

Coups in Fiji: A Personal Perspective*

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I wept openly when the Fiji Rugby Sevens team won the World Cup in 1997, I consider Vijay Singh as a true son of Fiji and I was once willing to even die for my beloved nation. But why did the coups of 1987 and 2000 nullify all my feelings of patriotism? Why are we told that we have no right over this land? Can democracy and racial tolerance be 'raped' so easily by hoodlums with guns?

A period of thirteen years, and life in a once claimed paradise has never been the same. Racism, mistrust and hatred have plagued a multi-cultural society that had previously thrived on racial tolerance and understanding. This short essay sheds further light into the fateful coup d'etats of 1987 and 2000 in Fiji by considering these from the views of an ethnic Indian, firstly as a child (1987) and then as an academic (2000). It argues that racial problems have always existed and were merely precipitated by the two coups. This has been attributed to the segregation of the two dominant racial groups and has resulted in neglect of the basic conditions of humanity. The paper suggests that such problems are recurring and to solve them, one needs to look closely at the racial division in Fiji. George Speights and Sitiveni Rabukas will always be born until an amicable solution is found. Dialogue, respect for one another, education, credible leadership, some level of compromise by both races and above all, individual conscience and righteousness are believed to be the way forward.

Fiji – The Way The World Should Be?

The Fiji Islands is a nation in the South Pacific that primarily constitutes two major races, the indigenous Fijians and ethnic

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Indians. It is a former British Colony that achieved independence in 1970. Fiji's population is about 850,000 with the indigenous people comprising just over 50% of this while ethnic Indians accounting for close to 45% of it. The country's economy is dominated by the sugar industry, tourism and garment manufacturing. Mining, fisheries and forestry also form important components of the economy.

Ethnic Indians were first brought to Fiji from India in 1879, landing in the colony on May 14th. They were to work as bonded labour in the sugar cane plantations under what was commonly known as the indenture system. This enabled the traditional lifestyle of the indigenous Fijians to be preserved at a time when they feared extinction. On completion of their indenture, which lasted 5 years, the labourers were given the option of returning to India at their own expense or of getting free passage if they completed another 5-year indenture. Later they were given the option to stay in the nation as free citizens of the British Crown, possessing rights no whit inferior to any citizen of the British Empire. By 1920, the indenture system was abolished. Many workers, who by then had raised families in Fiji, chose to stay in Fiji. They have since played an important role in the agricultural and commercial sector of the country. Since the 1920's they have also been actively involved in the political arena in Fiji.

Politics in Fiji has often been along racial lines with a predominantly indigenous party called the Alliance Party and an Indian backed party called the National Federation Party (NFP) being the primary parties contesting the first four post-independence elections (held in 1972, 1977 (twice), and 1982). A multicultural party (as claimed by its founders) called the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) was formed in 1985. In 1987, it entered into a coalition with the NFP to contest the general election to be held that year. Political control in Fiji had been in the hands of the Alliance Party until 1987 when the Labour-NFP coalition got into power. Many ethnic Fijians saw this as the erosion of their political control. Many supposedly feared that the Indian race had taken over governance of Fiji even though the coalition had a half of the cabinet in the hands of indigenous members (including the Prime Ministership). A well-organised destabilisation campaign began immediately upon the release of the results of the election. Within a month of the new government taking office, a military coup, led by the then Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, deposed the elected government. Rabuka has since stated that he had carried out the coup at the instigation of some unnamed figures.

After a period of military rule, a military backed interim administration governed the nation until 1992 when fresh elections took place under a new constitution that was formulated

in 1990. The new constitution was built on the foundation of enhancing indigenous supremacy in political governance. This constitution had ethnic Fijians voting for ethnic Fijian candidates only, ethnic Indians voting for ethnic Indian candidates only, and general electors (people of other races) voting for candidates of their own community. A greater number of seats was allocated to the ethnic Fijians in order to ensure that power remained in their hands. This led to the chiefly backed party, the *Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT), comprising members of the abolished Alliance Party, assuming power from 1992 to 1999. The NFP and the Labour Party which had split in 1992, formed the opposition. Elections had to be called in 1994 again when a defection of certain SVT members during the budget debate in November 1993, toppled the government. The defectors formed a breakaway party called the Fijian Association Party (FAP), which gained 5 seats in the 1994 election. This was not sufficient to preclude the SVT from its second term in office.

