suddenly woke up when it realized that the interim government was going ahead with plans for limiting the economic and political role of Indians under the new Constitution. India's criticism of the draft Constitution irked the regime in Fiji. India lashed out at the new Constitution calling it "undemocratic discriminatory and detrimental to the interests of stability and racial harmony."³² As a consequence of the above statement, India was charged by Fiji of interfering in its internal affairs. In the United Nations, India had brought to the notice of the General Assembly, Fiji's attempts at institutionalizing racial discrimination. Along with India, the other country which was critical of Fiji, was Mauritius which also has people of Indian origin in large numbers.³³ *The Asia 1990 Yearbook*, in its analysis of Fiji's foreign policy stated: "India emerged as the arch enemy because of its statements deploring proposals to relegate Fiji's big ethnic Indian population to a position of institutionalized political inferiority."³⁴ In May 1989, the Fijian army had informed the President Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau and Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, that there was actual danger

³¹ *The Hindu*, 1st June 1988, New Delhi.

³² *Indian Express*, New Delhi, 24th September, 1988.

³³ *ibid.*, 14th October 1988.

³⁴ *Far Eastern Economic Review, Asia 1990 Yearbook* (Hong Kong), p.119.

of the Indian Navy invading Fiji. In fact Mara is reported as saying : "I still believe there is a treat from India."³⁵

On 10 May 1990, the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Hari Kishore Singh, made a statement saying that the Indian Government would take action internationally against "a process of racial discrimination through Constitutional changes in Fiji."³⁶ Besides, Singh stated that India would also continue to block Fiji re-entry in to the Commonwealth. Fiji, reacted by using very strong words, and Fiji's Information Minister stated, "the decision of the Government of a country which has murdered many Tamilians in Sri Lanka and which in now poised for war with neighbouring Pakistan will obviously harden feelings between the two major communities in Fiji."³⁷ This kind of reaction towards India and to the Indian Minister's, statement was felt not only in Fiji but in other Island states as well. Insensitivity, lack of knowledge, indifference is all responsible for India's lack of contacts and goodwill in that region. The Indian High Commissioner to Fiji has asked to leave in November 1989, and India's contact with the Island states, which had been conducted from Fiji, was lost until India opened an embassy in Papua New Guinea.³⁸

Bavadra's mission to London to find support was not a success. Britain was going in for a general election so there was little time or interest in events in Fiji, nor had Bavadra's non-aligned policies made him any friends in London. Bavadra could not get an audience with Queen Elizabeth on technical reasons of protocol; he could only meet the Queen's private secretary. The only measure of outright support he received was from Shridath Rampha, Secretary General of the

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *The Canberra Times*, 12 May 1990.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Man Mohini Kaul, "Imaging the South Pacific: An Indian Construct of the Region" in N. N. Vohra (ed.), *India and Australia, History, Culture and Society*, (New Delhi: Shipra, 2003), p.142.

Commonwealth. Ramphal had unequivocally condemned the military coup in Fiji and called for an immediate return to democratic, Constitutional government. Ramphal had said that there was a time when an internal matter becomes an external one, and then the world has to take notice. It was after Rabuka's second coup that Queen Elizabeth sent a message condemning the coup and stressing that she recognized the Governor-General as the sole source of legitimate authority in Fiji. By that time it was too late; Rabuka was already moving to declare Fiji a republic.³⁹

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting was held in Vancouver shortly after Fiji became a republic. There was a general sense of dismay at the developments in Fiji at the summit meeting, but except for a few leaders, most of them did not favour any drastic action on the subject. Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi took a strong stand, he told his fellow Heads of Government: "Democracy has to be restored in Fiji. Any counsel of inaction is a mockery of the entire Commonwealth stands for." Fiji lost its membership of the Commonwealth on the grounds that it was now a republic and therefore had to seek re-admission into the Commonwealth. As a single vote could black ball any fresh Fijian application, it was clear that Fiji was no longer a member of the Commonwealth. It was a sad blow to the Fijian's who valued their special ties with the British royalty the place in the Commonwealth.⁴⁰

The summit declaration, however, did not go to far as to condemn the coup. It merely stated: Commonwealth leaders acknowledge that, on the basis of established Commonwealth conventions, Fiji's membership of the Commonwealth lapsed with the emergence of the Republic on 15 October. They viewed with

³⁹ Shubha Singh, n.16.

