



ARY PRATINIDHI SABHA OF FIJI

A Thought for University Education (Reflections)

The Founder (*1918) of the University of Fiji had begun exploring the possibilities of establishing a University College in Fiji, way back in 1956, during its Golden Jubilee Celebrations. This factor is well articulated in the opening statement of the initial University Charter Deed that reads – **“Whereas a duly constituted Special General Meeting of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, hereinafter called the Sabha, held on 4 December 2004 at DAV College Suva on the recommendation of the Education Committee of the Sabha, unanimously resolved that the Sabha sponsor the establishment of a university in Fiji, a resolution consistent with the resolution of the APS at the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Sabha in 1956.”**

Nineteen Fifty-six was still a colonial era. A bold and an unparalleled thought indeed from a community that was still struggling to get out of indentured servitude and take charge of their own redefined destiny as Fijian citizen.

By 1956, the Founder of The University of Fiji- The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji had established six primary schools and three secondary colleges in Colonial Fiji around main land Viti Levu. All these schools had a multiracial platform. According to its written records, the announcement to establish a University College, in the presence of the then Governor of Fiji Sir Ronald Garvey was received with much acclaim by those dignitaries gathered at that celebration held in the precincts of Dayanand Anglo Vedic College (DAV), Dayanand Nagar, Nabua.

The thought was magnanimous. The constraints were many. The most significant was lack of sound financial base. The post indenture (*1920) Indian Community in Fiji was basically in the process of social enhancement and community identity that was still assigned to the agriculturist classification. As such the idea of a university in Fiji by the Sabha remained simmering for forty-eight years.

A new generation of politicians from the Arya Samaj sector in Fiji began contemplating the idea of a local university in Fiji, based on the fact that entry into the regional University was governed by a quota system which disenfranchised Fijians of Indian ethnicity, to a great extent. To rekindle the thought, the idea of a university sponsored by the Sabha was put the principals of the Sabha in 2003. The idea gave impetus to their own decision taken in 1956.

2004 was the year to mark 100 years of Arya Samaj in Fiji (*1904). As part of due process, the university idea to mark its century was put to a special general meeting of the Sabha, held at the ADV College, on 4 December 2004. The Special General Meeting approved the idea of Sabha sponsored university in Fiji with a thunderous applause and whole of Arya Samaj in Fiji, its schools and colleges and other well-wishers rallied behind the university project. On 19th of December 2004, during the centenary celebrations of Arya Samaj in Fiji, the then President of the Sabha, in the welcoming address to the jam-packed stadium and in the presence of the then Prime Minister made a public announcement of the Sabha Establishing a university in the name – The University of Fiji in the Western Division. The Sabha took a deliberate decision to establish The University of Fiji in the Western Division to acknowledge the fact that its primary education journey had begun in 1918 from the precincts of the Saweni settlement.

The intentions to establish the University met legal hurdles as the Ministry of Education declared that it did not have the legal instruments to approve the proposed University of Fiji. To overcome the legal hurdle, the University of Fiji was registered under the Companies Act as a not for profit institution. Today the University is governed by the provisions of The University of Fiji Act 2011, the provisions of which are not binding on the State (s49).

The Founder, with this public announcement then constituted a multi stakeholder Council to manage the affairs of The University of Fiji and on 5th of March 2005 at the inaugural ceremony, dedicated the University to the people of Fiji. The University of Fiji became the first local, post-independence provider of university education in the Fijian Archipelago, thanks to the common and undisputed urge of the Founder’s members, that education was the solution to improving their social status.

Establishment of The University of Fiji brought to realization of a thought conceived in 1956 by the then Members of the Founder.

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Pro-Chancellor
7 April 2020

*1904 - Arya Samaj Movement formed in Fiji

*1918 – Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji established

*1920 – Indentured Labour System abolished in Fiji