In a turn of events, the SVT accepted the need for a more democratic and less racist constitution. It also agreed to power sharing between different political parties. The new constitutional provisions, endorsed unanimously by the Parliament as well as the Great Council of Chiefs, were contained in a Constitution Amendment Act, now known as the 1997 Constitution. The new Constitution saw the NFP and the SVT agreeing to work together to form a new government after the 1999 election. In the 1999 elections, however, both, the SVT and the NFP (which had teamed with the United General Party) were toppled by a Coalition of the FLP, Fijian Association Party, and the Party of National Unity. The SVT won only 8 seats while the NFP could not win a single seat. Many observers now believe that both ethnic Indians as well as ethnic Fijians could not forgive their respective leaders, Jai Ram Reddy and Sitiveni Rabuka (who orchestrated the military coup of 1987) for getting together. Each leader was said to have sold their rights to the other community. History was created when Mahendra Chaudhry became the first ethnic Indian Prime Minister of Fiji. His reign was cut short within a year through a terrorist coup, led by failed businessman, George Speight, which was justified on the basis of indigenous dissatisfaction with the government.

There have been a number of insights into the two 1987 coups and the 2000 coup in Fiji. Most have pointed out that what happened was not in the best interests of the nation. Poverty and unemployment are now probably at the worst level in Fiji's history. In my view, the turbulent events of the coups in Fiji and their aftermath have nullified the confidence of ethnic Indians in the nation where they were born and brought up. Racial discord,

political upheaval, deprivation of human rights, discrimination disguised in the name of indigenous supremacy and the constant rape of democracy, do not portray Fiji as a safe place for career progression, raising a family, or simply retiring. The aspirations and ambitions of ethnic Indians in Fiji have been suppressed.

For every ethnic Indian, Fiji is as much his/her home as it is to the Indigenous Fijian. There is an easy escape for those who are privileged enough to migrate. However, what happens to those who cannot leave their country of birth? They are alienated and discriminated in their own nation. As an ethnic Indian, I have often felt powerless and frustrated because I cannot do anything to help those discriminated and alienated. It is enough to say that Indians do not have a future in Fiji but where do they go from here. Can those countries that are critical of the lack of democracy in Fiji look after Fiji Indians? It is enough to make sweeping statements but if one really needs to make a contribution, one needs to take action to assist in getting Fiji back to where it rightfully should be.

The 1987 Military Coups

As a curious child, I asked my parents about what the word coup meant when I heard for the first time on May 14th that such an event had taken place. They told me that a group of individuals armed with guns had taken over the Bavadra government and had held the government hostage. I asked them whether it was possible for 10-12 men with guns to overthrow a democratically elected government. Thirteen years later, I realized that this was indeed possible, but on all accounts illegal, not to say inhuman!

May 1987 was without doubt a remarkable experience for all Fiji citizens. We were thrust into a situation that we had never expected, leaving aside having experienced. There were soldiers all around with instability being at its highest level. This was further compounded by racial mistrust with both major races condemning one another. Aggression against the Indian community was very high.

My personal experience involved learning certain important lessons in life. I felt that the friendship that I once had with my indigenous friends had turned into a very cold relationship. We were all fearful of even talking about the events that were taking place around us. Schools were often asked to close their doors, sometimes for a couple of days, as our safety was perceived to be very important. However, little regard was given to our fragile mental state. We were confused but could not seek assistance from our teachers as they themselves had no idea as to what was taking place and what would happen in the future. It just took one

incident to turn our lives around. We all were affected adversely and could do nothing about it because we were powerless. Some accused the ethnic Indians of trying to dominate a country that they 'did not own'; some even blatantly asked ethnic Indians to be expelled from Fiji.

The question we as ethnic Indians had, was 'to leave for where?' For us, Fiji was our home; we had no idea of what India was apart from watching it in movies!

Things begun to stabilize and some consensus seemed to be forthcoming but this was deterred by the second coup in September 1987. We were back to square one. Racial problems abounded again. All hope for a reasonable recovery was destroyed. Even Sundays were forced onto us as a day of worship and rest in the form of what was commonly known as the Sunday Ban. Our right to live our life the way we chose to do was taken away from us. The concept of racial discrimination was something that we inherited as a result of the coup. Poverty and unemployment had reached unprecedented levels. We seemed to have learnt more from the coups than from our texts.