⁴⁰ Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, n.3. p.194

sadness the developments in Fiji and hoped for a resolution of the problem by the people of Fiji on a basis consistent with the principles that have guided the Commonwealth. They agreed that the Commonwealth would, if requested, be ready to offer its good offices towards such a resolution and, on such basis, if the circumstances warrant, to consider the question of Fiji's membership of the Commonwealth if asked to do so.⁴¹

With Australian and New Zealand trade unions taking a tough stand and their governments to a lesser degree, France was quick to make use of the opportunity to gain some brownie points in Suva. France had been drawing some flak for its policies in New Caledonia and in the other French territories in the Pacific. The French Secretary of State for Pacific Affairs, Gaston Flosse visited Suva immediately after the coup and offered military co-operation with Fiji. The French navy conducted joined exercises with Fiji forces in October just after Rabuka's second coup. In the course of the frequent press statements and interviews that Rabuka gave he made it clear that he was looking at the ASEAN nations: Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea for support. Malaysia had its ethnic problems of an indigenous population irked at the increasing strength of the migrant Chinese and Indians. Rabuka made much of Malaysia's '*Bhumiputra*' policies.⁴²

The overthrow of the government in Fiji had a severe impact on the island economy. The sugar crop could only be partially salvaged, and there was a drastic decline in tourist arrivals. The trade bans and suspension of aid by Australia and New Zealand had their impact. By November, the Australian trade unions decided not to extend their embargo to flights to Fiji and the ailing

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Shubha Singh, n.16, pp.132-133.

tourism industry offered heavy discounts to attract tourists. Inflation was high and the prices of some basic commodities went up by almost 50 per cent. Foreign exchange reserves were down. Property values had fallen by 50 per cent, wages had reduced, and many small businesses had folded up. The economic consequences of the coup had begun to take their toll.⁴³

The Role of External Powers after the May 2000 Coup

Due to the international pressure on Fiji after the 1987 Coup forced Rabuka to form a Constitutional Review Committee to bring about a more egalitarian constitution in Fiji.⁴⁴ The resultant new constitution was perceived to have made a striking and fine balance between the two communities. This led to a re-entry of Fiji in the Commonwealth of Nations on 1st October 1997 and India too re-opened its High Commission in Suva on 2nd March 1999.⁴⁵ According to the new constitution in May 1999. FLP led people's coalition under the Mahendra Choudhary formed the government. This government symbolized peaceful co-existence between the communities of Fiji. But things did not go well for the Indo-Fijian's as on 10th May 2000. George Speight instigated a civilian coup in Fiji. Once again the coup sent shock waves all around the region as well as the entire world and once again all the External Powers Condemned the Fijian Coup in May 2000.⁴⁶

The continuing crisis finally led to Fiji's suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer defended the partial section imposed by his government. "To impose significant

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Teresia Teaiwa, "An Analysis Of The Current Political Crisis In Fiji", *Peace Initiatives*, vol. 6, no. 1-3, January-June 2000, pp 2-3.

⁴⁵ Brij V. Lal, "Constitution Conardrun", *Round Table*, vol. 372 October 2003, pp 672-673

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

economic sanctions on Fiji would successfully destroy Fijian economy. The people who would suffer (as a result of an economic embargo) would not be the organisers of the Civil Coup but the ordinary people of Fiji, who have nothing to do whatsoever with the political processes”, said Downer. Speight responded by telling Australia to mind its own business. After the 1987, Coup Australia and New Zealand Trade Unions had imposed a ban on Fiji, but other countries were quick to move in. Australia and New Zealand therefore, willing to only impose what it called “Smart Sanctions”.⁴⁷ A Commonwealth delegation headed by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Special representative, Musa Hitam, that included Alexander Downer and New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff arrived in Suva. In their meeting with Bainimarama, they conveyed the Commonwealth’s condemnation of the hostage taking.⁴⁸

The United States government has suspended more than \$1 million in security and other assistance to Fiji, cancelled a number of ship visits to Suva and banned more than 130 people from entering the US because it did not support the hostage-taking in the Parliament. The US Embassy in Suva said the US government had taken these action in strongly condemning the overthrow of the elected People’s Coalition government on May 19. The embassy was reacting to a media report which quoted (deposed Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhary) that the US Embassy had put indirect pressure on his government and was “pushy” about the American firm Timber resources management (TRM) being awarded the mahogany contract⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Shubha Singh, n.16, p 159

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ http://www.TheCIAWorldFactBook_Fiji_CountryProfles.htm

Choudhry reportedly said the coup was triggered by his government's decision to award the contract to British government-owned Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) over TRM and the game plan was to remove his government. But the embassy said insinuations attributed to Chaudhry regarding the alleged backing of the US government in the attempted May 19 coup was "completely unfounded, untrue and unfortunate"⁵⁰.

The US Embassy said that Chaudhry should know better than anyone else, the straight forward role it played in advocating on behalf of a US company's bid on Fiji's public tender for mahogany resources. The embassy said an important role of all nations' embassies and High Commissions was to promote their countries commercial interests and that it would continue to promote American business and commercial interests in the future. "In that regard we helped arrange a meeting between Mr. Chaudhry and State Department officials during a visit by Mr. Chaudhry to New York," . The Embassy said it also sponsored in orientation visit to New York of two cabinet ministers and two Chaudhry key advisers who met with senior financial experts in Wall Street to discuss how the US bond market would be involved in financial aspects of the US company's bid. It said any notion that the US supported the demise of constitutional democracy in Fiji was ludicrous, pernicious and completely false.⁵¹

The New Zealand condemned the unlawful detention and the fraudulent treatment of Prime Minister Chaudhry and other members of his Government. Halen Clerk sent a message to President Ratu Mara last evening "conveying the support of all New Zealanders: This is a very difficult time for him both as a father and as the legitimate President of Fiji. I know that he is working

⁵⁰ http://www.news/bbc/world/asia-pacific/Country_Profile/Fiji.htm

⁵¹ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/fiji.htm>

extremely hard to find a peaceful solution to the present crisis, and I have assured him of our complete support in his efforts". The current constitution, framed over 10 painful years after the coup of 1987, was a considerable achievement. It affects a complicated balance of rights and interest, including special recognition of the place of the indigenous Fijian people. It is within this constitution that the current legitimate government was formed. The New Zealand Government strongly believes that it is within this constitution that the current political crisis must be resolved.⁵²

No one in the international community is prepared to endorse a takeover coming from the barrel of a gun. In addition to New Zealand, Australia, the UK, US, some Forum members, the Commonwealth Secretary-General and UN Secretary-General have all have condemned Mr. Speight's action in trying to undermine the democratic process. New Zealand supports the efforts to Fijian Police Commissioner Savua who is trying to resolve the hostage situation through negotiation. This aim is shared by the President, the Army Commander by General Rubuka who has been conducting "shuttle diplomacy" between Speight and the President New Zealand has offered police experts to assist with the negotiations to resolve the crisis. The Police Commissioner has indicated to us that he needs no external assistance at this stage, but the offer remains open. As New Zealand have already said, this is a hostage situation, which the Fiji police and military are committed to resolving.⁵³

Australia's sanctions of Fiji will remain while it waits for a clear democratic roadmap from Fiji's President, Josefa Iloilo. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer says he is encouraged by the meeting of Fiji's Great Council

⁵² <http://www.abc.net.au>

⁵³ *ibid.*

of Chief. Mr. Downer's statement says the chiefs have evidently resolved to support the Court ruling that the 1997 Constitution is still the supreme law of Fiji, and the council is calling for new elections as soon as possible. The foreign Minister says President Iloilo Should take full advantage of the opportunity offered by the resolutions from the Great Council of Chiefs. Mr. Downer says "the President needs to make important decisions on the steps needed to restore democratic and constitutional rule and if the President lays down a roadmap for a return to the rule of law, Australia will review sanctions and offer all the help needed to restore democracy."⁵⁴