For a growing child in a developing nation, there is nothing worse than experiencing the events of 1987. We went to school every day wondering what the day had in store for one in the politically tense environment. But we had to attend school as we were told that this was for our future. A future in a country being depleted by gunmen! Probably the positive aspect of this was that it made us realize the importance of peace and stability for a nation. I am sure most would have promised themselves that they would not like to grow up and do something that wrecks the nation. But then, it just takes a moment of indecision by an individual to throw a country into chaos.

The 2000 Terrorist Coup

Two weeks before the terrorist coup of May 19th, 2000, I asked a close friend over lunch why there was so much indigenous dissent over the election of an ethnic Indian Prime Minister or, as better exemplified in the University of the South Pacific's case, the protest over the possible appointment of an ethnic Indian Vice-Chancellor. He explained that we Indians have taken over what belongs to the indigenous race. He compared the Indian/Fijian racial tension to that of the Hindu/Muslim problems in India and asked, 'How would Indians feel if Muslims took over the governance of India?' I replied that the situation in Fiji was different from conflicts in India. In any case, in Fiji, the Indians have been the primary architects of the country's economy through sugar cane farming and commercial business activity. So

why cannot they lead the country that they have basically built since arriving here in 1879? My friend could not reply.

The third coup in Fiji, orchestrated by some civilians with the assistance from the military, came as a *deja vu* to many Fiji citizens. This is not to say that we were all prepared for what was to follow.

The initial reactions to the coup were shock and disappointment among all. The coup of 1987 was claimed to have set our economy back by at least 10 years and race relations much further back, so why again? There was fear and anxiety amongst people but we were aware of what had to be done immediately. This was to rush home, lock our homes and remain inside for sometime. As an academic at the University of the South Pacific at that time, I had a more responsible role. Our students had their assignments due that day and many of them risked everything to try to hand in the assignment on time. Some even called and were advised not to worry about the assignment; well, not yet. We had to ensure that all students around knew where they were heading towards and that they were safe. They had to be advised not to leave for the town, as it was being burnt and looted. Ironically, I lived in the heart of Suva City so it was far more difficult to really make up my mind as to where to head towards. However, having seen the students off, I did decide to take a route to the city whereby I would be able to escape areas that were being looted.

It was indeed a relief to have arrived home safely. It, however, was extremely sad to see the extent to which looting was taking place. There were people all around, even little kids, proud of their loot as if these were the result of a hard day's work. The media in Fiji reported that in addition to the looting, many shops were also burnt down.

It was indeed a dismay to see 'paradise' being burnt and looted. I kept wondering why this was done. Do we expect human beings to stoop to this level? The indigenous people claim that the country belongs to them but why were they actually destroying the country that they claim was theirs? Why could the police do nothing about this – were they really outnumbered? Why was the military not deployed to the streets? Why were some businesses spared while others raided and looted? Did the police, which has a large Special Branch responsible for intelligence gathering, not have any intelligence on the plans of the terrorists? These, and other similar questions have remained unanswered. We, as a nation, had become powerless and could not do anything to stop the destruction of our beloved nation! All which many could do was wonder whether those terrorising Suva realized what they were actually doing and its consequences? After Suva City was burnt and looted, the media called it the 'ghost town', and quiet rightly

too, as it looked a pretty lonesome sight. It was also quite interesting to notice that the majority of shops burnt down or looted belong to ethnic Indians. Was this a racial war after all?

The political impasse regarding the 2000 coup lasted longer than the previous event. Hostages were held for a period of 56 days while people were asked to carry out business as usual. How could we even go to work while our leaders were held hostage? Could business continue as usual, considering that certain human beings were held captive against their own will? On a positive side, it was good to see that schools were closed indefinitely and universities ended up taking an earlier semester break. At least, the young would not have to go through what we went through in 1987.

Strangely, however, much of the daily businesses continued as usual during the parliamentary siege but there was a degree of uncertainty and fear around. It was like going to work each day not knowing what would happen next. This was indeed a frustrating experience knowing that you could do nothing to bring the country back to the pre-coup days. Reports of oppression of ethnic Indians in Dawasamu, in the chiefly province of Tailevu, and Muaniveni, in the Naitasiri province, could not be easily absorbed. To complicate matters further, the takeover of the Monosavu Hydroelectricity Dam meant that electricity had to be rationed. This really made matters worse, if they were not that bad already.

The release of hostages and the subsequent capture of the terrorists assisted in easing the tension somewhat. Slowly, trade bans were lifted and an interim regime (but with only one Indian representative) was appointed to run the country. We were 'out of the chaos' but were we really? What was the guarantee that a similar incident would not occur again?