Australia has offered support and money to Fiji to run the country's August 2001 election. The Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, made the offer to the interim Fijian Foreign Minister Kalipate Tavola during a conversation today. Mr. Downer says he is satisfied Fiji is on track in its preparations for the election and emphasized to Mr. Tavola that Australia is anxious for the poll to proceed smoothly." I also said to the interim foreign Minister that we'd be prepared to provide support for those elections in two respects, "Mr. Downer said, "One, through logistical assistance so that their elections are possible and secondly we'll give some financial support as well for their Electoral Commission to do its job."⁵⁵

However, Fiji's, relations with the International Community suffered a major reversal following the coup of May 2000, which was condemned by the UN, the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, India, the US and several other nations in the region. In June 2000 Fiji was partially suspended from the Commonwealth, and a delegation of ministers of Foreign

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ <http://www.foreignrelations.org>

Affairs from the Organization visited the Islands to demand the reinstatement of the 1997 constitution. Following the democratic elections of August - September 2001, both Australia and New Zealand removed the bilateral sanctions they had imposed. The sanction imposed by the European Union (EU) remained in place until early 2002. In December 2001 the Commonwealth Ministerial Action group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) recommended that Fiji be re-admitted to meetings of the Commonwealth. The decision by the French Government in June 1995 to resume nuclear testing in the region was widely condemned by the Pacific Islands Nations and in protest at the announcement Fiji, cancelled its annual military exercise with France.⁵⁶

Fiji has experienced two armed ousters of democratically elected government in 13 years (1987 – 2000) and both were strongly criticized by the International Communities . External powers have limitations and they cannot openly intervene in solving the Fiji crisis. They can, however, use pulls and pressures to help Fiji solve its crisis in its own way.

⁵⁶ www.europa.eu.int.

CHAPTER - V
CONCLUSION

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Fiji is a three-legged table with Fijian land, Indian labour and European capital, if any of them weakens it can lead to destabilization of the country. The arrival of the Indians in the country had prevented destruction of the Fijian way of life. In 1870s the Fijian population had been extremely distressed, as entire villages had been wiped out in the raging epidemics. The arrival of the *girmitiyas* provided the opportunity to the Fijians to stabilize and retain their indigenous way of life. The labour and later economic activity of the Indians was a major factor in protecting the Fijians and their way of life.

After years of being called a multi-racial Pacific paradise, Fiji has experienced two armed ousters of democratically elected governments in 13 years. Both times the coups took place because a section of the indigenous Fijian population felt displaced and dispossessed by the change in government. The new governments had given greater prominence in governance to the Indian community, with the result that a small fringe among the Fijian community overturned the election results through violent means.

The Indians had been brought to Fiji shortly after the Fijian chiefs ceded the islands to the British Crown. They came as indentured labourers to work on the sugar cane plantations, endured enormous hardship but finally made a home for themselves on the islands. The Indians and Fijians lived in harmony for over a hundreds years in Fiji. In 1979 the country celebrated a centenary of the arrival of the Indians to Fiji in a grand officially sponsored function. Just 10 years later,

when Ratu Mara's Alliance Party lost power to an Indian dominated government, Lt. Col. Rabuka staged a military coup with the slogan of returning '*Fiji to the Fijians*'. The same thing happened with Mahendra Chaudhry's government on 19th May 2000, as failed businessman George Speight instigated a civilian coup and Chaudhry's government was overthrown. The coups fostered the extremist Fijian belief that Fijian interests should be paramount in the country. It pandered the racist view that the Indians as a migrant community should play a subservient role in the country's affairs.

National integration is the responsibility of the leaders of both communities. The British as the colonial power kept the two communities apart. The Indians were presented during the colonial days as a threat to the hegemony of the indigenous people. It was a theme that was constantly played upon to divide the two communities. But Fijians need to realize that their system of life would have collapsed a long time ago had it not been for the presence of Indians in the country. The Fijians have to accept the reality of the Indian presence; Fiji needs the Indian population and its contribution to the country's economy. Fijian leaders have the responsibility of orienting Fijian education to provide a wider perspective to the youth, one that goes beyond the horizons of their own island, tribe or province. Many extremist views were given respectability and legitimacy during the Rabuka regime when their blatant racism was cloaked as indigenous rights. But the rights of indigenous people cannot supersede basic human rights of the people and racism cannot be countenanced in any civilised nation. The dilemmas faced by the Fijian community in transition should not be submerged in the rhetoric of indigenous rights and the community leadership has to find ways to address them.

Democracy has to be accompanied with a respect for the rule of law. In Fiji, a section of hardliner Fijians has used the power of the armed forces to subvert democracy. They have used the lack of knowledge of the majority of Fijians to find support for their ideas. The Fijians have a privileged position under the constitution, but they have been led to see themselves as victims. They see themselves as economically deprived and also deprived of political power, which they have come to believe, is their due as the original, ingenious people. They have little knowledge of their rights as entrenched in the constitution, something that even Rabuka acknowledged when he was looking for support for his new constitution. Mere 12 months of Mahendra Chaudhry's governance did not lead to economic deprivation of Fijians. If the Fijians have a grouse, the Fijian leadership, both traditional leadership and the political leadership that governed the country since independence, must share some of the blame. The leadership also bears the responsibility of educating the people on their rights and privileges as well as their duties to the state.

There is little cultural assimilation between the two main racial groups. Urban Indians are generally self-absorbed and prosperous. They tend to stress the Indian contribution to Fiji while ignoring the benefits that life in Fiji has given them. The Fijians, on the other hand, are culturally attuned not to speak of their grievances. The two communities have retained the general disdain for the other that was inculcated during the colonial days. As an independent nation the two communities need greater awareness of each other, and their hopes and aspirations. The Indians have not made the effort towards removing the community's apathy towards the Fijians. The Fijians and the Indians have to learn to live together in Fiji, which is the only way for both communities to prosper. It is the responsibility

of the leadership to remove the distance and misconceptions between the two largest ethnic groups. The greater responsibility lies with the better-educated and more politically aware Indians and their leaders to actively work towards better integration between the two main ethnic groups.

The Indian response to Fiji has been a mixed bag of missed opportunities, disinterest and arrogance. In the 1970s, India as the leader of the Third World had an immense impact on Fiji and other nations making the transition from colonial rule to independence. However, the warm personal relations between Indian and Fijian leaders built up during the early years of independence were allowed to fade away in the 1980s. Official visits between Indian and the Pacific reduced over the years and policy makers in the New Delhi turned their attention to other parts of the world. New Delhi has never evolved a policy for the Pacific region and after the Indian mission in Fiji was shut down; its ties with the rest of the island nations of the South Pacific went into a limbo.

During the days of the freedom struggle, there had been a real interest in matters relating to overseas Indians. Pt. Banarsi Das Chaturvedi used to publish a magazine called overseas Indians. The Indian freedom movement had greatly influenced the Indian populations in the other British colonies, most of who kept in touch with the mother country. But in the post-independence era, the contacts with the overseas Indians began to slacken because of the restriction on traveling or migrating to the colonies. Slowly the Indian government became indifferent to the needs of the overseas Indians, since it was the force of Indian public opinion that had shaped the government's policies towards them. The Indian government was keen to have the overseas Indians establish their new identities in their adopted countries. India's foreign policy stressed its diplomatic relations with the

governments of these countries, rather than the Indians themselves. As India became increasingly disinterested in the Indians abroad, the overseas Indians also grew indifferent to the mother country. This has changed in the past few years, with economic liberalisation in India, and as overseas Indians has become more assertive and politically conscious in their adopted homelands.

With an estimated strength of about 20 million, the Indian Diaspora can be an effective means to keep the Fiji issue alive. Once an issue falls off from the television screens, it fades away from public memory, and then gets relegated to the bottom of the pile of international problems, requiring attention. It is public pressure that keeps governments interested and involved in such international issues. There is a greater need to keep the issue alive at all international gatherings, including the United Nations, Commonwealth and ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum.