Why the Racial Tension?

One needs to consider that birthright is something that one cannot choose. I did not choose to be born an ethnic Indian nor did one choose to be born an ethnic Fijian. So why do we allow this man-made racial division to divide people? When will Indians and Fijians learn to trust one another and live together peacefully? The coups have been detrimental to both the races but the division between them still exists and perhaps continues to widen. This, despite the fact that we remain united in other things such as sports (especially sevens rugby), have the 'national' drink (kava) together, enjoy each others food, and communicate in a language which is fast evolving to be a unique amalgam of various languages used by our ancestors. Why such distrust then? To address this issue, one needs to examine the racial, social and

economic structures in Fiji.

The two major races in Fiji, indigenous Fijians and ethnic Indians have lived very different ways of life. The essential difference between them is that the ethnic Fijians live on a communal basis while ethnic Indians believe in an individual existence. A common belief that is claimed to be associated with the ethnic Fijians is that the present day is all that is worth living for, the future is not important, often stated in the Fijian language as 'kana nikua, mataka raica' (let's eat today, tomorrow we'll see). On the other hand, ethnic Indians focus on the future; hard work and savings are seen as key attributes to success. The emergence of these different outlooks have been products of the material environment in which the different ethnic groups have grown and continue to live. Ethnic Fijians have access to land which ensures survival and limits the worries of ensuring sustenance. On the other hand, ethnic Indians live without the surety of access to land, thus are left with only one avenue to ensure survival, which is to work now and ensure that there is some money saved in case there is no work tomorrow.

For the ethnic Fijians the social system is of utmost importance. This is based on a structure similar to a caste system with the chiefs (titled Ratu if male and Adi if female) being the dominant group. Respect for the chief is very high – tantamount to worshipping God. Chiefs control access to land and are supposed to look after the common people. This structure has been in place for centuries. On the other side of the spectrum, the social system among the ethnic Indians is slowly moving away from a caste structure – at least in terms of the undue importance given to individuals who are of a higher caste. Indians mainly include Hindus, Gujeratis, Muslims and Sikhs. Some of these communal groups may have internal caste arrangements, but these do not impact on the control of resources for ones survival.

The distribution of resources in Fiji is quite interesting. To put it simply, ethnic Fijians own most of the land while ethnic Indians are landless, having to lease land from the owners, often at terms determined like prices are determined for a product produced by a monopolist. On the other hand, over time, the ethnic Indians have come to become the leaders in the farming sector as well as hold a significant influence in the commercial sector, second only to the hold which foreign capital has. This dichotomy is interesting as it highlights a further division among the races, which in turn leads us to the key idea behind this essay – the political problems in Fiji are the result of segregation of the two major races.

Each ethnic group, therefore, is characterised by different social structures, different resource endowments, different economic interests and different life styles. These highlight

divisions between the two major races. They basically have opposite identities, which originate from early days of colonialism in Fiji when the British rulers decided to restrict, through legal and political means, intermixing between the two groups. To this day, this division remains. In essence, the polarization of ethnic differences continues to gain momentum as now ethnicity has become a major factor in access to state resources.

From the social and economic sphere, the division between the ethnic groups emerged into political divisions. All constitutions of the country to date (and there have been three, one drafted in 1970, another in 1990 and another in 1997) have a certain proportion of communalism in them. What this basically means is that political representation is largely ethnic in nature. There are seats where only ethnic Fijian politicians can represent ethnic Fijians while only ethnic Indian politicians can represent ethnic Indians. This further perpetuates the division between the two races. Indeed, the system has powerful inbuilt incentives to reproduce itself since politicians elected on ethnic votes will not tend to easily favour a change in the system. In the 1970 and the 1997 Constitutions, there have been national seats but again, these have been won by whichever party which proclaimed to champion the ethnic interests of the majority of the voters in the constituency. In the 1997 Constitution 25 out of the 71 parliamentary seats is filled by such a mechanism. While this has the foundation for inter-racial cooperation and mixing, the number of such seats is too small to make any serious contribution towards challenging the status quo.

Why is such a form of racial division a problem? Any division along racial lines violates the essence of humanity. Both the races in Fiji have been guilty of accepting the status quo. Humanity encompasses equal rights, freedom of choice, democracy, and the right to choose as one wishes. But in Fiji, these fundamental tenets of humanity have been violated through racially based constitutions. This in turn has led to an ethnic Fijian dominated public service (including the police and military) but an ethnic Indian dominated agricultural and commercial sector.