There was deep outrage in India over the criminal takeover in Fiji with angry demands for action by the Indian government. India should impose trade sanctions or withdraw its envoy from Suva were two of the strongest demands. Implementing either of these demands would have assuaged some of the angry feelings in India, but they would not have helped the situation in Fiji. Recalling the Indian envoy would have cut off ties with Fiji. It had happened in the 1990s when the Fijian government shut down the Indian embassy. India was left without a channel of communication with Fiji. New Delhi was cut off from Fiji with no way of even conveying its opinion to the administration in Suva, or keeping in touch with the Indian community. There was no means to influence decisions even when important events were taking place in Suva.

Imposing economic sanctions on Fiji would have displayed Indian displeasure at the ouster of a democratically elected government in Fiji. However, India's trade with Fiji is minimal, and a trade ban would have been a largely symbolic gesture. It would have affected only the Indians in Fiji, making Indian goods more expensive. Such as Indian films music and videos, Indian publications and a variety of film magazines, silk saris and spices etc. all of those goods were routes through Singapore or Hong Kong.

Economic sanctions by individual countries have little impact unless a major trade partner is involved in the ban. More resilient economies can ride through trade bans without being affected by them, and unless they are sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council other countries are very willing to step in to increase their trade, India was able to withstand the economic sanctions imposed by western countries including the US, after its nuclear tests in 1998. Iraq is in the process of coming out of ten years of UN mandated sanctions, imposed after the Gulf War. After the coup in 1987, Australia and New Zealand had imposed trade restrictions on Fiji but they had discovered that other countries were quick to take advantage and move into trade with Fiji. Malaysia, Japan and even China increased their trade with Fiji. France, who was feeling the pinch of its nuclear testing in the pacific region, also saw an opportunity to make new friends. This time round, Australia and New Zealand have chosen to impose what they have called "smart sanctions".

International isolation under the United Nations has a greater impact as well as a constant pressure from friends and allies. The countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the ASEAN countries have a greater influence in the region. The European Union, which has a preferential system of purchase of sugar

under the Lome Accord for the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, has a greater leverage in the region. The Fijians take pride in international recognition of Fiji. Despite the frequent angry comments of “keep off” directed at Australia, the Fijians are affected by international criticism. They love winning rugby matches and are proud of their peacekeeping work. Suspension from the commonwealth bruises the Fijian pride. Cutting sporting contacts and aid programmes have greater effect on the people.

It is important that any coherent Indian policy be formulated at two levels, one at the general, where limits should be set within which attitudes towards our immigrant population are formed and at the second where the general policy is seen in the specific context of bilateral relations. In other words, there should be a broad framework within which India should react to traumas, turmoil or crises, involving overseas Indians in Southeast Asia, Africa or the South Pacific. But at the specific level, the broad outline should not perhaps become function, but should at least be complementary to India’s foreign policy relations with individual countries. To speak of an Indian policy towards Fiji would be a misnomer; there was no policy. As for the other island states of the South Pacific, relationship has been non-existent except for Nauru and PNG. A policy, as already stated, suggests a long thought out, long term plan of action and not a mere reaction to current events.

Even the recent High Level Committee Report on the Indian Diaspora has demonstrated its lack of insight and knowledge of the Fijian problem, and the following erroneous statement is just one example of this: ‘A revised constitution was adopted in 1990. It sought to introduce a more balanced distribution of

legislative seats than before'.¹ In fact, and quite to the contrary, the 1990 constitution was racially biased and was most vociferously opposed by Indo-Fijians. The MEA Annual Report for 2001-02 is somewhat outdated in its stand.

India continued its cordial and friendly relations with South Pacific island countries with the exception of Fiji where the internal developments continued to have an impact on our relationship even after the post-election period where Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry was bypassed both for a partnership in the government and for the status of leader of the opposition.²

It was Fiji to which the other South Pacific nations deferred regarding the matter whether India should be invited as a dialogue partner to the Pacific Islands Forum. Fiji decided it was time to let India in, in the Pacific protocol. Even if Fiji were the only country to do it, all would support unanimously. This is a new beginning and India will have to stop imagining '*little India in Fiji*'. In 2002, as part of India's "Look East" policy and in furtherance of India's dialogue partnership of the ASEAN, it became a partner of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), a regional body of the Pacific. The dialogue partnership of the PIF would provide India a structured mechanism of interaction with the countries of this region including Fiji.

India is coming to see itself as a global player at a par with China and Japan. The Pacific Islands are also looking at India beyond its Diasporic connection. After India conducted nuclear tests it has grown in self-esteem and is confident to look beyond its region and play a meaningful role expected of a

¹ *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora* (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, December 2001), p. 299.

² *Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Annual Report 2001-2002*, pp. 13-14.

country of its size and democracy. Though India does not have urgent security interests in the South Pacific, it is likely to play a more positive role in the future in this distant region.

India-Fiji bilateral trade though small has been growing significantly. From US \$8.4 million in 1998, the trade has been grown to US \$17.8 million in 2002. Fiji-India business council was established in 1999 and formally launched in the beginning of the 2000. Besides Government of India offers slots under its ITEC and Colombo Plan to Fiji for training of personnel in India (25 slots under ITEC and 5 under Colombo plan every year). Indian Council for Cultural Relations also offers 25 slots to Fijian students to tertiary education in India.³

India has a legitimate interest in the Fijian issue. It can help play a role in getting the leaders of the two communities together in an atmosphere where many sensitive issues can be discussed without rancour to find an acceptable resolution. It needs to focus international attention on the situation in Fiji till the country returns in the healthy and peacefully existed multiracial society. India has to articulate its position forcefully in multi-lateral meetings and bilateral interactions. It has to work in concert with the countries that have an influence in the region, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Malaysia. The Indian government has to maintain close co-ordination with regional powers and organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum, the Commonwealth and the European Union that have leverage in the region. It will need to edge them into keeping up the pressure to him Fijian regime to bring the country in a multicultural society.

Indians have contributed significantly to the development of their country of domicile. It has been proved in almost all the countries wherever there is a

³ *Government of Indian, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Annual Report 2002-2003.*

marked Indian presence. Though Indians went as labourers to all the former colonies they have made remarkable progress in the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres. The irony is the way the other major groups (the so-called natives) perceive Indians. The suspicion and the racial attitude of the natives in many of these countries still continue to haunt these hard working People of Indian Origin (PIO). The socio-economic and political system in Fiji is highly protected and respected by Indians. They are hard working and democratic in nature. The contribution of Indians to the political, socio-economic and cultural field is much more than the so-called early settlers (who claim to be the indigenous). Indians helped in reviving a vibrant democracy, creating a multicultural society and a sound economy. It is time to learn lessons from the industrialized and developed nations. All major societies in the world are becoming multicultural. Multicultural societies can grow faster than the other societies if there is healthy competition among different ethnic groups to achieve social and economic progress. Conflict and competition is ubiquitous in society. Healthy competition is necessary for the socio-economic progress. However, often there is violent conflict in these societies and the People of Indian Origin (PIO) often become the victims. It seems that Indians are at the crossroads, doubtful about their survival in some of these countries. Some Indians prefer to migrate to safer countries to avoid a repeat of events that shattered Indians in Uganda and Fiji. Communal conflict as a major barrier for development and justice into the world today. In the multi-ethnic states of the Third World, planned political, economic and social change cannot succeed unless conceived through the prism of ethnicity. Development and change cannot follow a simple unilinear path driven by neutral factors such as capital and technology without being mediated through social process, in particular the

recognition of ethnic interests. 'Ethnic pluralism cannot be ignored. It is an integral part of the environment; it is at once both the subject and object of change'. These countries, which got independence from their colonial rulers in the recent past, have to undergo a process of transition. At present these countries in a state of flux, grappling with problems such as underdeveloped economy, mass illiteracy and racism. It is obvious that these societies will have to overcome the problem of racism and other forms of conflict. They can overcome such problems if the countries incorporate multi-culturalism in various key social and political institutions.

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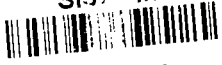
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