We live in a globalized world. Racial divisions ought not to be as pronounced as they were many years ago. Communities are now getting together to attempt to resolve the major issues confronting the globe. Human rights and equal opportunities have gained more prominence than ever. But in Fiji, we have continued to rely on traditional racial beliefs and values that were developed during the colonial days. This is analogous to the traditional Indian tale of kupamanduka, which describes a frog that lives a solitude life within a well and does not trust anything outside it.

It is indeed correct that coups in Fiji have been orchestrated

by greed of failed politicians, and businessmen. Recent reports in Fiji suggest that corrupt businessmen who had built a rapport with previous regimes (pre-1999), based on issuing of lucrative contracts, export quotas and favorable investment incentives seemed to be threatened by the change in government and the associated policies of the new governments, especially in 1999-2000. It is claimed that this monopolist capitalist sector (which is quite large in operation and financially robust) financed the coups. However, it is incorrect to say that the coup has nothing to do with the race issue. It has everything to do with it.

The coup precipitated a racial cleansing. Ethnic Indians suffered atrocities. From Dawasamu and Muaniveni in Viti Levu, and from Dreketi in Vanua Levu, hundreds of families were made to flee.

Yet ethnic Indians have continued to support the rule of the law. Many have accepted that disadvantaged indigenous people, like disadvantaged people from other ethnic groups, need preferential treatment. The ordinary ethnic Fijian, on the other hand, is prone to be led astray by political leaders who insist that ethnic Indians ought to be a third class citizen in the country. Coups give these so-called leaders the ammunition to launch their racial campaigns. After such events take place, comes the realization that what was done was wrong and forgiveness is sought. But will an apology be enough to redeem what has happened? Will a simple apology bring back, for example, the glory days in areas like Dawasamu, Muaniweni and Dreketi in Vanua Levu? What guarantee is there that these problems will not recur?

The crux of my argument is that the racial divide in Fiji is a key issue that needs to be resolved. Political problems will persist until individuals gain more responsibility and consider humanity over other matters such as political control. There will definitely be greedy politicians and businessmen around but resistance from the common people ought to be enough to deter uprisings such as those that were witnessed at the height of the two coups. So what solutions do I offer?

What do we do?

Having stated what I believe is the fundamental problem in the country, the remaining issue is: how could we make the future better. Radical changes are needed. The primary approach to do this will entail questioning and rejecting the status quo that has encouraged this racial division.

All ethnic groups should have equal rights – in the workforce and the political arena. There is a need for understanding and tolerance between both major racial groups. Togetherness

between the two races, care and compassion for each other and most importantly, respect for both races is needed. People should not be misled into something that they regret later and which they feel could be undone by seeking forgiveness. Forgiveness will not repair the damage that has already been done. A more committed and robust approach is required through reconciliation of differences.

Responsibility is needed from leaders who should not use the existing racial tension to fulfill their own agendas. Matters regarding racial division in Fiji should be openly discussed rather than being left as a subject which is taboo. Dialogue is needed so that an amicable solution is found that would unite the people, one that will create a nation out of Fiji. This will involve some level of compromise but such give and take should be in terms of a shared understanding rather than in terms of the rejection of the essence of humanity.

Reconciliation and dialogue could be fostered through moderation and mediation. Extreme views and mistrusts need to be replaced by a balanced vision of reality. Mediators free of preconceived notions and biases need to listen to voices from both the ethnic groups and seek an amicable solution rather than imposing upon them a preconceived solution.

This paper rejects the approach taken by the present government in Fiji. Entitled the 'Blueprint for Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans', this document aims to boost ethnic Fijian participation in the educational and commercial sector by restricting state funding and assistance to others. The paper views such an approach as another political gimmick used to promote the racial divide. In essence, the 'Blueprint' is an attempt to downgrade the educational possibilities offered to ethnic Indians by depriving ethnic Indian youth of a stable education, rather than an attempt to enhance indigenous education. One cannot give preferential treatment to one race purely because they have been left behind by the policies which were made by the very government which they had been electing for 17 continuous years. It is my view that ethnic Fijians will only advance if the communal way of life is replaced by individualistic attitudes and hard work, not through handouts as the 'Blueprint' aims to do.

Incidentally, the primary architect of the 'Blueprint' is the same person who endeavored a similar scheme involving a chain of supermarkets owned by indigenous Fijians called Eimcol. The Eimcol scheme, consuming millions of dollars of taxpayer funds, was a total failure and a disaster to the morale of the ethnic Fijians who went into the scheme. Should Fiji allow a person who failed at the institutional level to use the whole nation as a guinea pig?

Since constitutional independence, some sort of affirmative action has been in existence (though not specifically documented) but it has, on taking stock, failed to achieve its implied objective of transforming ethnic Fijians into large commercial machines. Indigenous Fijians still claim to be left behind. This brings into question the sincerity, commitment and attitude of the previous leadership in Fiji. Perhaps these so called blueprints have favored the elite within the indigenous group. What is certain is that the disparity between the two races has been widened further rather than narrowed. In fact, it creates a segregation within the indigenous group themselves, leading to an elite and ordinary grouping of the indigenous population. Unfortunately, the elite group has succeeded in convincing the ordinary group that ethnic Indians as a group are the enemy and a cause of their misery. A close scrutiny of the situation, however, indicates that conversely, it is the elite group that has done more harm to its own community than what the ethnic Indians have been accused of doing.

A common example to highlight the failure of the preferential system of blueprints in Fiji is the previous governments' approach towards scholarships to the indigenous population. A lot of deserving candidates have failed to attain scholarships largely because they have failed the 'race test'. The failure rate of those awarded such scholarships is so alarming that one wonders whether funds have been utilized efficiently. One estimate is that 61% of all students under the scheme during 1984-2000 failed in their courses. Thus, discrimination has not worked in this instance. Had merit been the criteria for awarding such scholarships, the country would have benefited from more skilled individuals. Any blueprint that favors a particular race over another is a recipe for disaster.

One of the approaches towards a rejection of the status quo will entail abandonment of the chiefly system in Fiji. Status in society should be based on merit, not on birth. Communal land ownership should be transferred to individual ownership of divided land. A person should gain superiority and respect in society through his/her deeds, not through birth.

A similar approach has worked in India, which has considerably larger population than Fiji. The Maharajas of India lost all their privileges after independence. This was met by some resistance but the end result ensured equality among all, at least in the political arena.

Education will play a key role in reducing the racial divide. The younger generation should be made aware of the importance of humanity and righteousness. They need to be encouraged to think independently and to realize the importance of peace building. Scholarships should be granted on the basis of merit rather than

race. The study of each other's language, customs and tradition right from primary school could assist in bridging the gulf between the ethnic Indians and ethnic Fijians, allowing them to understand and appreciate each others' culture.

Constitutions should encompass voting on a common roll rather than along communal lines. The 1997 Constitution should be amended to include this. Consideration of human rights, suppression of racial discrimination and enshrining equal opportunities for all races should be the stated objectives of the constitution.

Fiji went into the 2001 elections with a record number of political parties. The results illustrate the racial dilemma in Fiji clearly whereby voting seemed to be on party lines (rather than on the calibre of candidate) with ethnic Indians supporting the predominantly Indian led party of the former Prime Minister and ethnic Fijians supporting the two extremist Fijian parties that were not in existence in the previous elections. This signifies that the common people, despite having suffered the consequences of racial separation, have chosen to go down the same path again.

Democracy in Fiji has been at the cost of multiculturalism and unity. A predominantly indigenous government and an ethnic Indian opposition was the visible and effective consequence of this election. This very situation contributes significantly to a lack of national reconciliation, unity and harmony. This is so despite the fact that the spirit of the 1997 Constitution requires a government of national unity, comprising representatives from all political parties with at least 10% support, working conjunctively towards nation building.

It is discouraging to note that there is not even a single multicultural party Fiji - this would only have been proven if a particular party was able to win both a communal Fijian and a communal Indian seat. Since independence, this has never eventuated albeit claims by parties that they are multi-racial remain. Hence, the possibility of having a government of national unity in Fiji seems an utopian dream.

Elections will not solve the problems in Fiji; it is recognition of the racial division and its subsequent remedy that is important. This will only be possible through a belief in the essence of humanity. Humanity rises above caste, race, religion, gender, color or status; it encompasses equal rights, fairness and justice to humankind. Individual conscience will also play a vital role in determining personal attributes; allowing everyone to reflect on their past and current deeds. This will allow individuals to distinguish right from wrong rather than being misled by opportunists during racial upheavals.

This paper contains an individual perspective of the problems

confronting Fiji and some possible solutions. I will consider its motive fulfilled if at least some of the issues raised here are considered by the people of Fiji.

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